

THREE ESSAYS ON URBAN GOVERNANCE AND HABITAT IN DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES

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This dissertation comprises three articles that discuss various concerns affecting urban governance and urban habitat in developing countries and regions. The articles are organized in chronological order. The first, *Uneasy Partnerships between City Hall and Citizens*, reviews a series of case study reports commissioned by the author between 1995 and 2001 during the later part of his tenure as a research coordinator at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva, Switzerland. The case studies characterized the forces propelling and constraints against achievements of multiple collaborations between Civil Society Organizations CSOs and local authorities in Chicago, East St. Louis, Ho Chi Minh City, Jinja, Johannesburg, Lima, Mumbai, and São Paulo. The periods covered by the individual studies vary, though several stretch as long as from 1990 to 2003. The second article in the collection is *Self-built Housing in Developing Countries: Current Contributions and Challenges to Local Development through Volunteerism*. The study drew on research stimulated by the UNRISD project and subsequent contacts with community organizations and local governments that developed and promoted innovative approaches to collective land occupation, housing construction, and management as community-building and political-awareness-raising exercises. The final essay in this collection, *Security of Housing Tenure in the People's Republic of China: Background, Trends, and Issues*, is an exploration of

emerging housing issues in the People's Republic of China. The main concern of the article is to begin to describe how ill-conceived and poorly implemented land and housing reforms since the late 1990s have increasingly accelerated the erosion of access to secure tenure to housing for low-income groups in both the rural and urban sectors. This rapid return of insecure housing tenure has occurred during a period of massive expansion of commercial housing and house ownership in urban China. Socio-spatial segregation and income inequality are hallmarks of this process.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

David Westendorff was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in October 1955. He attended parochial schools in that city from the third grade until he began his freshman year at Yale in 1973. At that point he stopped going to Mass regularly and put most of his efforts into just getting by in his studies. He decided to major in architecture at the beginning of his junior year, as it befit his uncertain approach to scholarship and gave him wide leeway in choosing courses. By the end of his junior year David calculated that he would not be able to make ends meet for his final year at Yale, so he applied to the Yale Five-Year BA program, which provided a travel grant and access to a full year's student loan. He took the travel grant, the loan, and his first step out of the USA in September 1976, having agreed to design a church in Piura, Peru, for an American Catholic missionary priest who had worked there for far too long. David's priestly patron took him to every town and city on Peru's northern coastal desert to see churches and furnishings that might be incorporated in the new church. David's eyes fell mostly on the stunningly poor living conditions that most of the residents of these towns experienced on a daily basis. Such conditions made the situations of some of America's poorest families, the descendents of sharecroppers who worked the land a few miles from David's comfortable suburban home in South Carolina, seem privileged. This realization distracted David from design work but kindled an interest in the problems of poverty and its makings.

David went back to Yale in the fall of 1977 with enough money, including a new loan and bumper summer's earnings from testing the welds inside ships that were being built to haul vast quantities of liquefied natural gas around the world. David finished his architecture degree—just, and then took another fellowship teaching English at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. There his interest in Asia bloomed, and eventually led him to enroll in the MA program in City and Regional Planning at

Cornell University in 1982, and then to depart for Shanghai in 1985 to do his doctoral dissertation research and find a wife before returning to Cornell in mid-1988.

Facing financial constraints again in mid-1990, David put down his dissertation in exchange for a paying job at Cornell, only to exchange it six months later for a temporary post as a research coordinator at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), where he spent the next decade. At UNRISD his principal preoccupations were first measurement and data for monitoring social development cross-nationally and then, from 1994 onward, urban governance issues as they affected low-income communities' efforts at self-development.

David left UNRISD in 2001 to return to China, where he worked as an independent consultant before founding in Shanghai in 2006 the public interest research and consulting company *urbanchina partners, llc*.

For LW, CGW & CRW.

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A second set of mentors also deserves thanks. These are my colleagues at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva, Switzerland, and especially Solon Barraclough, a former professor at Cornell and director of UNRISD who spent most of his retirement years advising UNRISD staff on ways to keep the social dimensions of development at the forefront of our analysis. Last but certainly not least among my intellectual benefactors are the team leaders of the UNRISD-UNV research projects on urban governance. Their patience in helping me understand the local context of their actions was the greatest single learning experience of my life to date.

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CHAPTER ONE:

UNEASY PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN CITY HALL AND CITIZENS¹

Background and Introduction

When the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat I, was held in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976, the design and implementation of programs and policies to address the problems of housing and human settlements were seen to be the almost exclusive responsibility of governments. At that time, it was still generally believed that rapid urbanization could be slowed and its negative effects mitigated. Contrary to these optimistic projections, urbanization has continued unabated in many parts of the world. By the beginning of the twenty-first century the majority of the world's population was already or would soon be living in cities, and by some estimates that proportion will increase to two-thirds by the year 2025. The number of megacities (cities with populations over 8 million), which are often characterized as “ungovernable” as a result of the seemingly intractable nature and concentration of social problems they encompass, grew from 2 in 1950 to 21 in 1990. Sixteen of these are in developing countries. By the year 2015, the number of megacities is expected to reach 33, 27 of which will be in developing countries.

Today civil society plays a crucial role in finding and implementing solutions to the problems of urbanization, and it appears that this role will only grow in the coming decades. People's organizations, such as community-based organizations (CBOs), grassroots movements, and volunteer groups at the very basis of civil society, see no future in permanent confrontation or competition with the state. Rather, they want a responsible and competent state at all levels—one that is responsive and

¹ This article draws largely on published and unpublished research and progress reports from the UNRISD-UNV project Volunteer Action and Local Democracy: A Partnership for a Better Urban Future.

accountable to the needs of all people. In many countries, achieving this will require reforms that strengthen local governments in ways that enable them to become better partners with local communities in implementing bottom-up development strategies. And, for such reforms to achieve optimal results, civil society organizations at the local level will have to be strengthened as well.

To address these needs a joint project was developed by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV): *Volunteer Action and Local Democracy: A Partnership for a Better Urban Future*. The goal was to identify the successes of, and constraints on, collaborations between CBOs and volunteer organizations, on one side, and local governments, on the other, in designing, implementing, and evaluating social and economic policy at the local level, and to use this information to initiate and inform a dialogue among local actors about concrete ways of enhancing future collaborations of this kind.

This second UNRISD-UNV multicity action research project was undertaken as both a follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and as a contribution to the Habitat II conference held in Istanbul in June 1996. Provisional findings of some 20 case studies conducted in Chicago, Johannesburg-Soweto, Lima, Mumbai, and São Paulo, along with related research in East St. Louis (USA), Ho Chi Minh City (Viet Nam), and Jinja (Uganda), were first discussed at an international workshop in Kumburgaz, Turkey, during the last week in May 1996. These preliminary findings were then synthesized and presented at Habitat II. Since then, a process of dialogue and action research has continued in most of the cities, and this is reflected in a number of the studies that were finalized in 2001. Additional work was also conducted in six Chinese cities in 1997, drawing on earlier VALD studies and

collaborators in addition to those from the Chinese government and academic institutions.

This report is divided into five sections following this introduction. In order, they review the focus and methodology of the VALD project, its preliminary findings dating from Habitat II, the issue areas addressed in the case studies of partnership between community and volunteer organizations and local authorities, a synthesis of the overall findings of the project concerning factors tending to hinder effective collaborations between local authorities and community and volunteer organizations, and, finally, some recommendations for local authorities interested in enhancing the quality of their collaborations with community and volunteer organizations.

Project Focus and Methodology

The collaborations that the project sought to document were those demonstrating an active, nonexploitative partnership between agencies of the government operating at the local level and community organizations. In such relationships the community, through its volunteer and civic organizations, exercises its right to participate in decisions concerning the allocation of resources at the local level. Community members are not merely purveyors of free or below-market-price labor or materials in return for services or complementary resources from the state. The relationships they seek, rather than creating political or economic dependencies (as often happens in participation-as-subcontractor schemes), are partnerships that create skills, knowledge, and the capacity to organize effectively among community members, and open channels for democratizing information and decision-making processes at the local level. Such relationships are termed “non-co-optive” or “enabling.”

The project made an effort to engage key actors at the local level, and especially government authorities and community organizations (together with their supporters elsewhere in the local civil society) in a dialogue on how to improve the possibilities for such “enabling relationships.” The project used the Habitat II conference as a pretext for initiating these dialogues in a set of large cities on four continents.

In each of the core cities, several detailed case studies on specific collaborations between community organizations and local government were carried out. In addition, two thematic papers were prepared:² one reviewing the legal and regulatory framework that determines in a formal sense the possibility for collaboration, and one addressing the larger political economy of development and urbanization that influences the possibilities for collaborations between community groups and local authorities. Collectively, the case studies and thematic papers served as the basis for a dialogue among diverse local actors on how to improve the possibilities for future collaborations.

Preliminary Findings and Recommendations Presented at Habitat II

The findings and recommendations from the draft “City Case Studies” discussed in Kumburgaz, Turkey (27–30 May 1996) were further synthesized for presentation at Habitat II. These were as follows:

- ◆ Community-local authority collaborations exist in all the core cities surveyed.³
- However, the picture of collaborations with local authorities painted by community organizations and their interlocutors is a sobering one.

² Authors and titles will be given at the point where the studies are mentioned.

³ The distinction between “core” and “noncore” cities was not made explicitly in the report at Habitat II. The projects in the noncore cities—East St. Louis, Jinja, and Ho Chi Minh City—were at that time laying the groundwork for future collaborations. These efforts are described briefly after the experiences in the core cities in the next section.

- ◆ The genuineness—or degree of partnership—that characterizes these collaborations varies greatly from city to city and between collaborations within cities. CBOs and local associations remain too weak and disconnected to propel change; instead, they are “takers” or “implementers” of policy change initiated from above.
- ◆ True power-sharing relationships between community organizations of marginal or vulnerable groups and local authorities are, in fact, rare. And those partnerships that appear to be genuine may turn out to be less than that on closer examination. The direct impact on policy formulation by community and volunteer organizations is extremely limited. Governments still appear to play the dominant role in promoting change. They are followed in importance by NGOs, which have the capacity to lobby upward and organize downward while accessing external resources that allow them some independence from domestic power brokers.
- ◆ Many of the most positive collaborations appear to depend on the support of sympathetic officials, often in high places. Others often mask clientelistic relationships and practices. Even democratically elected urban administrations supported by progressive political parties are not immune to such practices. In either case, the lack of institutional supports that buttress democratic state–civil society relationships—such as legal structures, administrative regulations, and norms protecting and promoting the rights of communities to organize themselves and to participate in decision making; the existence of strong community organizations; broad access by community organizations to information influencing decisions affecting life and livelihood, and the like—hampers the development of genuine partnerships between local authorities and vulnerable or marginalized groups.

