UNDP

Gávea

Rio de Janeiro

Rocinha

0.97	**Human Development Index**	0.73
80.5	**Life Expectancy at Birth**	67.3
98.1	**Adult Literacy Rate**	87.9
1,174.4	**Income Per Capita**	120.7
100.0	**School Attendance**	69.5
12.4	Mean Years of Schooling	

Poverty and the City

FROM THE EDITOR

Describing Britain in the 1840s, Benjamin Disraeli famously spoke of "two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts and feelings, are formed by different breeding, fed by different food, ordered by different manners, and governed not by the same laws, as if they were dwellers in different zones or inhabitants of different planets… the rich and the poor".

Disraeli's is a fitting description of the reality in many large cities of the world, where poverty exists amidst concentrated wealth. Sometimes, poverty´s presence is simply just too obvious to ignore — slums and tenements in the middle of a city, beggars near a street light, homeless families eating and sleeping on a sidewalk. As often, it is hidden from the public's sight, secluded in areas into which better-off residents, and data gatherers, do not normally venture.

By 2050, two-thirds of the world's people will live in cities. Such growth is bound to outstrip the capacity of poorly resourced governments and feeble urban economies to absorb new residents and provide them with adequate jobs, shelter and services. Many if not most will end up in substandard housing in un-serviced and marginal locations, with insecure tenure, limited access to basic amenities and high exposure to health hazards.

This month, we devote *In Focus* to the theme of urban poverty. Accurate estimates of its spread are hard to get. In fact, our opening article argues that official poverty statistics tend to understate the actual scale of need in urban areas of the developing world. This is because standard poverty lines often fail to reflect the real cost of living in a city and to capture key dimensions of well-being, thus neglecting the great scope for improving the lot of the poor through provision of public goods. Housing tenure is especially important for them. In its absence, the urban poor are constantly exposed to the threat of eviction, as vividly described in the articles on Karachi and Lagos that also highlight the failure of formal sector planning to solve the problem of low income housing, the negative impact of market driven real estate development and ill conceived transport policies on the poor, and the institutional abuse and harassment often meted out to them.

Next, a piece on Kingston sheds light on the interaction between social exclusion and violent crime. The latter is not merely an outcome of the cumulative disadvantages faced by inner city residents but, in a perverse manner, serves to reinforce the stigma and discrimination that society thrusts upon them. This theme is further developed in the following article, devoted to the phenomenon of urban violence. Analyzing the implications of fear and insecurity for people's well-being, the author provides a useful typology of violence and draws important lessons for improving measurement and policy to curb it, and thereby avoid the fragmentation of the urban space.

Such fragmentation seems already underway in Montevideo, where changes in the economy and the polity are affecting the social morphology of the city through their repercussions in the sphere of work, space and non-market entitlements — and are so reconfiguring the urban space as to foretell a 'hardening' of poverty for the socially and spatially segregated poor. But this is not inevitable, as the article on Manila shows. Pointing to the crucial role of 'agency', particularly by poor women who often led the struggle for rights and recognition in the Tondo shanty settlement, the author explains how organization and collective action have helped recast the rules of engagement between the urban poor and city and national authorities in the Philippines.

In today's rapidly urbanizing world, the shifting locus of global poverty towards cities seems beyond doubt. To slow down the formation of slums and prevent an urbanization of poverty, our closing article proposes an agenda focused on strengthening urban governance and improving coordination among national and local authorities, private and non-profit actors, and the urban poor to ensure that they have tenure security as well as greater access to land, basic services and infrastructure. We hope our selection of articles can provide pointers to help meet these challenges so as to avoid the crystallization of "two nations" living side by side in one city.

Alejandro Grinspun

Under-Counting the Urban Poor

by David Satterthwaite,
International Institute for Environment
and Development (IIED), UK

One of the most puzzling aspects of official poverty statistics is that, in many low income nations, apparently only a small proportion of urban dwellers are poor. This is so even when more than a third of them live in poor quality, overcrowded shacks in squatter settlements lacking provision for water and sanitation, as well as schools and health services. Living in such settlements generally means lacking a legal address and so not being able to vote or access public services, as well as living under the constant threat of eviction. In many such places, conditions are so poor that infant and child mortality rates are ten to twenty times higher than in places with little poverty.

The main reason for this discrepancy between official statistics and conditions on the ground is that poverty definitions seldom reflect the reality of urban settings. Most are based only on consumption levels with no consideration of living conditions. Definitions and measurement are seen as the preserve of 'experts' — and the poor, who know how *they* live, are not consulted in the process.

Measuring poverty through poverty lines would seem particularly fitting for urban areas, where access to goods and services is highly monetized — as long as their limitations are recognized and sufficient allowance is made for non-food needs. Normally, poverty lines are set drawing on data on the cost of a minimum food basket or the lowest income that allows household members to get sufficient calories, with some amount added for non-food items. But the allowance for non-food consumption is often too small to enable a poor urban family to cover its needs adequately. It is commonly based on what a defined set of low income households spends on necessities other than food, not on the level of resources they would need to satisfy them.

Clearly, what poor households spend on non-food needs is *not* a measure of whether these are being met. The meager amount a family of five spends on renting a single room in which they all live — a room that lacks secure tenure and provision for piped water and sanitation — surely cannot be an indication of the income it needs if it is to afford adequate accommodation.

In some poverty lines, the allowance for non-food needs is unreasonably low because it is based on the amount that a household spends on non-food items when its *total* spending is equivalent to the cost of an adequate diet. In other words, members of that household will not eat enough if they devote any portion of their incomes to items other than food. Other poverty lines assume that households that spend enough to get sufficient calories must also be meeting their non-food needs. But no data is collected to see if they *are* actually met, or what income level would be required to do so.

The lack of research to establish the actual cost of meeting non-food needs has serious implications for urban locations where such needs are often particularly expensive. Yet some poverty lines make no allowance for the higher monetary cost of acquiring goods and services in an urban context, while others make some adjustment but typically based on variations in the cost of food alone. This fails to accurately reflect the higher cost of living in a city, which would involve considering the differential in the cost of non-food needs along with spatial variations in food prices.

Indeed, the costs of non-food items can be very high, and many empirical studies show the high proportion of income that poor urban families must devote to them. This is especially so in cities that

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The official statistics used by governments and international agencies tend to understate the scale and depth of urban poverty — sometimes grossly.

One reason is the over-reliance on poverty lines and the lack of attention to living conditions in urban areas, mainly with regard to housing, infrastructure and services.

This suggests the need to extend poverty definitions beyond income or consumption. It also highlights the potential for reducing poverty through better provision of public goods — hence, the critical importance of more competent and effective local governance.

Official poverty in Dar es Salaam was 17.6% in 2000, a time when its under-five mortality was reaching 173 per 1,000 live births.

are poorly governed and where much of the low income population have to resort to illegal markets to access services, housing or land on which to build their homes.

Housing expenses are usually for renting accommodation or building a house. Even renting a room in a poor quality shack may take 20% to 30% of a household's income. Slum or pavement dwellers may have to make informal payments to stop the police from evicting them. Building in an illegal settlement can also be expensive as the land has to be acquired and the construction materials, fixtures and fittings paid for, all of which is rarely cheap. Loans may be needed to purchase land — and, in the absence of credit markets which the poor can access on fair terms, repaying the loans to informal moneylenders can be highly onerous.

To escape high rental costs, many low income households go to peripheral locations to get land they can afford. But this increases their transport costs, especially to and from work and for accessing services, which can also take a large portion of their incomes. Or they have no choice but to walk long distances. Those living in illegal settlements and relying on water vendors normally pay much more per liter than those with piped water connections. Many also have to pay for garbage collection and access to latrines — and, in the case of families with children, for child care, which can be quite costly unless they resort to leaving young children unattended at home or in the charge of older siblings, with all the attendant risks.

Thus, despite the common assumption that city residents are better served by infrastructure and services than rural populations, the fact is that public provision is often so limited that even

those with incomes above the poverty line may still be deprived of essentials. In most urban contexts, indeed, whether a household is above or below the line may have little bearing on its capacity to access goods or services. Even poor families often have to turn to private provision, which is why urban households typically need higher cash incomes to avoid poverty than most rural households. Proximity, clearly, does not imply access.

There are other reasons for the under-estimation of poverty in official statistics. In setting poverty lines, children are often assumed to require a fraction of the income needed by adults because of their lower calorie requirements. But having one-third the calorie needs of adults does not mean that the expenses on children's non-food consumption are one-third of an adult's. In fact, affording health care for children or keeping them at school can be quite expensive for poor urban families. Even if education is nominally 'free', families generally have to pay for uniforms, books and exam fees, as well as transport to and from schools. Children are also more vulnerable to the health burdens associated with poverty. So expenditures on health care and medicines for them are likely to be high, unless their illnesses and injuries go untreated.

Still another problem with poverty measurement is that household surveys often are not representative of urban populations. They may have sample sizes large enough to indicate conditions in 'urban areas', but fail to capture the situation of many poor families who, because they are homeless and sleep on the street or in public spaces, lack a legal address — or live in illegal settlements or boarding houses into which data gatherers are reluctant to go. For most illegal settlements, there are no maps, official addresses or household records, which make their inclusion in official surveys difficult or impossible.

The lack of attention to living conditions in poverty measurements — and to the income needed to afford adequate housing in poverty lines — is linked to the uncritical transfer of methods from high to low income nations. Poverty

lines were first used widely in high income countries when virtually everyone had access to health care and schools — and to accommodation that had provision for water, sanitation and electricity. In most of these countries, poverty lines were also one among several measures of deprivation.

By contrast, poverty lines came to be applied in low income countries as the main or only method of measuring poverty, in contexts where large sections of the population lack access to basic necessities. Thus the methods for measuring poverty are often reproduced by governments and international agencies without questioning their limitations — and mostly with less generosity, for instance in the allowance made for non-food needs.

Fortunately, some of these limitations are being addressed in recent years, particularly through the inclusion of data on housing conditions and basic services in poverty measures — as in, for instance, estimates of the proportion of households with unsatisfied basic needs. Similarly, adjustments for spatial variations in prices or costs in different locations have become more common, and allowances for non-food necessities less ungenerous.

But even if poverty lines are set at levels that accurately reflect the income needed to avoid poverty, they will still give an incomplete picture of deprivation. Most make no allowance for household *savings* despite their importance for allowing poor families to cope with shocks and stress. Nor do they place a price on *time*, even though accessing some services may imply a trade-off — often in women's time — if queuing in an urban clinic or at a public standpipe or toilet is required.

Conventional poverty measures also fail to capture *intra-household* differentials in consumption and command over income and assets, which can be large enough as to hide the presence of deprivation within otherwise non-poor households. And they do not capture the *vulnerability* to falling into poverty but only the proportion of households who, at the time of a survey, are below the income

cutoff. So no distinction is drawn between *chronic* and *transient* poverty, even though households facing a temporary income drop need a different policy response to those who have long had inadequate incomes. Worse, families that take children out of school to work may appear better off in household surveys even as they become more vulnerable and compromise their children's future earning capacity.

There is clearly a need to widen poverty definitions to include aspects other than income or consumption. Of critical importance are *assets* and other means to reduce vulnerability to stress and shocks, housing conditions and tenure, access to services, and the rule of law. They not only highlight dimensions often ignored in standard measurement, but also help identify many more entry points for poverty reduction.

Unless these dimensions are included, many well-intentioned programs will miss the great potential to reduce poverty through *public goods*. After all, many deprivations associated with low incomes are rather the result of the incapacity of weak or ineffective public, private or non-profit institutions to ensure provision. A well-managed municipal system for piped water, sanitation, drainage, and garbage removal can greatly reduce the cost of accommodation for city residents, even without increasing their incomes.

This widening of poverty definitions is part of a more fundamental shift in development thinking. It is a shift from official perceptions of poor people as *objects* of government policy to poor people as *citizens* with rights and legitimate demands. It is a shift that requires a greater focus on definitions and data that can support local action by governments and civil society.

For city officials and other local bodies, household surveys based on representative samples for national populations are of little use because they do not identify which households are deprived and where they live. National statistical offices should rather be serving the needs of local authorities and civil society as well as national governments

Setting a poverty line: Key questions for urban areas

Due to lack of data, misplaced assumptions or inadequate handling of the information that does exist, poverty lines tend to understate the scale of poverty in urban areas or among certain urban groups. They should be questioned on several counts, such as:

Is the food allowance based on the kinds of food low income families actually consume? If based on the 'cheapest minimum food basket' defined by experts, poverty lines may underestimate the expenses incurred by poor families to meet their calorie requirements — influenced, for instance, by time shortages due to long working hours or queuing to access services, or by the choice of higher quality food such as meat or fish.

Is allowance made for meeting non-food needs? Is it based on the real cost of non-food items? Many poverty lines are based on the cost of food alone. When allowance is made for non-food needs, it normally reflects what a reference low income family spends on such items regardless of whether its needs are met. Sometimes, this allowance is based only on the expenditure on non-food items of households whose total spending is just enough to get sufficient food.

Is allowance made for the cost of housing? If allowance is made, it is usually imputed because of lack of data from official surveys. Most often, the allowance for the income needed to pay for adequate housing is very inadequate.

Is allowance made for spatial variations to reflect the higher cost of non-food items in urban settings? Where this is done, it is often based on differences in food costs only even though spatial variations in the cost of non-food needs may be much larger.

What allowance is made for children's consumption? Because children require fewer calories than adults, their food allowance is often adjusted downwards when converting household data to individual data in defining a poverty line. Yet the same factor is typically used to compute the costs of meeting children´s non-food needs, even though they can be as high as those of an adult due to expenses on schooling, health and day care.

and international agencies. For instance, the availability of small-area data drawn from censuses can provide critical information for identifying and prioritizing interventions for *specific* groups in *specific* locations, yet it is rare for local governments to be able to get such information.

Local initiatives to generate the data needed for local programs must also be supported, including those that urban poor organizations can undertake themselves. There are many examples of very detailed city-wide slum surveys, slum enumerations and slum mapping by organizations and federations of the urban poor and local non-governmental organizations. They provide strong information bases for improving housing conditions and tenure security, as well as upgrading basic infrastructure and services. Many of these initiatives have been catalysts for large-scale programs for poverty reduction, where representative

organizations of the urban poor, local authorities and international agencies work in partnership.

In the end, one of the critical determinants of the success of poverty reduction programs is the quality of the relationship between the poor and the organizations with the resources or powers that can help address their deprivations. Improving that relationship calls for the 'experts' to engage with the people they intend to serve, who also have knowledge, resources and capabilities that can contribute much to poverty reduction. Ultimately, this is a shift for poverty specialists from recommending what *should* be done to understanding what local processes need support in order to influence what *is* done at the local level.

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David Satterthwaite, *The under-estimation of urban poverty in low and middle-income nations*, IIED Working Paper 14, 2004.

A Tale of Three Cities:
Karachi, Kingston and Lagos

URBAN
STORIES

Insecurity is a fact of life for the poor urban citizens of many countries. It may arise from the lack of secure housing tenure, which means living with the constant fear of eviction. Or it may reflect high levels of personal insecurity stemming from police harassment, abuse in the hands of bureaucracies or the breakdown of public safety in the neighborhood.

Whether one or the other, the consequences for the poor can be traumatic — loss of critical assets and income earning opportunities, disruption of community ties and a general deterioration of the quality of life for the individuals as well as the households affected.

Karachi

by Arif Hasan
Urban Resources Centre, Pakistan

Since the early 1950s, the Pakistani government has seriously tried to work out housing solutions for low income communities. First it set out to build core houses to resettle refugees, but was not able to service even 10% of the requirement. In the 1960s, it launched a massive housing program that would build 200,000 housing units in five years. Yet only 10,000 units were completed in two years before the project came to a halt.

In the 1970s, authorities developed over 300,000 small sites and services plots, ostensibly for low income families, but more than 70% of plots remained vacant for over 15 years. In any case, they were unaffordable to the poor, had complex procedures for allotment and took years after allotment to acquire basic infrastructure. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the government initiated a program to regularize and improve informal settlements. Although most of Karachi's settlements have been notified as fit for registration, the program has progressed at a rate of only 1.5% per year. At this pace, it will take 75 years to regularize the settlements. Meanwhile, new ones are being created.

Beginning in the 1990s, the government has abandoned all attempts at social housing. Its current plans revolve round providing loans to access the land and housing market. Since the poor are not deemed creditworthy, they are excluded from the process. Besides, what they need is small-term loans for house improvements such as building a toilet, getting an electric connection or adding a room, but such loans are not available.