- ◆ Even where strong community organizations do exist, collaborations with local authorities often begin a process of co-optation or demobilization from within the organization. Efforts at advocacy, community organizing, and consciousness-raising formerly undertaken by the community group may deteriorate once the organization becomes saddled with responsibilities for delivering and managing “public services.” New and very different responsibilities often reorient the priorities of small organizations away from their original constituency.
- ◆ External forces also erode the basis for community action and genuine partnerships with local authorities. Economic restructuring has impoverished many communities, lessening the health, leisure time, and confidence that individuals and families need to organize themselves. At the same time, the prevailing ideological climate reinforces sentiments against demands made by the poor on the state. In many cities, the poor have been characterized as part of the problem—a burden on the city and the rest of its residents, rather than a symptom of inequalitarian social and economic systems. In this scenario, it is becoming easier to manipulate and divide disadvantaged groups with identity politics. Failing to establish and maintain internal cohesiveness, communities are less capable of negotiating with local authorities from a position of strength.

The less-than-positive assessment of the impact of community organizations on policy and on resource distribution does not deny that the experiences covered in these studies had many positive side effects. The collaborations clearly benefited participating individuals and organizations and, as pilot projects, they provided some useful lessons.

Recommendations for enhancing the environment in which genuine collaborations can grow were outlined in three broad areas: institutionalization, capacity-building, and resources. Among the points highlighted were the need for constitutional and legal structures to protect and promote partnerships between local authorities and community organizations; capacity-building for CBOs, NGOs, and local authorities, including training and regulatory structures to help them develop and maintain internally democratic practices; reorienting the education of planners, architects, and urban management specialists so that participatory action research (PAR) with community organizations becomes a standard operating procedure; and locating and allocating resources at the local level to make it possible for community organizations to assume responsibilities in decision making with local authorities. (In the final point, the emphasis is on making it possible for local groups, which are already hard-pressed with the simultaneous tasks of community organizing, neighborhood planning, and local development activities, to make time to garner the necessary skills for becoming equal partners in planning with local authorities.)

The following section takes a brief tour through the neighborhoods where the project was implemented and highlights the issue areas/sectors that each of the case studies addressed. These summaries also suggest the diversity of existing preconditions that shape and constrain collaborations between local authorities and community and volunteer organizations. These need to be taken into account whenever intervention in urban communities by outside agencies or actors is being designed and/or contemplated.

Results in the Cities

Chicago

In Chicago, three neighborhood organizations located on the near south side of the city's traditional central business district joined forces with a city-wide and state-wide coalition of housing advocates in an effort to protect their homes and neighborhoods from incipient processes of gentrification. Despite being well organized and assisted by technically and politically adept advocates, these black and ethnically Chinese communities appear to be losing ground in their fight to keep their neighborhoods intact. The crux of the problem is twofold: the complexity of the urban development process makes it class-biased; and the city has abdicated responsibility for mediating the competition for urban land between groups with highly disparate levels of power and resources.

Today the city of Chicago relies primarily on market forces to determine where different income groups live. Community groups wishing to maintain themselves in a specific area are told to come up with a project and submit it to the government. If it is economically viable it gets approval. This form of partnership with the local government, which often can be achieved only after lengthy pressure and confrontation from community organizations, encourages the community organization to become a developer.⁴ And by doing so, it agrees to play by the principles of market sustainability. The Chicago cases⁵ show that new developments may be sustainable, but not with low-income tenants. Sooner or later, low-income housing, whose construction and maintenance are often subsidized from public sources, graduates to

⁴ In the United States, the often informally constituted neighborhood organization must transform itself into a "community development corporation." This permits the organization to take legal responsibility for loans, grants, and other forms of contractual agreements that allow them not only to organize "bricks and mortar" projects but also to accept payment from government for services they offer.

⁵ David C. Ranney, Patricia A. Wright and Tingwei Zhang, **Citizens, Local Government and the Development of Chicago's Near South Side**, UNRISD Discussion Paper No. 90.

middle-income housing once the initial loans are repaid. The taxes, rents, and other costs soon increase, forcing those who cannot pay to move out. Evidence also suggests that once community organizations take on the mantle of developer, the linkage of interests between neighborhood residents and their organization becomes more tenuous, and so, too, the prospect of the organization pursuing the broadest community needs.

Johannesburg-Soweto

In Johannesburg-Soweto, researchers felt there had been so many “structural breaks” in South Africa’s recent history—the un-banning of the ANC, the first democratic elections and government, the collapse of many anti-apartheid civil society organizations whose funding and best personnel shifted to the newly legitimate government, and so on—that conditions in the late 1980s and early 1990s were not a helpful reference point for community-government interaction in the mid-1990s.

Therefore, researchers decided to survey residents in three different kinds of low-income neighborhoods to understand their perception of local authorities and community organizations, as well as their own role within the community and to attempt to draw some conclusions about strategies for making genuine collaborations feasible in the future.

The community-level research took place in the months following the first local government elections in November 1995, thus reflecting expectations that existed before any significant experience of cooperation between the new local authorities (councilors) and community organizations. Some of the findings included that⁶

⁶ David Everatt, Grace Rapholo and Sarah Davies, **The South African Experience: Analyzing Local-Level Governance in Tladi-Moletsane, Ivory Park and the Johannesburg Inner City**, mimeo, 1996. David Everatt, Grace Rapholo and Sarah Davies, **The Southern African Experience: Background Document**, mimeo, 1999.

- ◆ minimal collaboration exists among residents, their organizations and local government
- ◆ residents remain largely unaware of their rights and obligations vis-à-vis local government
- ◆ councilors often have no staff, no budget, and no experience in public administration, nor do they have detailed descriptions of the roles they are expected to fill or how to accomplish what is expected of them
- ◆ newly elected councilors' contacts with the state bureaucracy are often frustrated by obstructionist officials still holding power
- ◆ extremely low levels of technical, financial and human resources are available to both community organizations and newly elected councilors
- ◆ attendance by residents at civic⁷ meetings has fallen off (reasons cited include the attitude that there was no need to attend because “our people” were now running the government; weakening of the civics because the previous leadership had been absorbed into government; and emerging political conflicts within and among the civics).

Lima

As Peru's capital and largest metropolitan area, Lima is home to three levels of government: the national, the city (Province of Lima), and 40 district-level governments (municipios) making up the Province of Lima. It was at the district level that researchers felt the most innovative collaborations in Lima were occurring. Case studies were selected from each of the four major geographic zones comprising the Province of Lima: the Northern, Southern and Eastern Cones, and the historic city center (El Cercado).

⁷ “Civic” is the term commonly used in South Africa to denote neighborhood or residents' associations.

In the Northern Cone, three case studies⁸ describe the efforts of women's CBOs and local NGOs to work with district governments to ensure improved nutrition, sanitation, and public health in their districts. The Eastern Cone case study⁹ compares two separate experiences in which neighborhood associations, community kitchens, mother's clubs, and other organizations from a set of contiguous neighborhoods formed a committee to engage in social and economic planning at the subdistrict level. In one case the municipio joined the effort; in the other it did not. The Southern Cone case study¹⁰ examines the efforts of a retail merchant's association, community organizations, NGOs, and the municipio of Villa El Salvador to develop the infrastructure and supply links necessary to prevent hoarding, price gouging, and other forms of corruption in the marketing of food in the municipio. In the Cercado¹¹ government collaboration with community organizations barely exists because the level of community organization is so limited.

In all but the Cercado case, interaction between local authorities and community organizations resulted in positive impacts on the individuals involved in the community organizations, on the organizations themselves and on the development of innovative and appropriate approaches to social problems at the local level. But their immediate influence on policy—in other words, on resource distribution and decision-making structures—was minimal. This typically stems from the

⁸ María Josefina Huamán, Gloria Cubas Rivera and Juan Pedro Mora Sono, **Los nuevos desafíos de la ciudad para las mujeres y la visibilización de su participación en la construcción del habitat: el caso del cono norte**, mimeo, 1997 (a compilation of three case studies). Jaime Joseph, **Organizaciones comunitarias de base y gobiernos locales**, mimeo, 1997. These and the other Lima studies have been revised and updated and were published in Lima in monograph form in early 2000.

⁹ Julio A. Calderón Cockburn, **La organización zonal de las comunidades de base y su articulación con los gobiernos locales en el cono este**, mimeo, 1997.

¹⁰ Eduardo Ballón, **La experiencia de comercialización del frente único de comerciantes minoristas de villa el Salvador, Lima, Peru**, mimeo, 1997.

¹¹ Federico Arnillas L. and Arq. Silvia de los Ríos, **Organizaciones comunitarias de base el cercado de Lima y formas de coordinación y participación en la gestión municipal**, mimeo, 1997.

unwillingness or inability of the mayor to transfer adequate resources to the collaborating organizations or to extend to them control over the resources needed to make the collaboration function as intended by the community participants. Excessive dependence of these collaborations on the goodwill of the mayor proves to be another important impediment to their sustainability.

Mumbai

In Mumbai, two of the three main collaborations studied reflect a similar phenomenon, albeit substituting dependence on a senior civil servant for dependence on the district mayor. In the case of the Rationing Kruti Samiti, the successes of a coalition of NGOs, CBOs, and government agencies in halting corruption and abuse in the public distribution system of subsidized grains, oils, and cooking fuels began to rapidly erode when the officer who catalyzed the effort was transferred to another post outside the rationing system.¹² In the second case, the Deputy Municipal Commissioner (DMC) with jurisdiction over Jogeshwari, one of Mumbai's largest slums, brought city agencies, NGOs, and CBOs together in a two-year-long fact-finding collaboration in order to unravel a series of conflicts over the legal rights and responsibilities of tenants, chawl (tenement) owners, and various municipal authorities vis-à-vis one another. Using the information collected, the DMC ruled in favor of the tenants, strengthening their rights to tenure and security against harassment by the chawl owners. However, the DMC was transferred not long after making his ruling, which eight years later has yet to be implemented. While this suggests that implementation may have been too dependent on the DMC, it also highlights a more serious problem: the absence of accountability for the civil service to follow through on its own decisions or rulings.

¹² Apnalaya, **Rationing Kruti Samiti: Experience of Collaboration Between NGOs, GOs and CBOs in the City of Mumbai**, mimeo, 1998.

The Mohalla Committee case study¹³ describes incipient efforts of the Mumbai Police Force to open effective channels of communication and cooperation between itself, community organizations and ordinary citizens. The police have been accused in some quarters of having taken sides in the communal strife experienced in Mumbai in late 1992 and early 1993, and the proposed action was intended to show the police force's commitment to promoting harmony among Muslim and Hindu residents living in close proximity in Mumbai's slums. To date, however, doubts remain about the nature of the collaboration established. Two main reasons for this are that 1) the selection of Mohalla Committee members remains under the direct control of local police offices, and 2) the police force strongly resists any suggestion that the Mohalla Committees should directly monitor police work in the community.

The studies in Mumbai also highlight other constraints that must be overcome before there can be more genuine partnerships between community organizations and local authorities. These include internal weaknesses of CBOs, their over reliance on NGOs (whose number and resources are extremely limited), and the general resistance or inability of the lower-level bureaucracy to work with CBOs and NGOs.