As a result of these failures, over 50% of Karachi's 13 million people live in informal settlements or *katchi abadi*. The earlier settlements, built between the 1950s and 1970s, are now within the city and have acquired basic infrastructure and improved their homes. Yet many informal houses cannot be regularized since they are on what is considered to be 'ecologically unsafe' areas, prone to flooding or encroaching on amenity plots and reservations along natural drainage channels. Recent government policies are increasing the *katchi abadi* population as never before.

In the meantime, the Karachi middle class has expanded due to the growth of the services sector and the emergence of a market economy over the last ten years. Banks and leasing companies flush with funds have started giving easy loans for housing, both to individuals and formal sector developers.

This has fuelled the upper and middle income housing market. There is now a huge demand for vacant land within the Karachi urban sprawl. Since such land is unavailable, a powerful nexus involving politicians, developers and bureaucrats has emerged that is bulldozing and burning down irregular inner-city settlements — even some that were marked for regularization.

According to one estimate, some 17,500 housing units were demolished between 1992 and 2001 to make room for middle income housing, without counting other units that were cleared for infrastructure projects. Still other settlements have been removed on the grounds that they were in 'ecologically unsafe' areas. After their removal, however, embankments were built so as to prevent flooding and drainage channels.

The residents of these *katchi abadi* were evicted and pushed into the city's periphery. They are now far away from

their places of work and have to spend a sizeable part of their income on transport. They are also far away from the places of recreation and the better health and educational facilities. The major damage of this dislocation has been done to children's education. In addition, women who used to work in their old neighborhoods can no longer do so, which represents a considerable loss of income for their families.

Financed by foreign investment in the real estate market, expensive housing schemes are being developed along the sea front, often in contravention of the Karachi Coastal Management Plan and despite protestations by civil society organizations and threats of legal action. Seven hundred acres of protected mangroves have already been 'reclaimed' for housing purposes. So too are the city's natural recreational assets being taken over and 'privatized' for the exclusive use of the rich.

Banks are also providing easy loans for the purchase of vehicles. With 700 cars added to Karachi's roads every day, travel time within the city has increased by more than 150% in the last six years. The worst victims of this increase are those who live in the periphery and have to travel to the city for work. Almost all are *katchi abadi* residents.

The government is responding to traffic congestion by building expressways along Karachi's seasonal rivers. Better options, such as segregating local and thorough traffic, developing link roads and a rational land use plan, are not being explored seriously. One expressway alone is displacing 25,000 families and over 8,000 commercial units. It is affecting 40,000 jobs and the education of 26,000 children. More viable and cheaper solutions that do not have to evict people were placed before the government, but they have not been accepted. Expressways along the rivers offer an opportunity to occupy land for upper income commercial development, which may explain why they are chosen over alternative plans.

There are a number of reasons for the current state of affairs. With the emergence of a market economy following structural adjustment, the state has ceased to

invest in development and infrastructure. Privately funded projects have thus replaced planning. These private initiatives are governed by the logic of the market, not the public good. The partnership between foreign investors, banks and insurance companies, and local developers can turn easy profits only if it caters to the needs of the better off sections of Karachi's population, which are increasingly imbued with an *ethos* of consumerism.

To address these concerns politically is more difficult now than it was ten years ago. The devolution of power to an indirectly elected city government has turned these issues 'non-political' while sparing the national and provincial governments the need to tackle them. Perhaps direct elections for the Karachi mayor will help introduce some real politics at the local level.

Kingston

by Horace Levy
University of the West Indies, Jamaica

Jamaica's foremost problem today is not poverty but *violent crime*. It has grown relentlessly over the past 15 years, though with a lull between 1998 and 2003 that was followed by a 50% jump in 2004 to the third highest murder rate on the globe — three, five, seven murders in single episodes, bleeding the nation without pity.

For a small country with only 2.6 million people, to have recorded nearly 1,500 homicides in one year and be heading, at the current rate of five murders per day, to over 1,800 in 2005 is just staggering. The problem is concentrated in Kingston and the adjoining townships of Spanish Town and Portmore, which together accounted for 70% of the murders in 2004 — twice their share in the island's population.

Even aside from damage to the economy, the present wave of violent crime is having an intense impact on people's consciousness. The middle class panics after the murder of a few prominent citizens, calling for capital punishment by hanging to be resumed. Inner-city children are traumatized by the gunshots and dead bodies in their midst. Worse, they are socialized to see violence as normal.

Nationwide, poverty dropped to 19% in 2003 from 30% a decade ago. However, it remains concentrated in rural areas and inner city pockets in and around the capital, where many of the poorest Jamaicans are crowded. In 2002, the poorest 10% of the population spent one-eleventh as much as the wealthiest 10% on consumption and less than one-thirtieth on non-consumption items such as life insurance, house mortgage, car payments or weddings — which, in practice, means they do without most of these things.

It is in the inner city of Kingston and Spanish Town that one finds the 'garrison' communities where the largest number of homicides takes place. As is commonly acknowledged, violence in the country has its roots in partisan politics and the regular use of thuggery by Jamaica's two main political parties from the 1940s on. In the 1980s and 1990s, the proliferation of youth gangs, gun distribution and hard drugs sent back home from Northern cities by Jamaican *posses* and *yardies* added to the partisan arsenal of the previous decades.

Today party loyalties remain strong, although intolerance of opposed views has weakened among the youth. Turf wars continue, however, and the connection between political bosses and criminal area leaders known as *dons* persists, creating marked 'areas of exclusion' in parts of Kingston and Spanish Town. These are the critical constituencies termed 'garrisons'.

Clearly, the cultural and social exclusion that is at the core of Jamaica's violence goes back centuries. The entire history of the island, from slavery up to the present, has been one long struggle of the African majority for their rightful place in society.

Even now, primary and secondary schools continue to privilege the white- and brown-skinned minority, while the Jamaican language has only recently begun to be treated as a socially acceptable vehicle of expression. Exclusion extends to health care, where the poor have to endure long hours in out-patient clinics and months of waiting for treatment. The legal system inherited from the British maintains a heavy bias against many traditional

African customs, for instance on property. Exclusion is also rampant in the way ghetto people are treated by the police — with a death toll of 140 to 150 a year up to 2003, two-thirds of them reported as 'executions'. While pressure from human rights groups and the adoption of 'community policing' have brought some improvements, police treatment of poor people as 'second-class' citizens remains, including killings under the pretext of a shoot-out.

By and large, exclusion from the labor market has fallen hardest on the youth, their unemployment running at over 30% in 2004 compared to a ten-year average of 14.8% for 1995-2004, inclusive of adults. In inner city communities the idle jobless number over 60 out of every 100, with young women among the hardest hit. This state of affairs is not just seen in straight income terms but, above all, as discrimination, as hurtful disrespect by the wider society.

The worst damage of this spiral of exclusion and violence is felt at the level of the family. So many parents have migrated, so many women become single mothers prematurely and so many males have multiple partners and do not offer the needed father figure that children are being thrust without love and guidance into a maelstrom of violence.

It is no wonder, then, that male youth, well backed up by women drawn to dependence on those known as gunmen, are both the chief perpetrators and the chief victims of the violence. About half of those arrested for major crimes in 2004 were from the age group of 16-25 years, and males of the same age accounted for 61.5% of the victims.

In a vicious circle, such violence has only deepened the exclusion faced by the poor, bringing down stigma and paralysis on inner city communities. Employers rely on stereotypes to reject applicants for jobs. Stigma drives out businesses, particularly with the recent turn to extortion to compensate for the lack of legitimate income. It also drives out more ambitious residents, leaving communities bereft of needed talent and leadership. Even worse is the blow to the social capital, solidarity and social life of communities.

The *crescendo* of murder that has gradually mounted in Jamaica must be seen as the direct consequence of the social exclusion thrust upon a large segment of the population. It is a form of protest, of suppressed rage.

Jamaicans, however, have never taken their marginalization with complete passivity. Dependence on hand-outs from politicians has long been combined with political demands for recognition and other assertions of independent identity. The latter have been most evident in the prevailing forms of family structure and religion, in reggae and dancehall music — and, not least, in an informal economy that now probably accounts for over 40% of Jamaica's GDP.

Lagos

by Kayode Ogunbunmi
The Guardian, Nigeria

In April 2005, state officials carried out a demolition exercise that cleared about 200 buildings at Makoko, a slum settlement in Lagos. The exercise was allegedly meant to upgrade the community and provide a better environment for its residents. Yet the gloom and despair of the newly homeless families were enough to judge their appreciation of government's decision. They knew they would get no new housing or compensation for their lost dwellings.