São Paulo

The São Paulo case studies reflect the willingness of the first Worker's Party (WP) administration (1989-1992) to democratize the traditionally closed and clientelistic machinery of urban government in one of the world's largest cities. Of the four São Paulo cases, two describe initiatives of the WP administration¹⁴ and two examine ongoing initiatives of community organizations and NGOs that the new

¹³ Sushoba Bharve, **Mumbai Mohalla Committees: A Case Study**, mimeo, 1996.

¹⁴ Valmir de Souza, **Acao cultural regionalizada area central da cidade de São Paulo**, mimeo, 1996. Pedro Jacobi, **Orcamento participativo: o caso de São Paulo (1989-1992), à luz das experiencias de Porto Alegre e Belo Horizonte**, mimeo, 1997. Additional information on the Erundina Administration is contained in Pedro Jacobi, **Overview Paper: São Paulo**, mimeo, 1998.

mayor, Luisa Erundina, decided to promote for “demonstration” purposes.¹⁵ The most public and extensive experiment of the WP administration was the Participatory Budget (PB), which for the first time formalized channels for public review and comment on the city’s spending priorities. Its most revolutionary feature was to offer community organizations throughout the city the opportunity to comment on and offer their own spending proposals. The process for mobilizing such large-scale participation was cumbersome and, despite efforts to improve and streamline it in subsequent years, the PB never caught the imagination of the public or had a large impact on the decision-making process. The greatest impediment to the successful implementation of the PB was, however, that the final spending decisions were made by the city council, on which the WP held a minority position. Thus, the WP was able neither to change the legislative basis of the budget-making process nor to force the city councilors to accept the recommendations of the PB. And without an effective campaign to convince the public of the validity of the PB, it will be hard to overcome these weaknesses.¹⁶

The two cases promoted by civil society organizations, and supported by the WP administration for their demonstration value, pioneered lessons in employment creation for the homeless through solid waste recycling cooperatives, and self-managed construction of high-density, multistory, low-income housing. Both of these initiatives represented innovative solutions to pressing problems of low-income and marginalized groups, but neither could muster adequate popular recognition during the WP’s administration. In the case of the recycling cooperative, economic sustainability

¹⁵ Raquel Rolnick and Walter Cruz de Oliveira, **Mutirao autogerido apuaña: enfrentando a questao da moradia com parceria**, mimeo, 1997. Beth Grimberg, **Estudo sobre a coopamare: Cooperativa de catadores autonomos de papel, aparas e materiais reaproveitaveis de São Paulo**, mimeo, 1997.

¹⁶ Relatively successful instances of Participatory Budgeting (PB) have proceeded in recent years in Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte, and may eventually catalyze a change in public opinion about the PB in São Paulo.

has been elusive because of the absence of laws and administrative practices necessary to make consumers bear the real cost of nonrecyclable solid waste. Thus there is little incentive to recycle anything, and the cooperative designed to reintegrate homeless people into the labor market as collectors of recyclable materials languishes. The case of self-managed construction of low-income housing has evolved more positively, albeit long after the WP was voted out of office. In part this is due to the visible¹⁷ success of the model: the Apuaña apartments have turned out to be an attractive, land-saving, low-cost alternative to other social housing schemes in São Paulo, a fact acknowledged both in Brazil by conservative and progressive politicians alike, and by the Habitat II meeting in Istanbul in 1996.

The “Noncore” Cities: East St. Louis, Ho Chi Minh City and Jinja

The three noncore cities differed from the five core cities in the initial conditions of the collaborations reported on. Most importantly, from the perspective of the project, the principal characteristic of the noncore cities was that the collaboration with governments and civil society was indirect, in each case mediated if not largely promoted by university-based researchers and technicians. Second, in each of the three cities no strong evidence of community–local authority collaboration presented itself to the researchers. Indeed, none of the researchers involved in the project had reported collaborations on the order of those defined in the initial section of this paper. Rather, this being the case, the researchers hoped that through long-term, broad-based interaction with both community organizations and local authorities, they would help promote both the will to and the capacity for partnership/collaboration between two crucial protagonists in local-level development. Third, in these cities, the research

¹⁷ Two kinds of “visibility” made for the success of the Apuaña scheme, and neither existed during the Erundina administration. First, the physical structures were not complete until 1995; and second, wide public debate about their role in public housing did not occur until 1996.

teams prepared a single report. This profiled the socioeconomic conditions in each city, the principles and methods underlying their interventions, and the progress made as of 1996.

The largest and longest of these interventions took place in East St. Louis (ESL). Beginning in 1990, a multidisciplinary team of researchers and graduate students from a public university located some 300 km from ESL began making contacts within the city and community organizations. Their aim was to understand how the university might assist a turnaround in the social and economic conditions of the city, the poorest in the USA at that time. The university put most of its efforts into strengthening the capacity of existing community organizations (and helping set up new ones) to (a) identify neighborhood concerns, (b) build a consensus about the kinds of actions that could be undertaken by citizens (either independently or with the assistance of the project), and (c) organize such actions.

The ESL Action Research Project (ESLARP) then helped identify possible allies within agencies and government bodies operating within the boundaries of ESL that could be accessed by community organizations to accomplish discrete community-driven projects. The next major effort was to lobby local agencies and political officials to do their jobs better, and to create conditions for more thoroughgoing reform of local government. More recently, housing and economic development activities of ESLARP have begun to involve local authorities, in part as a result of the high level of organization among local residents.

In 1996 in both Ho Chi Minh City and Jinja, the government–university–community collaborations were in the early stage of implementation, with all participants in a fact-finding and mutual familiarization process. In both cases, pressing environmental problems affecting the physical health and income-generating prospects of large numbers of urban poor were the focus of the planned collaborations.

In Jinja, the agreement of the municipal government to implement Local Agenda 21 recognized officially the importance of bringing civil society organizations, local authorities, and business together to solve the problems at hand. In Ho Chi Minh City, water and sanitation issues in densely inhabited informal settlements were the foci of scientific, sociological, and economic analysis that was to eventually lay the groundwork for a series of interventions. Among these were to be actions undertaken by and for the residents themselves, others in cooperation with municipal agencies, and yet others at the policy level reflecting the analysis of the partners in the action-research component. A major difference between the ESLARP and the Jinja and Ho Chi Minh projects lay in the fact that foreign aid was the source of many of the resources available to the latter two projects. On the other hand, an important similarity among the three cities existed: the commitment of the external promoters to use PAR methods as a tool for planning, implementing, and evaluating their interventions.

Despite the incipient nature of the collaborations in the non-core cities in 1996, the researchers established important baselines of socioeconomic conditions against which the impact of developing collaborations can be measured.

Shanghai

In the year following Habitat II, new research took place in China, culminating in a meeting in Shanghai, October 1997, “Comparative Perspectives on Decentralized Governance in a Globalizing World.”

The purpose of the Shanghai meeting was twofold: to disseminate the results of the studies completed earlier in the project, and to better understand how Chinese cities are attempting to come to grips with the stresses and strains caused by rapid rural–urban migration and other compound effects of deepening economic and

administrative reforms. The meeting brought together urban planners, officials, and scholars from six large and medium-sized Chinese cities, researchers involved in the VALD project, and observers from foundations, international NGOs, and multilateral development agencies for three days of discussion and site visits. Participants sought to identify the extent to which Chinese cities had begun responding to pressures on physical and social infrastructure by opening up new channels of participation in decision-making processes, and to gauge whether such changes had begun to affect the living and working conditions of residents.

From the preliminary discussion of the case studies written by Chinese planners¹⁸ and a study commissioned by UNRISD,¹⁹ it became evident that community participation in planning and decision making remains extremely limited. In contrast to many rural Chinese communities where residents select their leaders by plebiscite, mayors and other high city officials are still appointed by provincial and, sometimes, central government administrators.

Planners and city officials in six cities prepared case studies exploring their understanding of “public participation.” The case studies also relate actual experiences with public participation in Chinese cities to efforts at designing more effective responses to social problems accompanying the rapid urbanization and economic and social policy reforms in the People’s Republic of China. Chinese participants compared and contrasted their studies with a selected group of cases presented by

¹⁸ **Beihai chengshi guihua gongzhong canyude shijian tansuo** (The Experience of Public Participation in City Planning: The Case of Beihai City), Beihai City Planning Bureau, mimeo, 1997. **Zhuanjia guwenzu canyu chengshi guihua de shijian yanjiu** (Research on the Experience of Specialized Consultants in City Planning) Wuhan City Urban Planning and Design Academy, mimeo, 1997. **Liuzhu zuotian, fengfu jintian, zaizao mingtian: gongzhong dui ningbo lishi wenhua mingcheng baohu guihua he shijian de canyu** (Protect Yesterday, Enrich Today, Create Tomorrow: Public Participation in Planning for the Preservation of Historic Ningbo), Rongguang XIA and Guoqing ZHANG, mimeo, 1997. **Chengshi guihua bianzhizhong de gongzhong canyu: yi Shenzhenshi wei lie** (Public Participation in City Planning: The Case of Shenzhen), Shenzhen Municipal Institute of City Planning and Urban Design, Huasheng SUN and Fuhai WANG, mimeo, 1997.

¹⁹ Tingwei Zhang, *The Transition of the Decision-Making Process: Participation in Urban Development in China*, mimeo, 1997.

members of the project's research team from other cities, and from a sampling of other international research projects with similar concerns. International cases were selected to highlight alternative strategies for participation in decision making.

Case studies suggest that the urban planning apparatus of Chinese cities remains strongly top-down and closed, as it was during the pre-reform era, despite wide-ranging deregulation in social and economic spheres. These case studies reflect, nonetheless, openness to new planning techniques and some small efforts at experimentation in public participation.

Participation in urban governance in Chinese cities has been largely passive: planners may undertake opinion surveys, hold exhibitions where plans are unveiled and citizens invited to comment and, in some cases, solicit the input of groups of experts from different fields when plans are on the verge of completion. Municipal legislatures (People's Consultative Congresses) are empowered to recommend legislation to the local government. However, the high proportion of Communist Party members in the congress ensures that it will not veer from decisions established by the municipal government, whose leading members are also the leading members of the Communist Party in the municipality. With power concentrated in a small group of high party officials at each level of government, decisions in cities still tend to flow from top to bottom, with very little accountability to lower levels of government or communities.

On the third day of the meeting, participants reflected on the state of and prospects for participation in planning and decision making in Chinese cities. Almost all agreed that simply informing residents of plans or taking opinion surveys did not constitute participation. Residents should have an active role in decision making and implementation of policies, through either their neighborhood or street committees or other organized bodies. Participants felt that it would be useful to experiment with

some of the participatory techniques that cities in other countries are using and especially to understand the roles and potential of true²⁰ NGOs in building the capacity of community groups and local authorities to undertake bottom-up community development initiatives.