It was not the first time demolitions were carried out in the state. Already four other slums were destroyed this year, along with several stand alone shacks, shops and kiosks. Since 1985, public urban renewal programs have sought to upgrade slum communities by providing roads and drainage channels, along with schools, health clinics, water supply and electricity. Despite a stated aim of making cities more livable for their dwellers, urban renewal in Lagos has of late translated into an almost unbridled destruction of entire neighborhoods.

There is, in fact, a worrisome trend in most Nigerian cities that has turned demolitions into the most potent instrument for enforcing urban

planning laws. Most often, the people at the receiving end are the weakest — the poor, women, aged and children —, who usually receive no compensation for the destroyed property and the loss of earnings. Either they have no way of fighting for their rights or they are deemed to be illegal residents and simply denied reparation. Some are even fined for constituting 'public nuisance'.

Even in the United States where it initially developed, urban renewal was seen as a disastrous public program because it ends up destroying neighborhoods and reducing available low cost housing. Typical of such programs is the clearing of slums through the demolition of sub-standard buildings and the construction of low and middle income housing projects. At best, where a program is followed through, the mere replacement of old buildings with new structures rarely leads to the elimination of slum conditions.

The experience has been no different in Nigeria. In a place like Lagos where government participation in housing provision is weak, displaced people typically end up relocating to other slums because they cannot afford the rate for the new housing units.

The urban poor, who are now dominant in Lagos and elsewhere in the country, are transforming the city to meet their needs, often in conflict with official laws and plans. They are just interested in solving their problems of accommodation and employment, which they try to do on their own terms. According to official estimates, only 20% to 40% of the physical development in Nigerian cities is carried out with formal government approval. Inadequate oversight of buildings and shoddy handling of building permits create additional problems for the poor, including the collapse of housing structures that causes them a major loss of assets.

The Nigerian Land Use Decree was introduced in 1978, ostensibly to facilitate speedy and equitable access to land for development. The decree vested the proprietorship and control of all land in the state. In practice, the procedure for obtaining and developing land became excessively bureaucratized

and riddled with corruption. The resulting restrictions on the availability of land, especially for the poor, have encouraged the unrelenting growth of irregular settlements on the fringes of towns or on vacant public land.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Lagos. Despite being one of the smallest states in Nigeria, it remains the country's industrial and commercial center. Its population of over 12 million has been steadily on the rise so that Lagos is projected to become one of the world's five largest cities this year.

Some of its problems include over-crowding and a growing stress on the city's infrastructure as a result of migration from rural areas. Lagos also features a poor solid waste disposal system, inadequate provision of amenities and unregulated planning, which has led to haphazard development, flooding and erosion. A large number of its residents are engaged in informal activities. Most live in the poor districts and squatter settlements of the city.

It is then little wonder that government should be overwhelmed. Since the early days of independence, the informal sector has been the main provider of urban land and housing in the country. The pressure to provide accommodation for the rising number of city dwellers is compounded by official ineptitude and graft. Weaknesses in government planning controls, and the haphazard developments associated with the informal sector, have created disorderly and unhealthy urban environments.

Yet it was not until 1991 that Nigeria adopted its first urban development policy, although nothing was done to implement it until the end of that decade. The policy turned out to be heavily tilted against the poor. Many of its components, such as access to mortgage banks and land deeds, were unaffordable to the poor because of their meager earnings and, ironically, their inability to use their property as collateral for loans that could help them formalize their tenancy.

The challenge for city planners, therefore, revolves around supporting and regulating the urban sector so as to promote employment for the poor, ensure a safe and healthy environment for its most vulnerable residents, and guarantee their 'right to the city'. At the same time, urban planners must foster environmental awareness and find ways of containing the negative impact of some activities carried out by the urban poor but without disrupting their livelihoods or causing social distress.

This is not being done. Even though people are said to be the main focus of renewal programs, they are hardly consulted before implementation and seldom play a role in it. Indeed, one of the main drawbacks of urban renewal in Lagos is the total lack of participation by those affected. Often the first thing residents know about government plans to 'renew' their community is a quit notice, followed by the razing or burning of their property. Demolitions are carried out swiftly and punitively, with no offer of compensation for disrupted lives and broken homes.

After a slum is cleared, there are usually no relocations for the displaced. So the absence of resettlement plans following demolition has made people wonder whether the whole purpose of the program is any other than pushing them back from land that has suddenly appreciated. The fact that well-connected companies sometimes connive with government officials to purchase land from under the feet of long-standing tenants has only lent support to this view.

Yet it is wishful to expect the poor to vacate the cities and return to farming in the hinterlands to feed themselves and city dwellers. Officials might rather realize that the path to urban sustainability lies in developing more inclusive and socially equitable cities. This would not only involve efforts to upgrade slums, provide affordable housing and improve the security of land and housing tenure for the poor, but to strengthen urban local governance as well.

Without these actions, pressures on over-burdened cities will continue unabated, and the poor will suffer most. ■

From housing provision to infrastructure to public security, ill conceived plans or outright neglect by government cause lasting damage to the urban poor.

by Caroline O. N. Moser,
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City Violence and the Poor

Induced by growing perceptions of violence, fear and insecurity are reshaping the urban space of many large cities in the developing world.

As the rich retreat to fortified enclaves, the poor become increasingly isolated in their segregated neighborhoods — fearful of random violence, vulnerable to the erosion of key livelihood assets, and often fending for themselves owing to the state's failure to protect them.

Violence and crime are hugely detrimental to well-being, and demand urgent and innovative approaches to curb them.

In many nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, urban violence has become so ubiquitous that it is now rightly considered to be a major development constraint. Not only does violence affect people's health and well-being, but it also has a devastating impact on the social fabric and economic prospects of entire cities.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the range of researchers, policy makers and practitioners focusing on the issue of violence, fear and insecurity has expanded in the past decade beyond the traditional disciplines — criminology, social work and psychology — and today includes economists, sociologists, political scientists, transport planners, architects and community workers.

Along with this change has come a growing recognition that violence is not merely a problem of individual criminal pathology, but a complex, dynamic and multi-layered phenomenon that shapes people's lives in multiple ways. Violence forces girls and young women to drop out of night school to avoid streets that are no longer safe after dark. It erodes the assets and livelihood sources of the poor, compromising their ability to improve their life chances. And it instills fear and insecurity into the daily lives of city residents, undermining social trust and increasing the fragmentation of the urban space and the isolation of its people.

Although accelerating rates of violence and crime are by no means an urban specific problem, they are particularly severe in many large cities of the developing world. In Latin America, cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo account for more than half the total homicides nationwide, and so do Mexico, Lima or Caracas. Indeed, the sheer scale of violence in many poor urban areas and slums is such that it has become normalized into daily life, provoking references to 'failed cities' and 'cities of chaos' to describe the loss of control by public bodies and the victimization of urban residents.

It is hard to ascertain the spread of urban violence accurately. Mortality statistics, often used as proxies, are notoriously unreliable due to under-reporting and difficulties in interpreting the data. The most commonly used indicator of violent crime, the homicide rate, disregards non-fatal violence and usually includes both intentional and unintentional deaths, such as from car accidents. National and regional differences in data collection methods, recall periods and cultural definitions of crime and violence further complicate comparisons across countries.

Despite these limitations, it is a fact that cross-country differences in homicide rates can be quite striking, ranging from 6.4 per 100,000 in Buenos Aires to 248 per 100,000 in Medellín in the year 2000. While less pronounced, there may be sharp contrasts even among cities within the same nation. In Brazil, for instance, the homicide rate in São Paulo rose by 103% between 1979 and 1998 — three times as fast as in Rio de Janeiro.

Within individual countries, urban growth is generally a stronger indicator of crime rates than city size. Intra-city variations, in turn, are often linked to neighborhood income levels. Crime related to property is typically more common in prosperous areas, while lower income districts tend to concentrate severe violence, especially in a city's marginal periphery where the grim living conditions of the poor serve to heighten the potential for crime and conflict.

Levels of violence also vary greatly by age and gender. By and large, young men are most likely to be both the main

perpetrators *and* the main victims. The estimated homicide rate among men aged 15-24 in Brazil was 86.7 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1999, compared to only 6.5 for women of the same age. Even in countries with much lower levels, not only is male juvenile violence mounting but so is its intensity.

It is nonetheless useful to distinguish between *structural* causes and *trigger* risk factors when analyzing urban violence. The former largely reflect unequal power relations (whether based on class, gender, ethnicity, territory or identity), while the latter refer to situational circumstances that can exacerbate the likelihood of violence occurring. For instance, drug and alcohol use can be a trigger for gang brutality or gender-based abuse, but it is important to discern the underlying structural factors behind such violence no matter what its triggers might be.