But building political and practical support for such experimentation and research would first require awareness-raising and training at different levels of urban government. Mayors and high-level officials will need to understand the value and methods of participatory decision making; officials in the basic-level (sub municipal/district) governments, who number some 480,000, must be encouraged to function more effectively with market rather than administrative mechanisms in providing services; and residents' committees, which suffer from low levels of legitimacy because of past involvement in repressive functions and/or because of the limited abilities of their cadres, must invigorate themselves by attracting younger and more capable people. Finally, participants recognized the importance of institutionalizing participation in planning by incorporating appropriate legal mechanisms in planning statutes. Additional details of the discussions are found in the workshop report.²¹

The following section elaborates a typology of factors that tend to hinder the growth of effective collaborations between local authorities and community organizations. These include the following:

1. External Social/Political/Cultural Environment
2. Conditions and Attitudes of Local Authorities

²⁰ "True" NGOs are rare in China. Organizations that have typically been touted as NGOs often receive their operating budget directly from the government, and employ staff that are either seconded from government agencies or holding dual appointments.

²¹ *Quanqiuhua de Shijiezhong Jinxing Fenquan Guihuaguanli de Zhanwang: Guoji Taolunhui Zongjie Baogao (Report of the International Conference on Prospects for Decentralized Governance in a Globalizing World)*, UNRISD mimeo, February 1998.

3. Structure of Collaborations
4. Roles, Functions, and Attitudes of Intermediary Organizations
5. Capacity of Volunteer Organizations
6. Capacity of Individuals (Volunteers)

Factors Hindering Effective Volunteer Efforts in Collaborations with Local Authorities

None of the individual collaborations studied were affected by all of these factors, nor were all characteristic of the project cities. But multiple constraints were the rule for all collaborations and cities. This should not be surprising. If it were otherwise, there would be few challenges to improving governance at the local level. The project suggests, however, that the challenges are many and that they occur at a variety of levels, from the individual to the macro society.

The factors “hindering” collaborations are not matched by a list of those “enhancing.” The positive scenario is easy to imagine, and is also readily available in many forms, including the action agendas of the major UN Summits, international covenants, and the charters of numerous international bodies promoting good governance, the numerous guides to partnership and participation in development projects and programs produced by international agencies, and so forth.

This list is provided to help organizations engaged in grassroots interventions in low-income urban settings. Its chief use is as a checklist when considering the feasibility of intervention, and at what level. The list should also encourage the development of indicators of progress for intervention in urban areas. Over time, has the environment changed to be more or less hospitable to collaborations between local authorities and community organizations? In what way? What do the key actors need to do to promote such change?

External Social/Political/Cultural Environment

A fractious party-political environment, resulting in frequent changes of leadership in municipalities, can retard the evolution of positive interaction between community groups and local authorities. On the one hand, policies encouraging genuine participation in grassroots-level decision making can be easily undone, or on the other, civic (volunteer) impulses can be diverted to serving clients (particularistic interests) rather than those of the larger vulnerable community (Chicago, SP).

Traditions of clientelism die hard, even in formally democratic states and cities. Political leaders and nonelected members of urban authorities still derive popular support from such practices. These, of course, work against truly civic volunteer contributions because their chief aim is to maintain the power of an individual and system that supports her/him rather than to promote the well-being of the larger group (SP, Mumbai, and Johannesburg).

Macroeconomic policies and/or administrative reforms that radically increase the role of market forces in daily life can expand or contract opportunities for volunteer action in urban communities. The imposition of structural adjustment policies were seen to stimulate some forms of organizing for survival that in the short run accomplished the purpose. But there is also evidence that too much competition between individuals and groups can have negative impacts in the long run. Organizations of survival have neither the resources nor the outlook to create, plan, and organize activities that change inequitable social structures (Lima).

The lack of administrative rules and legislation protecting and promoting collaborations with volunteer groups and other civil-society organizations are a major hindrance to effective participation of grassroots actors in urban decision making. In only one of the cities studied was such legislation on the books. However, the implementation of the legislation remains stalled 5 years after promulgation.

Authorities are therefore able to treat civic participation as a discretionary, rather than mandatory, area of governance (Chicago, Lima, Johannesburg, Mumbai, and SP).

Decentralization is expanding the latitude of cities to adopt policies to enhance social integration in the local space. This occurs primarily by leaving to the local authorities the setting of social policy and, to an even larger extent, its implementation. While the capacity to implement such policy is in question because the resources needed to implement it may not accompany decision-making autonomy, the city allocates certain economic activities to enhance the status of poor and/or marginal groups. Opportunities for this were found in solid waste collection, environmental protection, and housing provision. Unfortunately, the authorities were unwilling to explore these possibilities to their logical extension, and important advantages to the poor were lost (Chicago, Lima, and SP).

In all the cities of the study, there appears to be a willingness (at the level of action, if not rhetoric) to back away from the role of mediator of the public good. Market mechanisms are given much greater sway than would be expected from the recent history and politics of the city.

The rapid expansion and differentiation within the NGO sector, coupled with the increasing “marketization” of their roles, especially as service contractors, has created among local authorities great confusion about and solid resistance to working with NGOs. Local authorities have expressed legitimate concerns about the representativeness, accountability, governance structures, and ambitions of many NGOs, CBOs, and other CSOs (Chicago, Mumbai).

Communities with a strong tradition of mutual assistance have a better chance of developing the local organizations that can effectively interact with local authorities in efforts to improve urban living conditions. Conversely, urban communities comprising large numbers of migrants of diverse origins have more difficulties

organizing themselves, or being organized with the help of external agents (e.g., NGOs, religious groups, municipal agencies, etc.) (Lima, São Paulo [SP]).

Violence and insecurity stemming from the increasing prevalence of extralegal force and intimidation tactics diminish the capacity of communities to organize and pursue collective social goals. Public institutions, churches, and all manner of volunteer organizations suffer the threat of arms. Individuals who would otherwise participate in public-spirited activities resist the impulse in order to avoid unnecessarily sacrificing their lives and their families' well-being (Lima, Johannesburg, and Mumbai).

Conditions and Attitudes of Local Authorities

In none of the cities studied did there exist a strong tradition of incorporating community and volunteer groups in significant decision-making processes. In practice, ignoring grassroots actors was closer to the rule.

The relative impoverishment of local authorities (as compared with central and intermediate governing bodies) appears to exacerbate sentiments of envy and distrust toward civil-society groups, who are often seen as competing for resources that would otherwise go to the local authority.

Nontransparent behavior and restricted information flows characterize most of the local authorities—even those considered to be open to community participation—in the study. This continues to disempower volunteer action across the spectrum of urban governance.

Corruption and/or lack of internal accountability within local authorities (Lima, SP, Mumbai) permits positive action taken by one branch of local authorities to stymie or block positive change brought about by other branches in collaboration with community groups.

Local authorities are inclined to take an instrumental view of participation, that is, to welcome it when the community and volunteer groups provide labor, material inputs or, simply, the façade of democratic decision making that allows an otherwise top-down project to go forward. Even the most “participatory” local authorities fear too much genuine participation.

The exceedingly low level of fiscal and administrative capacity of local authorities often prevents them from being able to join as effective partners with community and volunteer groups. They may neither know how to interact or work with community groups nor have any significant material resources they can bring to the collaboration (Johannesburg, Mumbai).

Decentralization in new democracies or newly democratized municipal entities, when combined with weak local government capacity and a willingness by the local authority to back away from its role as mediator of the public good, can result in highly undemocratic governance (Lima, Johannesburg).

Despite the high level of women’s contribution to the collaborations studied and women’s dominant role in the management of low-income communities, traditional forms of sexism and class bias were evident in the local authorities and were likely to have reduced the positive impact that women could have been having in their communities.

Structure of Collaborations

Partnerships—relationships in which the partners take genuine responsibility for achieving one another’s objectives—were absent in the study. All cases selected for analysis were chosen because they were perceived to represent partnerships. None, however, came close to this ideal.

Related to the previous point, power imbalances usually favor local authorities and/or, secondarily, intermediaries such as NGOs. In no cases have the community organizations been able to “drive” the agenda. Some instances did exist in which community and volunteer groups were able to block a proposed action for some time, but none could do so permanently (Chicago, Mumbai).

Local authorities are often less stable “players” than community participants. This results from changes of political leadership, administrative transfers of important decision makers, internal reorganizations, or major shifts in policy. Mutual trust and established collaborations are often sacrificed when key contacts in local government are lost. This results in a high cost to volunteer organizations because they must continually persuade new functionaries of the value of collaboration and joint decision making.

Collaborations are too often based on relations with a sympathetic politician or bureaucrat. Such personalized interaction/collaborations are fragile, at best, and clientilistic, at worst (Lima, Mumbai, and SP).

None of the collaborations studied contained formal procedures for record keeping, monitoring, or evaluation. As a result, data on the conduct of the collaborations had to be acquired from a variety of nonsystematic sources. This lack of formal institutional memory not only makes the analysis of the collaborations more difficult and tenuous but also results in lost opportunities for building on past experience.

*Roles, Functions, and Attitudes of Intermediary Organizations*²²

Intermediary organizations such as Nongovernmental Development Organizations, grassroots support organizations, voluntary agencies associated with church groups or international NGOs, and certain collectives of academic and professionals are crucial actors in all of the cities in this study. They often serve as conduits of information and/or mediators between local authorities and grassroots urban organizations. These institutions also provide training, contacts, and, sometimes, direct financial support to the community-level organizations. At present, it appears difficult to conceive of CBOs and other grassroots volunteer organizations of vulnerable groups carrying out effective collaborations without the support of such intermediaries. At the same time, the following observations can be offered about the roles of such organizations:

As mentioned above in the section on the general environment for CSO–local authority collaborations, the rapid expansion of NGOs in development work has also given rise to some doubt about their motivations, competence, and commitment to civic action. Many NGOs have become service providers or social-sector consultants, leaving behind—if they ever had them—orientations toward empowerment or advocacy for the poor. This is not entirely surprising, as in many cases, especially in formerly authoritarian countries, funding for the opposition groups dried up when democratic governments came in (Johannesburg and, to a lesser extent, SP). These organizations either dissolve or find ways to survive, the latter often by selling services. Some of these same NGOs lost their top cadres to the newly democratic governments, putting further at risk the ideals these organizations professed in the era of opposition.

²² The observations concerning intermediary organizations are largely based on the project coordinator's discussions with the intermediary organizations participating in the project as well as analysis contained in the overview reports. These perceptions are not based on case studies, however.

Some intermediaries are more successful than others in promoting and accompanying institutional development and autonomy in urban grassroots organizations (Johannesburg, SP).

Unfortunately, there are simply too few intermediary organizations capable of undertaking large-scale organizing and capacity-building of autonomous volunteer organizations in the vast slums and bidonvilles of many of the world's megacities (Mumbai).

Capacity of Volunteer Organizations

Volunteer organizations, such as neighborhood associations, CBOs, mother's clubs, housing cooperatives, and so forth typically draw their strength and material resources from within, that is, from their members. Thus an organization's strength has much to do with the capacity of its individual members (see next section), its access to information and capacity-building (see previous section), and the possibility to exist and develop in a democratic way (i.e., without stifling regulation or repression from the government or inhospitable local forces). In all the cities studied this last condition was met. The grassroots organizations also typically had access to strong, civic-minded intermediaries. The capacity of the members was a problem, however, especially the individual's ability to remain in a state of mobilization over the long term. The constraints acting at this level are described in the next section.

Internal democracy is an acknowledged ideal for both NGOs and CBOs. For many of the grassroots organizations covered in the case studies, such ideals were sometimes honored more in their breach (Chicago, Mumbai, Johannesburg, Lima, and SP). This does not mean that the organizations did not have democratic impulses or goals, but rather that adverse conditions—such as changes in leadership, external political forces, or internal corruption—did at times divert the organization's trajectory.

The urban poor are rarely a homogenous lot. They can be highly stratified even in their vulnerability. This shows itself in the attitudes of different groups and in the community organizations that serve separate subsets of the poor. Among groups with different “vulnerability profiles” residing side by side, the most vulnerable will not necessarily benefit from the efforts of the groups representing the less vulnerable. In practice, relations between the groups can be highly conflicting. Such circumstances reduce the possibility of effective approaches to resolution of problems affecting both groups (Mumbai, Johannesburg).

In politically fractious environments, and even when party politics across the spectrum have been completely discredited, volunteer organizations may become targets for capture by “political bosses” or leaders with political ambitions (Johannesburg, Lima, and SP).

Community organizations of the urban poor can rarely access by themselves information needed to protect themselves and/or their neighborhood. Nor are they adequately prepared to interact publicly or privately with local authorities or to develop independently the kinds of analysis of the urban economy that will sway private developers or city agencies to protect the rights and interests of members of the low-income community. In these situations it is crucial for grassroots organizations to have access to reliable information and analysis from NGO or research institutes.

The internal strength of community and volunteer organizations can be enhanced effectively if, in addition to access to strong intermediaries and information, they learn to “organize themselves to learn.” This means, among other things, becoming participants in action research, whereby they collect and analyze in progressively sophisticated ways the information needed to become effective advocates for change both within their community and in the larger society.

Capacity of Individuals (Volunteers)

Individuals in low-income communities who, because of the objective conditions of their lives have highly restricted mobility, chronic health problems, or extremely limited mental functions, may not be able to take an active role in public life. This is not unexpected. Nevertheless, this is a burden imposed unequally on the poorest populations. To this must be added the burden of violent or disaffected youth, criminal elements, and others who have been excluded from more positive social intercourse. A higher incidence of persons in these categories increases the number of “nonparticipants” in civic activities, as well as the burdens on those who might otherwise want to contribute, or contribute more.

Related to the previous point, women, who are often the primary managers of “informal” urban settlements, share this burden disproportionately. This is a limiting factor on their ability to participate as fully as they would want and to acquire special skills that may advance overall volunteer contributions of women.

In many low-income settlements, existing efforts by women to contribute have been undermined by the attitudes of their male partners/spouses and fellow community members. Women are still, in general, not granted equal status as civic actors in the community. The persistence of men’s unemancipated attitudes negatively affects the volunteer contribution in many communities.

Youth have proven to be invaluable volunteers and civic actors when structures (organizations and activities) exist to channel their efforts. They are also among the most vulnerable members of society. Longstanding precarious economic and social conditions are clearly alienating many young people from taking up civic action (Lima, Johannesburg).

Recommendations to Local Authorities for Enhancing the Effectiveness of Collaborations with Community Organizations

The previous section offers a litany of factors that impede the establishment of fruitful collaborations between local authorities and community organizations. To improve the impact of such collaborations, all of the actors and institutions cited could usefully change certain aspects of their attitudes, behavior, and capacities. The full responsibility for promoting and compelling such changes cannot be placed entirely on local authorities. They can, only with great difficulty, bring about changes at the macro level, despite their increasing influence on social and economic conditions within their sub national regions. It may also be argued that it is not inherently the responsibility of local authorities to redress the weaknesses of community organizations within their geographical purview. Nor would it be wise to suggest that the local authority must improve the basic element of the community organizations—the individual—by intervening inside the family to change patterns of relations or cultural practices that disproportionately benefit some members to the detriment of others. But there are areas in which local authorities can make important contributions, and these are the focus of this final section.

These recommendations are those of the author, based on his understanding of the case studies, overview materials, and interaction with the main participants in the project over the past several years. The recommendations are, in effect, based on comparing and contrasting the conditions, achievements, and challenges that have been reported on in total. As such, these recommendations are generic, and hence apply everywhere and nowhere. Any attempt to apply them should be accompanied by a review of the individual studies in which recommendations are set clearly within local contexts. Limitations of space prevent further discussion of how international organizations, national governments, community organizations, and international

NGOs can support the kinds of changes needed to bring about more fruitful collaborations between community organizations and local authorities.

One of the main conclusions of this study is that local authorities play the determining role in urban grassroots development or, more correctly, in fostering social cohesion and development in cities and towns. But to be successful in these efforts they must ally themselves with community and city-wide institutions of civil society. Cities willing to do this may begin by examining the extent to which they accomplish the following:

- Make publicly available in timely and easily accessible forms information concerning public budget decisions; investment and urban development plans; records of internal discussions on infrastructure locations, designs and technologies; and administrative and political boundary changes.
- Allow substantive participation of community organizations in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and investments that significantly and differentially affect groups within the city.
- Support open dialogue between local authorities and civil-society organizations (and among the latter) on these issues.
- Provide a competent, motivated, and politically independent liaison service within the urban administration to respond to and inform CSOs on issues of concern to the public.
- Promulgate and implement legislation and administrative regulations that institutionalize these characteristics of openness to CSOs, regardless of the change of important political or executive personnel within the local authority.
- Promote awareness of the concerns of CSOs and a capacity for working with CSOs among employees at different levels of the urban administration.

- Train CSO liaison personnel to be “women-friendly,” as many of the most important grassroots managers of low-income urban communities are wives and mothers.
- Commit to acting as mediators of the public good, in which promoting and protecting the dignity of life for all residents is the first priority in decision making.

Implementing even this short list of recommendations, which will necessarily have to be adapted to widely varying local conditions and histories, will require additional resources, new ways of thinking, and more autonomy for local authorities. This is happening in many cities, but not nearly enough. And the threats to progress already made loom ever larger: political and ethnic conflict, environmental collapse, increasing disease burdens, the scourge of drugs, disintegrating local economies, and so forth. It is therefore necessary to bolster reforms within local authorities with external support—not just monetary but moral, intellectual, and legislative. National governments, other local authorities, international cooperation, and local and international civil society, citizens, and business all have a part to play in this effort.

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CHAPTER TWO:
SELF-BUILT HOUSING IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES:
CURRENT CONTRIBUTIONS AND CHALLENGES TO LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM

Introduction

This paper summarizes the literature describing the current and near-term challenges to improving the quality, quantity, and social impact of volunteer contributions to self-built housing in cities of developing countries. On the basis of this analysis it then suggests several approaches for providing institutional support to improve the impacts of these volunteer efforts. The paper was prepared for the United Nations Volunteers¹ as support to its project Support to Intra-City Volunteerism.

This project “is based on the premise that volunteerism is still largely under-utilized in (urban) development . . . [and] . . . is seldom fully recognized, promoted and supported by local authorities and by other urban policy- and decision-makers.” The terms of reference for the paper also note that

Equally, the local volunteer sector is seldom organized in a fashion that would make the best of itself. The contribution of volunteerism to urban development could be much broader than what it is at present, if further support was given. The project aims at helping to expand such contribution, by (i) setting-up demonstration activities as well as (ii) an awareness raising campaign and (iii) technical assistance. The development of a knowledge base is crucial to these three objectives.

The paper comprises four sections, not including this introduction. The first section describes what is meant by self-built housing in developing countries and the processes it encompassed during the postwar era. The second section assesses the

¹ The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) is the only agency in the United Nations system with a mandate to promote, organize, and manage volunteer efforts in support of United Nations development goals.

scale of self-building in developing countries and the living conditions it provides for the large majority of residents. The third section reviews different organizational typologies of self-built housing for low-income groups in urban areas of developing countries. This focuses on identifying the roles of different social actors, including volunteers, in a spectrum of approaches to self-building. The fourth section describes the major obstacles to the transformation of much self-built housing into adequate housing for the majority of its builders/residents. The final section has two parts. The first offers general prescriptions for overcoming the obstacles to transforming self-built housing into adequate housing. The second discusses the idea of UNV's promoting forms of self-building that lead to psychosocial and political transformations of individuals, groups, and communities that participate in self-building processes.

The information and opinions offered in this paper are drawn from a selective review of recent journal articles that discuss self-built housing or volunteerism and urban upgrading in developing and developed countries. The research also benefited from a review of case studies of self-built housing in the UNCHS Best Practices Database. I also draw on studies of self-built housing I commissioned under the auspices of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), and on my experience as an advisor to an NGO in Buenos Aires, Argentina, that promotes income-generation and decent housing for low-income groups through microenterprise development.²

Self-Built Urban Housing in the Global South

For the purposes of this paper, self-built or self-help housing is the product of a range of activities leading to the design, construction, maintenance, and management

² The name of the NGO is Microenergía. Information about its work may be found at <http://www.microenergia.net>.

of the physical structure and immediate surroundings of permanent shelter for human beings. Self-help housing also includes renovations, alterations, or adaptations of existing buildings, including tenements, industrial spaces, or other structures that have not been occupied for lengthy periods and whose new residents or others working with them undertake the improvements. Regardless of the nature of the structure, self-help housing would normally, if not at the moment of first habitation, entail eventual provisioning of clean water, sanitation, and energy within the shelter or within convenient reach of the structure. This expansive definition of self-built housing follows from that of “adequate housing” as pursued as a human right established and elaborated over time by the United Nations in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR). So, while not all self-built housing achieves on-premises services such as these, they must be considered as an eventual—but still pressing—goal of the process. Without them, particularly in densely inhabited urban settlements, not only are the physical and social well-being of the residents of the self-help structure put at risk by exposure to environmental pathogens or other health-endangering conditions, so too are those of their neighbors and the surrounding community.³

The literature describing modern processes of self-built housing (and communities) in urbanizing areas of developing countries is nearly as old as the process of modern urbanization. This literature will not be reviewed in detail here, only summarized in a way that might accurately describe some of the most typical aspects of the peri-urbanization process.

³ The working definition of the right to adequate housing currently applied by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living is as follows: “the right of every woman, man, youth and child to gain and sustain a secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity.” In his efforts to promote the realization of this right, the Special Rapporteur has “followed a holistic approach, based on the reality that all human rights are interrelated and indivisible. The right to adequate housing cannot be fully realized if separated [from] with other rights such as the rights to food, water, sanitation, electricity, health, work, property, security of the person, security of home, and protection against inhuman and degrading treatment” (Kothari).