One also has to acknowledge that no single cause determines or explains urban violence. While poverty has long been considered to be among its chief determinants, this relationship has recently been challenged as being too simplistic. Interpretations based on statistical modeling have shown that, with regard to national level data on murder rates, inequality tends to have greater influence than poverty, with income disparities characteristically being more marked in urban than rural areas. Bouts of violence have likewise been associated with the implementation of structural adjustment programs, as well as with processes of globalization and democratization.

In reality, poverty and inequality frequently overlap to generate conditions in which acts of violence become more likely. Of great consequence in this regard are the *spatial* dangers so prevalent in city peripheries, where unsafe places such as unlit or isolated lanes, bus stops and public latrines become ripe with physical assault, rape, robbery. The presence of such places usually reflects poor infrastructure or design, and the fact that the urban poor have to commute long distances to work early in the morning or late at night only enhances their exposure to being assaulted.

Urban violence: Definitions and categories

Violence is usually defined as the use of physical force, which causes hurt to others in order to impose one's wishes. It almost invariably entails the exercise of power to legitimize the use of force for specific gains. Broader definitions of the term extend beyond physical violence to include psychological harm, material deprivation as well as symbolic disadvantage.

For purposes of designing interventions to prevent or reduce its incidence, it is useful to distinguish between different types of urban violence according to its more common manifestations and perpetrators. One such typology would distinguish between political, institutional, economic and social violence.

Much *social* violence is linked to gender power relations, such as intimate-partner violence and child abuse inside the home as well as sexual abuse in the public arena. Social violence further includes ethnic and territorial or identity-based violence linked to gangs. *Economic* violence, motivated by material gain, is associated with street crime, including mugging, robbery and criminal acts linked to drugs and kidnapping. Closely related is *institutional* violence, perpetrated by state institutions, especially the police and judiciary, but also by officials in sector ministries such as health and education, as well as groups operating outside the state such as social cleansing vigilante groups. Finally, *political* violence includes guerrilla or paramilitary conflict and political assassination, often associated with a context of armed struggle or war but present during peacetime as well.

Since violence is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon, it is clear that there can be no hard boundaries between the different types described here. In reality, our four categories represent an interrelated continuum with close linkages between them.

Whatever its causes, it is undeniable that violence has a dramatic impact on people's well-being. Even if perceptions of fear cannot be properly captured in statistics, they fundamentally affect the livelihood security of the poor and their ability to access resources for survival, as well as the functioning of local social institutions. The spatial, economic and social constraints imposed by street crime and endemic violence, and the uncertainty they generate, pervade people's lives, with serious implications for the various assets and capabilities that underpin their livelihood strategies.

Violence, in fact, erodes financial assets through its drain on criminal justice services and the health care system, as well as decreased investment and rising institutional costs. It has a huge impact on victims' human capital, through reductions in life expectancy, educational opportunities and productivity in the workplace. And by reducing social contact and trust among city dwellers, violence weakens social capital too. It isolates the poor in their segregated neighborhoods and the rich in their gated communities, perpetuating a fear of the 'other' and thus contributing to the social, economic and political fragmentation of urban areas.

This fragmentation has intensified with recent increases in kidnapping for ransom and vehicle robbery as against vehicle theft, which have heightened insecurity among the wealthier population in cities throughout the world. Panic stricken, the rich react by cutting themselves off from the poor, whom they see as the main culprits.

Residential fortification is one of many fear-management strategies through which they try to cope with the anxiety generated by a perception of rising criminality. In some cases, the urban space is being so reconfigured that it is leading to the emergence of what has been called a 'networked community' of wealthy residents who are somehow dis-embedded from the city, their fortified residences linked to a constellation of shopping malls through a sophisticated transport network of highways and

roundabouts. It is as though parts of the city were 'lifted out' so that they are increasingly alien from the rest of the metropolis — spatially and socially apart from the sprawling, chaotic, impoverished mass of its residents.

For the urban poor, the ensuing socio-spatial exclusion and the ever-present fear stemming from random violence are compounded by an almost unqualified distrust of the state's capacity to control or prevent criminal behavior, and the structural problems associated with existing police and judiciary systems. The lack of confidence in the public security system has led to a rapid expansion of informal, non-state mechanisms of social control that include revenge violence, vigilante crime and other extra-judicial forms of justice. These self-help community responses may serve to maintain social cohesion and mitigate conflict, but at the cost of generating perverse forms of social capital.

The perceived failure of the public forces to protect the citizens has also led to the proliferation of private security measures, with state authorities either contracting or condoning private firms to conduct public policing. But the resulting *privatization* of security offers solutions that focus more on the rich than the poor, at the same time undermining efforts to develop adequate policing solutions.

Effective solutions must recognize that as much as the spatial consequences of urban crime and violence differ from one place to another, so too do socially constructed thresholds of tolerance and perceptions about acceptable levels or types of violence.

It is typical, for example, to find a strict distinction between *public* and *private* spaces that serves to render much of women's victimization invisible. The demarcation between citizen security and issues of intra-family violence normally means that gang violence is unacceptable, while that taking place among intimate partners is tolerated. This is so despite the fact that gendered violence occurs in both the public and the private spheres. It is not space *per se* that matters, but rather the *cultural norms* regulating gender relations that

minimize and naturalize abusive behavior of that sort. Effective prevention thus demands a close examination of how, and when, a society responds — or fails to respond — to specific manifestations of violence in different realms.

Difficult as it is, assessing the costs of violence is equally important for policy making. Probably the greatest progress has been made with regard to estimates of *direct* economic costs, such as the associated losses due to deaths and disabilities (or 'transferals' from property crimes) as a percentage of, for instance, GDP. Such measurements can help to assess the impact of crime on both individuals and society, allowing for a comparison with the costs of other social ills — with important policy implications in terms of cost-benefit assessments.

But in many contexts, measurement is constrained by the lack of access to information on expenditures incurred by the police, the judiciary, the penal system and even the armed forces. And there are many *indirect* costs as well, for individual victims as well as society as a whole, which are intangible and for which no reliable quantitative data exist.

So the realization that quantitative methodologies fail to reflect people's daily encounters with violence has encouraged the use of qualitative techniques in recent years. These have proved invaluable in eliciting people's perceptions of fear and insecurity. Similarly, incorporating specific questions on these topics into broader household surveys could help address some of the existing measurement problems, providing a low-cost way to procure data that is probably more accurate than police records.

This would certainly provide a stronger information basis for policy initiatives aimed at preventing or reducing urban crime and violence, which have become a 'growth industry' in the last few years. There are now numerous policy approaches to tackle these problems, many of which deliberately target the urban poor. They range from sector specific interventions, such as using the criminal justice system to control and treat economic violence or the public

Increasingly, policies seeking to improve living conditions in urban areas will need to tackle the thorny issue of violence.

health approach aimed at prevention, to more integrated strategies seeking to prevent crime and improve citizen security through urban renewal, as well as spatial and environmental design.

But, to date, there has been little rigorous evaluation of the efficacy of these various approaches, despite a wide recognition that there can be no magic bullets or one-off solutions to curb or prevent city violence. This has led to an expectation that a diversity of strategies, used in varying combinations in different places, will together achieve the desired outcome. Some approaches clearly work better than others, and some are more appropriate in settings where other interventions would likely fail.

At the same time, rising concern with political and institutional violence has brought issues of human rights to the forefront. There is, as a result, a broadening consensus about the crucial importance of consulting community residents in designing appropriate solutions — whether it means drawing on young people's perceptions about solutions for gang warfare or promoting partnerships between the police and local communities.

Missing still are efforts to confront and incorporate the issue of fear into violence prevention and reduction strategies. Locally grounded approaches to rebuild trust and social capital at the community level are equally in need of development. Ultimately, though, these may provide a crucial mechanism for redressing the impact of violence on the lives and livelihoods of the poor in cities around the world.

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Spatial Segregation and the Hardening of Poverty

Poverty in Montevideo has more than doubled since the mid-1990s — from 9% to 21% of households between 1994 and 2003.

As important, though, has been the progressive weakening of the links tying low-skilled workers to formal labor markets, which has been accompanied by a growing segmentation in the demand for and quality of public services and a noticeable concentration of low-income families in 'pockets' with high density of material deprivation.

Both processes are changing the social and urban landscape of the city in a manner that, left unchecked, can have long-term effects on the very fabric of Uruguayan society.