New arrivals to the city would typically lodge with a friend or relation with connections to the new arrival's home place. After sharing or renting housing for a period in order to save money and make appropriate plans for establishing his/her own home, the new migrant would join with a group of other would-be settlers in a more-or-less organized takeover of vacant/unused property. Takeovers like this could be on public or private property, within the boundaries of the city or well outside it, but usually not on land already undergoing formal development processes. More typically, the land suffered multiple hazards for occupancy: high susceptibility to industrial pollution or natural disaster (flooding, seismic activity, wildfires, etc.) or nearly insurmountable obstacles to the provisioning of necessary services (absence of sources of drinking water, location on steep rocky slopes or shifting sands, etc.). Occupation of land took place under cover of night. By morning a series of makeshift huts stood in close proximity, offering a semblance of self-protection and an important degree of solidarity. Large-scale land invasions and subsequent settlements could often depend on external assistance in achieving a degree of legitimacy, if not legality, for newly settled communities. Local politicians found them to be useful vote banks; progressive NGOs and church-based organizations found them to be viable alternatives to overcrowding in existing urban slums or worse conditions in communities that had managed to grow entirely spontaneously through multiple and uncoordinated invasions.⁴

⁴ Modern urbanization in developing countries refers to the post-World War II era, during which decolonization and nation-building processes often included industrialization programs. New industry, typically located in the major cities, encouraged rural workers to migrate to the cities in search of higher wages, better physical amenities, and access to health care, education, cultural facilities, etc. In some countries, modernization of agriculture served to push unemployed peasants to the city. With these processes, urban population began growing faster than total population. Although initially migration often led to overcrowding and degradation of existing urban housing stock, housing within the existing city boundaries reached capacity and soon became too expensive for most rural migrants. Increasingly, they were to settle on the periphery of the major cities, in many cases occupying vast tracts of lands more than double the area within the city's formal boundaries. More recently, such areas became known as peri-urban settlements. A sampling of the vernacular names for these include *pueblos juvenes*, *colonias*, *gecekondus*, *bidonvilles*, *favelas*, *shanty towns*, *squatter settlements*, *villas de miseria*, *katchi*

Over decades some peri-urban settlements consolidated as both housing and connections to urban infrastructure and services improved. Families with steady incomes gradually replaced the temporary materials of their first structures: walls of brick and mortar for tin or cardboard, paving or tiles for mud floors, glass windows for oiled paper or plastic sheeting, and doors with locks for a sheet of hanging canvas. More prosperous settlements and/or those with better political connections got paved roads linking them to metropolitan transportation networks, urban services (water, power, sanitation, and refuse collection), and social and cultural facilities (education, health, recreation). Indeed, some of these successful self-upgraded communities are now mature enough that homes built with the original permanent materials are now reaching the stage of becoming dangerous because of aging materials and overbuilding on poorly designed or constructed supports.

Other neighborhoods did not prosper, or did so only selectively. Nor did they become fully integrated into urban transportation and infrastructure networks. These may have grown large enough to be officially recognized as slums. Some were enveloped within the formal⁵ city that expanded as the upper and upper-middle classes established new neighborhoods, commercial centers, and recreation facilities to cater to their needs in the cleaner and greener suburbs. The fact remains, however, that today some 43 percent of urbanites in developing countries live in slums (UN Habitat 2003:vi).⁶

abadis, chawls, kampungs, etc. A fuller list of vernacular names for slums by region can be found in UNHSP (2003:10).

⁵ The “formal city” is that part of the urban area that adheres to planning regulations and building codes and is fully serviced with modern transport, sanitation, refuse collection, drinking water, energy, etc.

⁶ In many cities, the term “slum” is an official designation, defined and applied by the local government. In certain instances, the term may be selectively applied depending on some minimum number of households or area covered by substandard housing. This would therefore not necessarily enumerate all substandard living situations in a city, and perhaps would result in higher estimates of the population living in substandard housing if housing in nondesignated slum areas were enumerated.

Because no consistent records are kept on the number of houses that are “self-built” or the proportion of the total urban residential building stock that they occupy, a proxy variable is needed to estimate the extent of population living in self-built housing. From this, one may then draw some conclusions about the probable “quantum” of volunteer effort that must be invested in self-building in order to keep roofs over the heads of families who have no other means of protecting themselves from the elements. Furthermore, it would be possible to calculate the monetary value of such effort both in terms of de facto family savings and contribution to GDP. This latter computation is beyond the scope of this study, but may well be taken up by UNV at a later point when seeking to influence government policy toward support for self-help/self-built housing.

The proxy variable I have chosen to estimate the importance of volunteer efforts in self-built housing is the number of persons living in slums. We will see that current efforts to define slums in a way that will allow cross-city and cross-national comparisons should yield a reasonable estimate of populations living in self-built housing. Also, because the stock of dilapidated formal housing in the traditional center city is decreasing as a result of gentrification or clearance for nonresidential uses and because of stricter regulation and policing of central-city areas, new slums will increasingly be found in peri-urban areas. These will be largely constructed by the inhabitants themselves, with or without contributions from informal laborers living nearby.

While not all residences in urban slums house the poor and not all slum residences are poorly constructed and maintained, current research reveals that slums rarely meet minimum standard of “adequate housing” as defined by the United Nations. Based on a review of definitions used by local governments, statistical offices, institutions dealing with slum issues and public perceptions, UNHSP (United Nations

Human Settlements Programme)⁷ compiled the following list of characteristics describing slums:

- ◆ Area lacks basic services (clean water, sanitation, energy)
- ◆ Housing/building structures substandard or located in illegal sites, structures inadequate
- ◆ Housing overcrowded (as many as 5 persons in one room unit)
- ◆ Unhealthy living conditions and hazardous locations (open sewers, uncontrolled dumping of waste, polluted environments, etc. or in areas subject to natural hazards)
- ◆ Insecure tenure (absence of legal document entitling occupant to use of site)
- ◆ Irregular or informal settlements (do not follow land-use plans)
- ◆ High levels of poverty and social exclusion
- ◆ Minimum settlement size. (UNHSP 2003:11)

UNHSP further notes that conditions such as these “. . . are physical and statutory manifestations that create barriers to human and social development.” Thus, as discussed later in the paper, under certain conditions self-building can be a way of transforming slums into communities where these barriers are significantly dismantled. Finding and supporting these “certain” conditions should therefore be one of the aims of national and international technical assistance as well as aid programs, especially with respect to self-help housing.

In an effort to devise a more workable means to estimate the number of persons living in slums, a United Nations Expert Group proposed in October 2002 an

⁷ UN Center for Human Settlements (UNCHS), UN Habitat, and UN Human Settlements Programme (UNHSP) are names for the same United Nations family organization concerned with urban settlements. The change in the name and acronym of the organization over the years reflects subtle changes in the governance arrangements within the UN rather than in the nature of the institution’s mandate.

operational definition based on a reduced set of indicators reflecting the following: lack of access to safe water, sanitation, and other infrastructure; poor structural quality of housing; overcrowding; and insecure residential status. By this tentative method, UNHSP arrived at an estimate of 31.6 percent of the world's urban population living in inadequate conditions. For developing countries, the UNHSP's estimate is 43 percent, or about 870 million people (UNHSP 2003:12–13). Compared with an estimate of the slum population in developing countries for 1975 (Madavo), the increase during the 26 intervening years was more than 400 percent.⁸

This suggests that at least 4 out of every 10 urban residents in developing countries lives in self-built housing that in one aspect or another is inadequate. In other words, 4 of every 10 are exposed to physical conditions that are known to be harmful to human beings. UNHSP further concludes, on the basis of urban growth rates and declining rates of public investment in or other supports to low-income housing, that slum populations are likely to be growing rather than remaining stable or shrinking and that overall conditions in many cities are worsening as globalization reduces the supply of formal sector employment and tightens the belt around redistributive mechanisms.

It is because of these dire trends that actions must be taken to support poor people's efforts to house themselves adequately. To do so will require strategic investments by governments, international organizations, local and international NGOs, and the people themselves. The rest of this paper will focus on developing an understanding of self-built/self-help housing that may assist UNV in identifying its strategic, if not unique, contribution to this effort.

⁸ This estimate of change is "very approximate" as neither the definitions of slum populations used for these two years (1975 and 2001) nor the data collection systems were the same.

Approaches to Self-Built Housing

Today, individuals and families whose incomes are too low to allow them to rent or buy shelter must either borrow accommodations, share it with others, live in the open, or construct their own shelter. This last choice can be accomplished in different ways, ranging from stretching a sheet of canvas from an existing structure over a sidewalk space to joining a spontaneous invasion of a piece of open land and in the course of an evening assembling cardboard, tin, and wire into rough shack. Still others join groups of families in need of housing and organize themselves to occupy a piece of land that they hope to establish tenure on, first by constructing a rudimentary dwelling and then inhabiting it for a long period. Increasingly more frequent today, groups such as these align themselves with voluntary organizations that belong to the local and/or national housing movement.

The contribution of these organizations to the self-housing process may be simple or complicated. For example, the voluntary organization may simply channel homeless people to an open spot that may be ripe for invasion. Or one or more voluntary organizations may participate in an ongoing technical assistance process that includes organizing homeless people into a “social entity” in which some basic aspirations (for housing) and rules about achieving them collectively are agreed upon by all participants as a condition of membership in the group and eventual access to housing. In the more formalized cases, prospective “occupiers” agree to meet regularly before occupying land to keep abreast of developments in the environment for occupations, to organize crucial on-site tasks prior to the initial occupation of land, and to rehearse scenarios that might occur during the early phases of occupation. Members such as these will often pay dues into a common fund and keep track of attendance at group activities as a means of establishing seniority for land and housing assignments or other benefits that may be established for steady participation.

Once self-builders have occupied land, voluntary groups and for-profit organizations may assist them by helping to organize and carry out tasks such as security, fire protection, child care, and education, and to acquire skills necessary to participate fully in the construction, management, and maintenance of structures and community facilities desired by the “invaders,” and so forth.

In some cases, most notably in and around the city and State of São Paulo beginning in the late 1980s, homeless families organized by and working with voluntary organizations were able to negotiate with municipalities for access to state-controlled land for their nascent cooperatives. This happened predominately in cities led by mayors from left-wing political parties, especially the Worker’s Party.⁹

In some cases these residents’ organizations formalize themselves as housing cooperatives. In other cases, residents take over empty buildings in built-up zones of cities, where they may or may not “habilitate” the structure for human occupancy and/or establish forms of internal management and government. This is generally considered to be “squatting.” Nonetheless, it is a strategy that may lead not only to access to housing, but to improvements and true rehabilitation of the existing structure by the squatters.

Because of technical and financial constraints, urban self-building has generally been limited to structures not taller than three stories. However, there are examples in China, Yemen, Mali, and many other developing countries where traditional construction technology and materials have been used successfully in structures of six stories and more for hundreds of years (see Figure 2.1). Modern self-building experiences in urban settings have even begun to achieve these heights.¹⁰

⁹ The history of these experiences in the City of São Paulo is complex and riven with political intrigue. For an excellent case study of one such experience, see Rolnik (1997, 2003).