Historically, the city of Montevideo has had relatively low levels of poverty and inequality and a fair degree of social cohesion among its residents. This, however, is changing rapidly.

Like other countries in the region, Uruguay has been going through intense economic restructuring in recent decades. The demise of import substitution and the retreat of the state, together with erratic and modest overall economic growth, have slowed down the pace of job creation, particularly in the public and manufacturing sectors, traditionally two important sources of jobs. These changes have been accompanied by an expansion of services, where wages and employment conditions differ markedly across occupations, as well as a rapid incorporation of technology in the most dynamic productive areas.

The combined result of these changes has been a decline in the demand for low-skilled work, an increase in under-employment and unemployment, and a widening of the gap in pay and working conditions among workers with different qualifications. Absent a well developed welfare regime, the spread of irregular and precarious jobs is impacting negatively on the urban poor, undermining their ability to accumulate tangible and intangible assets that could help them gain access to critical qualifications, services and entitlements.

Greater occupational instability among the urban poor is being reinforced by two other processes that are profoundly altering the social morphology of many South American cities. I am referring to the growing *segmentation* in the demand for and utilization of public services, and the *polarization* of the urban space into ever more socially homogeneous areas. Unlike changes in the labor market, these two processes may be harder to reverse once they become firmly established.

In fact, widening income differentials do not automatically translate into increasing social distance among city dwellers. But once better off families stop consuming public services and turn to the market for their education, health, security or transportation, the services they leave behind, which now cater mostly to the poor, lose an important constituency and begin to deteriorate. The resulting quality gap between public and private services is not the only problem, though. As the middle class deserts the public schools, hospitals and squares, these cease to provide a space where people from different backgrounds can interact as *equals* — and the scope of concerns that were previously perceived as common becomes narrower.

Segmentations in the labor market and the use of publicly provided services are having a visible expression in the novel fragmentation of the urban space. Since the 1980s, Montevideo has seen unprecedented changes in the spatial distribution of households from different income groups. Large numbers of urban poor fled the city center to settle in the periphery, where irregular settlements expanded notably. At the same time, middle and upper class families moved to exclusive areas to the east of the city, increasing the physical and social distance separating the haves and the have-nots.

This phenomenon is certainly not new to Montevideo. Starting in the 1950s, rural folk who migrated to the capital settled in the city's outskirts where they established precarious settlements known as *cantegril*. By then, the urban landscape was already punctuated by a number of solidly working-class and other low-income neighborhoods that had developed since the early days of industrialization. But the current process of spatial segregation differs from the past, not only in its intensity but in other key aspects.

Intra-urban residential mobility and socio-spatial polarization
Montevideo, 1985-1996 (%)

Neighborhoods	Population dynamics*		
	Net out-migration	Stable	Net in-migration
By social composition **			
Low	4.8	22.2	69.6
Medium	38.1	38.9	21.7
High	57.1	38.9	8.7
By social risk ***			
Low	57.1	38.9	4.3
Medium	33.3	44.4	26.1
High	9.5	16.7	69.6

* Percentage of neighborhoods, classified according to the changes in the number of residents from 1985 to 1996.
** Measured by the share of high-status occupations among residents (professionals, managers, etc).
*** Based on indicators of teenage pregnancy, schooling gap and dropout rates among children aged 8-15, and youngsters who are neither studying nor working or seeking employment.

Social isolation of the urban poor

Life in the new urban slums does not revolve around work, as it did in the traditional working-class districts whose residents shared a sense of identity and loyalty that arose from a commonality of interests and life experiences at work and at home. Nor do the slums reveal the dense web of local associations and small-scale businesses that characterized many mixed low-income neighborhoods in the past. And unlike the rural migrants who were pulled into the city by the prospects of a better life and saw their residence in a *cantegril* as temporary, today's irregular settlements are largely inhabited by people who, after having acquired the habits and aspirations typical of an urban lifestyle, are being pushed out in a context of downward mobility. Their physical move to the periphery represents a step towards social exclusion, rather than a springboard into full citizenship.

It is perhaps unsurprising that families on low and irregular incomes should cluster into the poorer areas of the city. But once there, it seems that their very concentration in spatially segregated neighborhoods with poor services and high material deprivation makes it harder for them to obtain stable jobs.

Our own research in Montevideo shows that, whether young or adult, male or female, people who have completed 11 years of study have a higher incidence of unemployment, or self-employment in precarious jobs lacking social protection, if they live in a poor neighborhood than in other parts of the city. The social make-up of the place of residence also appears to be a stronger predictor of the probability of a youngster being out of school *and* out of work than the educational level of his family.

Unemployment is higher in the irregular settlements around the city. So is the spread of self-employment in informal activities and of precarious jobs with limited or no social protection. These are the areas that have exhibited the greatest demographic growth of the last two decades. They are also the ones that cluster the greatest number of spatial disadvantages: lack of critical services and infrastructure, a high density of poor households, and an above-average incidence of social ills such as teenage pregnancy and out-of-school youth who are neither working nor seeking a job.

Exploring the impact of *residence* on poverty is a new area of inquiry in the region. But initial findings from research suggest that the *neighborhood* does exert an independent effect on people's chances of moving out of poverty. The mechanisms at work are many and reinforce each other. Accessing good jobs is harder for those who live on the city periphery, who may rather take lowly paid jobs closer to home to avoid the high costs of transport to and from work, in time as well as cash. Meanwhile, employment opportunities in the vicinity are rare, since the spatial clustering of poorly endowed households on one location conspires against the emergence of viable economic ventures. The few family businesses that exist mostly rely on unpaid family labor, so they cannot be counted upon as a source of remuneration or experience that might ease someone's entry into the labor force.

For a growing number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, the lack of formal, stable jobs heralds a slow but steady erosion of the role 'work' has traditionally played in Uruguay's relatively open society — a channel for social mobility and integration, a source of self-esteem and identity, as well as a promoter of *citizenship*. The physical concentration of working-age people with little hope of advancement through gainful employment can breed a strong feeling of relative deprivation among those who, no longer able to partake in the urban lifestyle into which they were socialized, see a widening chasm between their symbolic and their material satisfaction of the consumption patterns and aspirations associated with it. Their location in areas with high levels of material want also limits the development of neighborhood associations and reciprocity networks, precisely at a time when their role as informal safety nets could prove most valuable.

As the new urban poor crowd into highly deprived areas and their links with the labor market turn weaker and more unstable, they are becoming increasingly isolated from the rest of society. In a
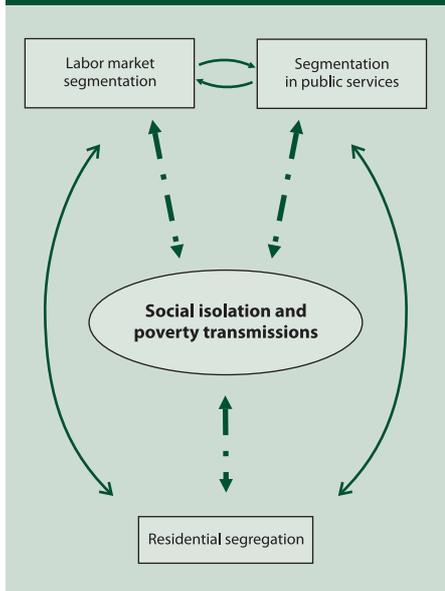
context of declining economic opportunity, neighbors seldom provide an effective source of help for obtaining a job or information for accessing services and training opportunities. At the same time, the physical and social distance between the spatially segregated poor and their better off counterparts in other neighborhoods deprives them of vital connections that could otherwise be put to gainful use, while the 'flight' of those who can afford to leave robs these communities — mostly the youth — of much needed *role models* who could provide a living example of the positive association between work and achievement. Finally, the shallowness of local institutions weakens the mechanisms for informal social control in the localities where they live, undermining basic rules of conviviality among neighbors.

Community trust may eventually break down. The public and personal insecurity that follows will have the effect of further restricting people's mobility, their choice of occupations and their efforts to mobilize household labor, forcing them to divert key resources away from income generation into unproductive uses, such as looking after the house, assets or children who can no longer be left unattended.

It is in this milieu that an alternative set of norms seeps in. It is one that questions the normative and behavioral codes which, in the eyes of those with little hope for the future, have failed to prevent the exclusion and isolation that permeate their lives. Thus emerge the most disruptive, self-reproducing traits of poverty — the *ghetto* subcultures that not only express the precarious living conditions of the new urban poor but create additional obstacles for their integration into society.

These subcultures are a natural corollary of the gradual build-up of adaptive responses to the experience of severe hardship and persistent unemployment, the lack of successful role models and reasonable expectations of social mobility, and the weakening of local mechanisms for self-regulation, all of which make the residents of these communities more susceptible to the codes and norms prevailing in their immediate environment. Yet, in a vicious

circle, the crystallization of codes and norms so alien from those that regulate behaviors in 'mainstream society' will affect the public image of these neighborhoods and foster the creation of *stigma*, especially when perceived as tolerant of illicit activities.

Even those who reject resorting to illegal means in their quest for the elusive goals of consumerism are increasingly prone to be perceived as being at odds with the norms sanctioned by society. As a result, an exclusionary stigma is collectively imposed upon everyone who happens to live in such segregated places. By erecting a barrier to the accumulation of assets that might help them escape poverty, the growing social isolation of the urban poor thus sets the ground for a 'hardening' of poverty for the present and future generations.

Ominously, the current economic climate in the region seems to promote the development of areas that resemble *urban ghettos*. These are places where the chances of accumulating useful social capital for obtaining a job become narrower, where insecurity precludes the mobilization of household labor, and where stigma and discrimination conspire against those who seek to progress through a regular job. They are places inhabited by people expelled from other areas of the city, as well as those who cannot afford to leave — a *residual* population living in ever more precarious conditions.

As the disparities between socially homogenous neighborhoods deepen, so will the gaps in the quality of social services, infrastructure and amenities, drawing even sharper contrasts between the localities that house the poor and the rest of the city. Worse, the decay of public spaces due to the overlapping segmentations in the labor market, the use of public services and the urban space is bound to weaken feelings of empathy and moral obligation towards the least advantaged, which must be constantly renewed to remain active. By limiting the frequency of interactions, the growing physical and social distance between poor and non-poor may end up reducing society's aversion to inequality and making it less likely that

Public policy must not only seek to alleviate poverty, but also incorporate socially those who are being left behind.

better-off families will care for the poverty around them.

The segregated urban poor may therefore become the paradigmatic case of *social exclusion*. There are those who will resist it — and eventually succeed. Many others won't, resigning themselves to their fate as 'second class' citizens. Consequently, the progressive polarization of space along class lines seems to portend a worsening of the extreme disparities that already characterize so many cities in Latin America.

To arrest these trends, public policy in the region must go beyond current notions of poverty as resulting merely from the vagaries of the economic cycle. It can no longer be assumed that improving the living conditions of the poor would, by itself, enable them to become full participants in society. It is only now that the problem of residential segregation and how it affects social integration are entering the urban research agenda. So as notions of *exclusion*, *disenfranchisement*, *isolation* and the like gain currency in contemporary accounts of poverty, so too does it become more pressing to understand how economic process and social morphology combine and interact to fragment the urban space, congeal social relations and erect barriers to equity and citizenship.

It is this perverse interaction between *work* and *space* that public policy must address if it is to promote more cohesive and integrated societies. The notion of an *open city* — a city open to all — should serve as a guiding principle for efforts to not only address poverty, but also respond to the demands for incorporation of its excluded groups.

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Rubén Kaztman y Alejandro Retamoso, **"Segregación espacial, empleo y pobreza** **en Montevideo",** *Revista CEPAL* **no. 85, 2005.**

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Recasting Urban Power Relations

Since it first emerged in the 1960s, community mobilization by poor informal settlers has changed the political dynamic in many large Philippine cities.

Now, city officials can no longer neglect the demands of the urban poor when they are organized. At the forefront of this movement have been women — fighting for their rights, pressing for reform, demanding better services for their communities.

The reality of urban poverty assaults the senses of those who venture near the many shanty settlements of Philippine cities. Those who enter the maze of paths, alleys and wooden walkways over low-lying swamps discover another kind of city. There, hundreds of families live in flimsy houses, crowded in densely packed neighborhoods that mix physically degraded settings with a wide array of productive small-scale enterprises.

These are the people who represent some one-third of the population of large Philippine cities. Metro Manila alone, with its 14 cities and three municipalities, accounts for over half of the 8.4 million informal settlers nationwide.

Whether tucked away in pockets of land dispersed throughout the metropolis or all too visible on large tracts of public land invaded long ago, informal settlers nonetheless easily disappear in urban statistics. Rarely do the latter disaggregate urban populations so as to identify informal settlers separately from the rest of the population. Urban figures rather tend to merge the wealthy with the poor in urban-rural comparisons of income, health, education, clean water and other basic features. The emerging skewed averages thus hide the depth of poverty existing in the shantytowns, where most of the city's poor live.

To this day, many city maps still show open spaces for areas in which thousands of poor settler families have actually lived for years. But because they are residing on the land illegally, elites and officials dismiss as unjustified their claims to secure tenure, basic services or other benefits.

The exclusion of poor people from serious planning circles persists until the day they assert their rights and demand recognition. In the Philippines, this urban awakening came about largely through community organizing.

Informal settlers began to organize in the mid-1960s, in response to a government plan to demolish the homes of thousands of poor families in the Tondo foreshore area and relocate its 180,000 residents to a site 40 km from the city. Despite the repression of the Marcos authoritarian regime, a group of non-governmental activists and progressive Catholic leaders convinced the foreshore residents to form the Zone One Tondo Organization, or ZOTO, a federation of mass-based neighborhood organizations that would oppose government plans to convert the narrow strip of land along Manila Bay into a modern container pier, with upper income housing units, commercial buildings and small-scale industry.

Through the use of popular education and social mobilization tactics backed by marches and rallies, ZOTO would manage to recast unequal power relations between government and people. It would help Tondo residents to identify, prioritize and mobilize around local problems, linking them with national issues while resisting outside manipulation and rejecting dependency attitudes in favor of democratic and egalitarian modes of collective action.

Hundreds of meetings and many mobilizations later, Tondo's occupants had succeeded in pressuring the government to grant them titles or leasehold rights to land onsite or nearby, upgrade their community and guarantee basic services on terms negotiated with the government and the World Bank. The participatory processes demanded by ZOTO — always with the latent threat of protest mobilizations — yielded program and policy solutions that were mutually worked out between people and government.

Many positive developments over the intervening twenty years have shown the efficacy of community organizing in enabling marginalized people to gain recognition of their rights and dignity — and claim a fair share of resources and power. Had urban informal settlers not mobilized to confront recalcitrant officials, criticize unresponsive institutions and put forth their own solutions, many pro-poor programs that national and city governments are currently implementing would likely not have come into being. Those programs range from fostering land rights and providing basic services, information and participation in decision-making to a host of income, employment, health insurance and micro-credit schemes for the poor.

A product of intense grassroots lobbying, the Urban Development and Housing Law of 1992 has opened up more just and humane opportunities for urban shelter. Forced evictions now prove difficult for government to undertake unless acceptable and nearby relocation sites have been agreed upon by those threatened with displacement. More distant resettlement communities may only be considered if they build in alternative income opportunities, affordable transportation, school facilities, potable water, health services, electricity, and other amenities.

Although some local governments still ride roughshod over informal settlers, especially if they are not well organized and cannot articulate their points of view effectively, officials are now much more aware that unwillingness to listen to and address some of their needs may lead to defeat in the next election. Accountability of city politicians to their constituent voters is emerging as a reality that must be taken seriously.

It is noteworthy that, all along, women have been at the forefront of community organizing, from the early ZOTO era to today. Although men participate and take on leadership positions, it is the women in poor communities who most avidly join and lead local efforts to improve their localities.

It is women who have to face hungry children when there is no food, nurse them back to health, or explain why they cannot join the school outing or buy lunch for lack of pocket money. It is women who press for street lights, mindful that a daughter walking home along dark alleys after work or night school is an easy target for rape. It is they who bear the brunt of violence from a drunken or angry husband and seek change. Since, by virtue of their child-minding roles, many women are home or neighborhood bound or engage in petty trade at the fringes of their settlements, they possess an intimate knowledge of local life — and strongly held aspirations for bettering their community.

It comes as no surprise, then, that women appear the most motivated to press for reform and act. Women can generally be counted on to struggle for land, housing and other assets. They are the first to demand better services and press for income and employment opportunities in their communities. The results of their engagement emerge in their own sense of efficacy, the meaning and direction in their lives, and their ability to manage the family when a husband dies or abandons them.