¹⁰ The problem has not been the absence of building technologies that allow self-builders to go higher, but the willingness of urban administrations who have contributed funds to multistory projects to allow public resources to be used to hire the equipment and specialized labor needed to build safely above three stories. See Rolnik (1997, 2003).



a)



b)



c)

Figure 2.1. Examples of Self-Built Housing of Six or More Stories. a) Fujian, China; b) Alkwa, Mali; c) Bab El, Yemen.

Aims of Self-Built Housing: More than Shelter

As noted at the beginning of this report, self-help housing has the potential to fulfill a range of societal functions. The most important and immediate of these is to provide shelter. But eventually it must integrate a range of services and environmental characteristics that meet the United Nations criteria of adequate housing. Second, by participating in self-help construction and eventual management of community assets and services, residents of previously marginalized groups may acquire skills, create employment, and acquire equity in a home that would be difficult to duplicate under other circumstances. Third, depending on how the self-help-building community organizes and manages itself, the process may promote among participants the capacity for self-reliance, an understanding of socially and environmentally sound

living, and high levels of affection for the physical community because public and private spaces embody evidence of the creativity and pride of the community. Under ideal circumstances, achievement of these broad aims creates a strong political consciousness among residents that reflects itself in an active solidarity with other members of society's marginalized groups.¹¹ *In effect, for members of society's most marginalized groups, the self-building process at its best transforms people whose capacity to take public-spirited action has heretofore been limited by the material conditions of their lives (inadequate habitat, employment, income, and self-confidence, both individually and collectively).*

It is therefore valuable to establish

- ◆ what forms of self-building best tend to achieve all these objectives, and
- ◆ how best to promote such forms of self-help building and the volunteer efforts they comprise.

To do so, it is first necessary to review some of the principal roles that volunteers play in the different self-building processes and then to identify the main obstacles to achieving the multiple goals of self-built housing. These are discussed in the next two sections, respectively.

Volunteer Contributions to Self-Built Housing

Volunteer roles have been enumerated in the literature on self-building to reflect the size, procedures, and “in-kind” contributions of persons participating in the process. Typically, in-kind contributions have been motivated either by necessity to

¹¹ During a review of studies prepared for presentation at Habitat II, researchers of the joint UNRISD-UNV action research project Volunteer Action and Local Democracy: Partnership for a Better Urban Future agreed that an apt definition of a “volunteer” must include that s/he as a minimum condition possessed the health, time, and mental capacity to decide of her/his free will to undertake an act of solidarity (Kumburgaz, Turkey 26–29 May 1996).

secure housing by those in need, or by others not necessarily in need of housing but who wish to act in solidarity with those who do. The motivations and actions of these two sets of volunteers should be understood clearly. Not least among the reasons for doing so is that they mutually influence the effectiveness of each other's efforts. Moreover, it may be argued that access to adequate housing is a necessary precondition for some individuals to be able to act on instincts of solidarity. It may be further argued—and there appears to be anecdotal evidence to support this—that the will to undertake public-spirited action may be awakened through a well-conceived and implemented self-building process.

Different approaches to self-building entail different physical, social, and political processes and fulfill different sets of human needs. These range from merely solving temporarily the need for physical shelter to the progressive fulfillment of the right to adequate housing, employment, and participation in decisions affecting one's family and community.

Table 2.1 lists the principle roles that “volunteers” play in a range of self-building processes. The schematic consists of five different forms or styles of self-help housing processes: the spontaneous individualistic process, the facilitated individual process, the facilitated collective process, the comprehensively organized and facilitated collective process, and the comprehensive mutual-assistance cooperative process.¹² The roles listed in the table are those that appeared with some consistency in a selection of self-help-housing case studies compiled in the latter half of the 1990s either as part of the UNCHS Best Practices Program or in my own research projects with UNRISD. The List of Best Practice cases reviewed is found in Appendix 1.

¹² Between adjacent pairs of the five self-help housing processes listed there are many gradations and variants. The five discussed in this paper form major categories, and there is at least one major difference between them. This schema reflects the link between increasing complexity of the planned self-help process and the comprehensiveness of the change expected from it. This table limits itself to the construction of shelter rather than to the takeover or “squatting” of an existing structure. The latter, though important in some cities, is far less common in most cities of the developing world.

Table 2.1. Volunteer Roles and Actors in Self-Built Housing

Forms of self-building processes					
Activities	Spontaneous Individual	Facilitated Individual (e.g., sites & services)	Facilitated Collective (e.g., sites & services)	Comprehensively Organized & Facilitated Collective	Comprehensive Mutual Assistance Cooperative
Site identification	I	N/S	N/S	N/S/P	N
Site preparation	I	I/S/P	N/S/P	N/S/P	N/S
Materials acquisition/fabrication	I	I	I	N/S/P	N/G
Construction of first shelter	I	I	I	I	N/G
Self-defense/policing	I	I	I/G	I/G	G
Child-care	I	I	I/G	I/G	G
Permitting	I	I	I	I	N/G
Construction training	NA	NA	NA	N	N/G
Design of shelter and common facilities	NA	NA	NA	N/P	N/G/P
Organizational development of community groups	NA	NA	NA	N/S	N/G
Management of construction	NA	NA	NA	N	G
Materials and site management	NA	NA	NA	N	G
Bookkeeping and financial management	NA	NA	NA	N	G
Government relations	NA	NA	NA	G/N/S	G
Community self-management	NA	NA	NA	G	G

Key: I = Individual or family self-builder
 G = Self-organized/Grassroots group
 N = NGO, inc. University or Church affiliated groups, unions
 S = Government, public authority/agency (any level)
 P = Private sector
 NA = Not Applicable

In the *spontaneous individual process* the family in need of housing plays almost all the volunteer roles. It identifies a location where building a shelter appears

feasible and where the risk of being removed immediately at high material cost to oneself is acceptable. The family then collects and transports building materials to the site, clears it for construction, and rapidly assembles a rudimentary structure there. Gaining permission to remain on the site, either from the legal private or public owner or from a de facto local boss, remains the sole responsibility of the family. Protecting the family and property, provisioning water, sanitation, and energy, and subsequent structural upgrading then become the daily concern of the newly housed family. Collective efforts to accomplish any of these objectives can be undertaken only if some form of mutual assistance can be agreed upon among co-settlers. In the absence of an external organizing force, whether mutual assistance among settlers within close proximity to one another will eventually become the basis for community organization and neighborhood decision making depends greatly on the personal characteristics of the settlers. Deep poverty and heterogeneity of language and culture among settlers often retards this process.

In the *facilitated individual process*, such as sites and services projects, some of the initial burdens of settlement are lightened by the participation of government authorities and/or NGOs. This is particularly beneficial when it reduces the time needed to search for an appropriate site, and when the site has been cleared and provided with minimal essential services. Still, mutual assistance for self-protection, structural and service upgrading, and collective decision making will be left to the will of the settlers.

In the *facilitated collective process*, settlers receive the same benefits as in the *facilitated individual process*. The main difference is that in the latter case, settlers arrive at the site as members of a group. As such, they may have already received guidance about how to organize mutual assistance for self-defense, day-care services for families needing it, construction and environmental upgrading, and relations with

representatives of the owner/political bosses concerned. The main benefit, however, may rest with the moral support that derives from a sense of belonging to a group and knowing that in moments of difficulty, there is someone nearby to turn to for help.

The degree of cohesiveness of the group and the quality of its leadership may vary widely. In some cases, NGOs or the local authority assemble prospective settlers into an association of sorts with the aim of making it easier to assist a group that can internally provide mutual assistance, a range of skills, and economies of scale to the construction process, for example. But a newly formed group is less likely to function harmoniously than one that has been planning its settlement process for a long time.

The *comprehensively assisted and organized collective process* (hereafter, *comprehensive collective*) differs from the simpler forms because public, private, and community actors may be involved in working with prospective settlers on all aspects of planning for the self-building process as well as in later phases including construction, site management, and even organizational development, housing finance, upgrading of service access, and so forth. Compared with the simpler forms of self-building, the *comprehensive collective* form involves an expanded role for outside actors and reflects a higher degree of commitment on the part of government and/or social organizations to sustaining a process of improvement in the newly settled area. In some of the most formalized processes, the community organization incorporates itself as a not-for-profit entity through which it can receive and disburse resources from the government, sign business contracts, and represent community interests before courts and government administrative units.

A special and noteworthy case of the *comprehensive collective* form is the *comprehensive mutual-assistance cooperative*. In some of the most advanced examples of this form of self-building, prospective settlers have worked extensively with NGOs to establish functioning resident committees and a self-governing body

from well before the physical settlement process begins. The purpose of the pre-settlement organizational development is to instill in the settlers an understanding of democratic processes that will guide them through the countless decisions that will arise regularly during the development of their physical and social community. These close links to NGOs in the housing movements or to trade unions and even municipal authorities may continue long after the construction is complete: experienced personnel from one cooperative project may be called upon to assist in the formation or training of new cooperatives, or to help draft legislation supportive of cooperative housing development.

According to the UNCHS 2001 Global Report on Human Settlements, housing cooperatives have the “potential to provide low-income households with improved access to adequate housing because they:

- ◆ facilitate the pooling of resources and lower individual housing costs
- ◆ foster collective action and self-help
- ◆ increase creditworthiness
- ◆ limit or prevent speculation. (2001:208–9)

UNCHS then attributed this institutional potential to the cooperative’s governance principles of collective ownership and democratic management.¹³

Some of the most successful and varied forms of mutual-assistance housing cooperatives began appearing in Uruguay in the mid-1960s. Were they not rigorously suppressed by the military government between 1973 and 1985, the mutual-assistance cooperative housing movement might be far more widespread today than it is.

¹³ See detailed case studies demonstrating how these principles have influenced individual housing cooperatives in Montevideo, Uruguay and in São Paulo (Rolnik 1998, 2003) and Fortaleza (2001), Brazil.

Nonetheless, the Uruguayan experience has been successful enough to inspire housing movements throughout Latin America.

This success also owed much to strong partnerships between local authorities, CBOs, and NGOs, especially in Montevideo. The NGO FUCVAM, established in 1970, has provided continuous technical assistance to Uruguayan cooperatives by developing innovative construction methods, materials, and material production processes; providing training to grassroots communities, policy advice to government, as well as advocacy with the public and other services. Throughout the 1990s Montevideo's municipal government was led by an architect whose earlier professional life involved him in the cooperative housing movement. Because of his confidence in the validity of the mutual-assistance cooperative housing model, he used his influence to establish a municipal "land bank," the aim of which was to acquire and hold land and buildings within the core city that could be developed by mutual assistance cooperatives of very low-income residents. By doing so, it saves the prospective cooperative from having to search for and buy land on their own—a truly daunting if not impossible task organizationally and financially for the city's low-income residents. Then, when a cooperative is sufficiently mature to begin construction or renovation on the property, the city sells it to the cooperative.