Perhaps women's strengths derive from their greater optimism about the future, compared to poor men. Yet, even as they forge ahead, Filipino women make an effort not to leave their husbands behind, aware that men's positive self-images must also be strong.

As time passes and people's experiences sharpen, their capacity to tackle broader policy issues for justice and redistribution grows. Much still has to be done, but the seeds for social transformation have already been planted.

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Mary Racelis, "Begging, requesting, demanding, negotiating: Moving toward urban poor partnerships in governance", in Nabeel Hamdi, ed., *Urban Futures* (2005).

Targeting children in informal settlements

More than their richer urban counterparts, poor children are likely to begin life as low-birth-weight babies susceptible to the many diseases endemic to poverty. Diarrhea, typhoid fever and cholera come from contaminated water and food, dengue fever from mosquitoes breeding in stagnant canals, and respiratory diseases from leaking roofs and drafts blowing through perforated cardboard walls. The high levels of infant and child mortality and morbidity attest to the degraded environments where they live.

Measles and tuberculosis spread quickly in crowded shanties and densely populated neighborhoods. All too common there are infected cuts from broken glass and cans, festering sores untreated for lack of medicine or nerve ailments from dumpsite fumes — and, for young street vendors and scavengers, permanent disabilities from vehicle accidents or garbage slides. Those who beat the odds and reach adolescence face new threats to their well-being in the form of gang warfare and drugs.

Of the estimated 240,000 street children in 22 major Philippine cities, most return home each night. But the rest join gangs of children and youth who spend day and night on the street, banding together for protection and emotional support. To this street population have recently been added push cart families and sleeping-space renters, who settle down on city sidewalks once the shops have closed.

Yet even if city governments wanted to target poor children for program benefits, they would be hard pressed to do so because data on living conditions is so woefully inadequate at the *barangay* or community level. In the 1990s, a promising attempt to gather data on *minimum basic needs* flourished so long as local officials and communities used them in programming for children. But the experiment ended as soon as the national government lost interest.

Thus, there is no way city officials can identify children in need or ascertain whether their interventions make a difference. Targeting, monitoring progress and evaluating impact call for a sound database that allows follow-up assessments for comparisons over time. This is a crucial component of a genuine pro-poor program.

INSIGHT

Poverty and the Urban Agenda

by Anna Tibaijuka, UN-HABITAT

Confronting the unremitting urbanization of poverty requires a clean break with the fragmented and uncoordinated approaches to development planning of the past. Decentralization, participation, flexibility, innovation — these are some key ingredients of integrated development management at city level.

Equally important is to enforce the right of every citizen to secure housing and basic services, which will help prevent the proliferation of slums in coming decades.

Well over half of the world's population will live in urban and peri-urban areas by 2015, the target date for reaching the Millennium Development Goals. The majority of these people will be in developing countries and, if present trends continue, most will be living in slums without access to decent shelter, water and sanitation.*

The *urbanization of poverty* constitutes one of the major challenges of our times. Its underlying causes have been well documented — rapid and unprecedented urban growth, inequitable distribution of wealth, and the inability of the formal economy to create sufficient jobs, combined with the failure of public policy to ensure people's access to basic needs.

Slums, and the informal economy of which they are part, are the physical manifestation of urban poverty. It is ironic that the homes of the poor, which are not only their place of residence but also a potential source of earnings for many low income families, are seldom recognized as houses, which means they cannot be insured or used as collateral. Thus the largest single investment that most households make in their lifetime is, in the case of the urban poor, discounted as having no economic value.

The difficulty of providing housing for low income groups has long plagued rich and poor countries alike. Rapid urbanization has only worsened the problems that have beset a whole range of strategies in the past, from subsidized public housing to inner city rehabilitation, and from sites and services to slum upgrading. Yet access to land and security of tenure are critical for the integration of slums into the urban economy and the improvement of living conditions for their residents.

Tenure security, in particular, is commonly acknowledged as the first and most critical step towards slum improvement, but it is often hampered by the fact that most slums and informal settlements are deemed illegal. Interventions by public authorities to regularize or upgrade these settlements are politically sensitive as they could be interpreted as *de facto* recognition of the legal status of slums. This often leads to a vicious circle whereby slum dwellers are reluctant to improve their living environment in the absence of regular titles, while service providers are unwilling to assume the risk of investing in infrastructure. Slum dwellers end up paying dearly for their lack of access to basic amenities and services, both in economic terms and in terms of their health and lack of security. Those who are fortunate enough to run a small scale business have little or no access to formal credit, and are often subject to harassment and eviction.

Breaking from this vicious cycle requires a departure from conventional planning and decision making by sector towards more integrated policies aimed at promoting socially inclusive development. Legal and institutional frameworks and governance systems must be reshaped so as to include all spheres of government, local authorities and, especially, the urban poor as participants in devising any solution. Needed foremost are actions seeking to reduce existing inequities in housing security and access to services, and to plan and manage the growth of cities so as to prevent the proliferation of slums and unplanned settlements.

Achieving this will not be easy. In most developing countries, municipal authorities lack the flexibility and the instruments to link administrative decisions with physical planning for infrastructure, services and local development. Officials often compete for

resources, each operating according to their own logic and losing sight of how their decisions affect overall socio-economic and environmental conditions. This competition and the resulting fragmentation tend to exacerbate existing inefficiencies and inequities in access to vital services and amenities, with detrimental effects on the poor.

Decentralization and administrative reform can significantly strengthen the capacity of city officials to tackle these challenges, and should be a central component of a new agenda for effective urban governance. In recent years, for instance, participatory planning is proving to be effective in reducing poverty and stimulating local economic development by linking social, economic and environmental planning and management through the involvement of all stakeholders in government and society.

Already many countries and cities are devising innovative ways to relieve the plight of the urban poor. In *Brazil*, a pro-poor land act passed in Belo Horizonte has allowed tens of thousands of slum dwellers to obtain tenure security and regularize their status. Based on enabling federal legislation, the local authority suspends and relaxes planning laws and building standards on a temporary basis to facilitate housing improvements and land tenure regularization, thereby providing the space for slum dwellers to invest in their houses, comply with codes and standards, and gain legal recognition and title deeds.

Likewise, *China* has managed to curb the problems posed by high rates of urbanization and a real estate boom following the liberalization of its housing sector, which has largely bypassed those with limited income and savings. To ease their access to formal housing, cities like Chengdu and Baotou have adopted a 'dual track' policy of stimulating demand and supply through the combined use of equity grants for the poor and fiscal incentives for developers who provide affordable housing within a negotiated price range. This policy has put some six million housing units on the market each year, avoiding the formation of slums and the social ills often associated with low income housing projects that tend to evolve into urban ghettos over time.

South Africa, in turn, has revised its national policy and legal framework for water and sanitation so as to redress the imbalances inherited from *apartheid*. The new legislation complies with principles of fairness, equity and sustainability, with a view to ensuring universal access to basic water supply by 2008 and to basic sanitation by 2010. The strategy separates regulatory from operational functions, devolving management and decision making to the lowest administrative level consistent with the benefits of economies of scale. It also provides for the participation of civil society in planning and monitoring, and the private sector in assisting, rather than replacing, local authorities in water provision and management. Between 1994 and 2003, the reforms in South Africa had already expanded access to basic water supply from 60% to 86% of the country's population, and from 49% to 63% for basic sanitation.

Another good example comes from *Morocco*, where a participatory planning and budgeting exercise was successfully carried out in the city of Tétouan. Involving all spheres of government and the citizenry, the exercise resulted in the leveraging of resources for the implementation of a pro-poor investment plan, alongside a city poverty alleviation strategy that includes urban upgrading and local development initiatives. Important outcomes from this experience have been a more transparent and accountable process of decision making, a more responsive administrative and governance system, and a public that not only became better informed of the resource allocation process but was able to influence the decisions taken.

These experiences show how inclusive and integrated approaches to development planning and administration can make a noticeable difference on the ground. They confirm that decentralization and empowerment of adequately resourced local authorities can not only contribute to poverty reduction, but to a dynamic urban economy in which everyone has a stake. They suggest, in short, how we can keep the promise of the Millennium Declaration and ensure that every person, rich as well as poor, fully enjoys a 'right to the city'. ■

Slum population by region, 1990-2015 (in millions)

South Asia
199
276
345

East Asia
200
272
335

Sub-Saharan Africa
101
199
313

Latin America, Caribbean
111
134
153

North Africa, Middle East
50
68
85

Industrialized countries
42
47
50

Eastern Europe
19
19
18

■ 1990 ■ 2005 ■ 2015

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