The cooperative purchases the property with the proceeds of a loan equal to the construction costs, minus 15 percent, which is calculated as the value of mutual aid labor. Some of the special characteristics of Uruguay's mutual assistance characteristics are described in the following section.

Mutual Assistance Cooperative Housing in Uruguay: Much more than a house . . .

Mutual assistance cooperative housing in Uruguay has demonstrated a range of socially valuable practices and outcomes. Not least among these would be reducing overall costs by 20 percent while delivering a better-designed and more comfortable home than available for the same price in the private market; managing to reuse or recycle large portions of construction materials, equipment, and architectural finishings when rehabilitating existing structures; maximizing the use of nonspecialized labor throughout the construction process; creating public spaces that are better-appreciated and cared-for than in public and many private housing complexes; sustaining themselves financially even for low-income groups, and so forth. Those intimately involved in assisting these processes argue, however, that such successes are achieved and sustained and further enhanced over time because of the social processes that take place during the formation of the cooperative and the construction of its physical premises:

The Uruguayan experience of mutual-aid cooperative housing is inseparably linked to self-organisation and grass-roots participation, as well as to the application of fundamental cooperative principles—in the organizational structure, in the building process and in the proposal of community-oriented social development.

It promotes values such as solidarity, democracy, and mutual respect, which are different and even opposed to those of individualism and competition, currently prevailing in modern societies. Mutual aid, which implies the joint effort of every beneficiary family, not only of those acting as leaders of the group, is a fundamental factor for the consolidation of those values. That is why even if it were possible to omit mutual aid as an economic necessity in order to reduce housing costs, it is important to retain it as a way to strengthen these values.

Moreover, the cooperation and self-help capacities achieved in this process are later transferred to different levels to fulfil other family and community needs, through the cooperative itself or by other forms of popular organisations

initiated within the cooperative movement. Cooperatives have thus fostered, either through their own actions or by seeking both state and community intervention, solutions to the widest range of problems.

These include:

Basic services: urban infrastructure (water, sewage disposal, electricity, home waste collection, transportation), culture (kindergartens and primary schools, day-care centres, public libraries, artistic activities, sports and recreational facilities), health (multipurpose community clinics, preventive medicine, dental and psychological assistance) and food (public meals, consumers' cooperatives) through community-managed programs.

Solidarity networks: Community support to families affected by temporary social or economic hardship (unemployment, labour strikes, and—during the past dictatorship period—also political repression). This is related to the so-called “relief fund” (fondo de socorro), constituted in each cooperative with monthly contributions from the members themselves, another token of mutual aid.

Non-formal education: Functioning of the cooperative as a social and economic enterprise calls for a permanent effort on the part of its members to attain cooperative education and training, beginning with the constituent stage and extending to the building and community living process. This permanent requirement for training and integration of knowledge and experience acts as a genuine school of systematic education.”¹⁴

The next section selectively reviews the literature on the factors that have prevented self-help housing from becoming a solution to the urban housing crisis in the developing world.

¹⁴ Quoted from http://www.rosalux.de/engl/projects/international/Central_America/athenaeum.htm. Original source is FUCVAM Habitat II Presentation. <http://www.wisc.edu/uwcc/icic/today/housing/Uruguay--Housing--Self-Management--Comm1.html> accessed 18 Feb 2004. Uruguay: Housing, Self-Management, Community Empowerment: The Coop Experience

Obstacles to Successful Self-Help Housing

For a family whose only choice in realizing its right to adequate housing is through self-building, there are many obstacles to success. These may influence the family's chances of success directly and others indirectly. In rapid succession, if not always simultaneously, the family must cope with challenges to the four attributes of adequate housing: *affordability*, *livability*, *security*, and *sustainability*. The following paragraphs identify these challenges.

Affordability is principally determined by the cost of accessing land on which to build, acquiring building materials and tools, hiring additional labor/technology if needed, and acquiring skills in construction, among other things, needed to establish a first rudimentary shelter.

With the exception of the most precariously habitable urban land, most self-builders do not immediately purchase the land on which they build their homes. More often than not, “the largest single urban land tenure category in many developing countries is that of extra-legal land developments. These include a wide range of land development practices, from squatting and unauthorized sub-divisions, to the construction on registered land of houses that have not been officially sanctioned” (DPU 2002:128). But central-city land that can be accessed by these forms of tenure are ever more rare.¹⁵ The high and rising cost of land in these areas, which are now almost universally scheduled for their “highest usage” because of the reform and privatization of urban land markets, prevents legal use by the neediest groups. As a result, as noted earlier, new self-built settlements tend to be peri-urban, and tenure questions are initially left unsettled and thus precarious.

¹⁵ In 1996 UNCHS (244) pointed out that the commercialization of formal and informal urban land markets was causing an increasing concentration of low-income groups on a small proportion of the land area. Already by 1987, the wealthiest 2 percent of Dhaka's residents occupied the same amount of the city's residential area as the poorest 70 percent. The poorest 2.8 million of Dhaka's residents lived on seven square kilometers of land (Islam 1992, quoted in UNCHS 1996:242).

Even rudimentary building materials in metropolitan areas have become relatively more expensive for self-builders in recent decades (Ward:5).¹⁶ At the same time, new materials, production processes, and low-cost building designs have been developed. These can reduce overall construction costs while improving the quality of homes for self-builders. However, some of these may be better suited for disaster relief than for more usual self-building in peri-urban areas if capital-intensive mass-production techniques are employed or if the design of the structure is not well suited to local cultural practices.

Various studies beginning with early works by Turner assumed that self-builders are resourceful enough to build their own homes or to hire others to do all or part of the job for them. In more recent situations where single mothers or other self-builders with no construction experience have joined self-building processes, NGOs or CBOs have been important in transferring skills to these groups. The existence and quality of the training these groups can give, or their role in arranging the bartering of other services (e.g., child care, food preparation and serving, grounds-keeping, night security, etc.) for construction labor can thus be an important factor. The complete absence of access to such training, on the other hand, is a significant obstacle for builders. This situation has become more apparent in major metropolitan areas where the high costs of land for self-building have necessitated more and more vertical construction, that is, the construction of apartment blocks of four or more stories in height.

¹⁶ I have not found references to systematic research on this question. Nonetheless, the high degree of competition that now exists in the formal and informal recycling sector in metropolitan areas of developing countries suggests that scavenging for one's own makeshift materials would not be easy for a nonprofessional (for more on this competition, see Rolnik and Cymbalista 2003). At the same time, many building materials that are fabricated from tradable commodities are likely to have increased as well by virtue of their integration into formal processing and trade channels, many of which imply the influence of international standards and pricing.

A groundbreaking example of this began in São Paulo, Brazil, in the early 1990s. In one case, the Apuaña *mutirao* was forced to adopt a design of four stories. Special equipment and highly skilled laborers were needed to carry out certain aspects of construction. After evaluation of the costs and skills that would be required to complete the work, the architectural NGO assisting the community trained residents to build parts of the foundation that would have otherwise required specialized workers at a high cost to the community. But other tasks that could be carried out by the community had to be hired in. First, however, the NGO, working with residents and the local government, had to obtain special permission to use public funds—intended only for the purchase of construction materials—to hire special equipment and operators. Even more recently, self-builders have begun to press for access to abandoned apartment buildings in city centers. In situations where main structural elements or the electrical, water, or sanitation systems have deteriorated seriously, rehabilitation of the buildings requires, again, more skilled labor than the average first-time self-builder could manage. Similarly, Ward has suggested that renovation of continuously expanded permanent structures dating from three or four decades ago may also be more complicated than building the original core structure (Turner; Rolnik & Cymbalista; and Ward.)

Once a rudimentary shelter is established, the struggle for *livability* ensues. This entails elaborating a permanent structure that is both strong enough and designed in a way to permit safe habitation during normal and extreme weather experienced in the locality. This concept also implies sufficient space adequately divided, ventilation, and access to clean water, sanitation, and energy, such that young and old, male and female live in conditions that do not jeopardize their physical or psychological development or well-being.

Affordability issues may also affect livability to the extent that they block accession to or evidence of tenure. If legal evidence of secure tenure can be neither purchased nor rented, self-builder households will find it difficult to borrow money to upgrade their homes, such as to cover the large expenditures for one-time capital costs of connecting to city water and sanitation systems. On the other hand, even if tenure were affordable in principle, cumbersome regulations, high fees, or illegal charges encountered during efforts to register tenure may raise the costs of this process beyond affordability, or to a level that effectively prevents residents from upgrading their structures in a timely way. Regulations pertaining to urban planning (zoning, land use, etc.) and administration (features of buildings and lots, approval procedures for expansions or additions to structures) also have proven to increase costs and slow processes by which residents legally improve their property.¹⁷

Gilbert (2000) and others have described the additional problem of financing for self-built housing, particularly from the formal sector. Although governments have not generally been involved in massive-scale lending to self-help housers, in recent years they have been scaling back on their investments in public or low-income housing. This, along with the impacts of weakening economies in many developing countries in the 1990s, will have increased the pressure on existing affordable housing.¹⁸

Formal private-sector institutions have not shown interest in the self-help housing market, usually for several reasons: First, lenders are biased toward completed

¹⁷ This paragraph is based on Payne (2002).

¹⁸ An ongoing study on the housing situation in Rosario, Argentina, shows that middle- and upper-middle-class families, having been seriously affected by the economic downturn in their city over the past half-decade, have been moving from solid, central-city locations, to in-fill neighborhoods between the core city and its less-well-off inner peripheral neighborhoods. Until the late 1990s, the in-fill neighborhoods held little appeal for the middle class but hold greater appeal today because they afford acceptable levels of access to the city center but without the high land and housing costs (Salgado and Woeflin).

owner-occupied housing—loans for rental or condominium housing, or for house improvements or unfinished core houses on serviced sites, are rare. Second, mortgage lenders find it difficult to verify self-employment incomes of low-income community members. Third, lenders do not trust poor people to repay their loans. Fourth, lenders are put off by the low profitability on small loans. At the same time, significant amounts of microcredit issued through NGOs have yet to find their way into the self-building market. It seems most of these resources have been directed to working-capital loans for enterprises in the form of frequent, small amounts. Typically such loans are well below the size of funds needed for housing (Ferguson, cited in Gilbert 2000:167).

Closely connected in time and necessity to the issue of livability is that of *security*: security of tenure; security against crime, violence, anomie, and social exclusion; security against natural and man-made disasters. There now appears to be a general consensus among urban-development professionals, whether working in city governments, international agencies, or NGOs, that secure tenure extended broadly across a community is the bedrock on which self-building can proceed from shelter to decent housing and long-term community development. Without secure tenure, residents' sense of insecurity prevents them from investing significantly in their own shelter, in consenting to pay the relatively large connection fees for water, sanitation, and electricity, and from contributing labor or money to upgrading or maintaining minimally adequate environmental conditions and equipment within the community. Moser (1997) and others have shown that neighborhoods in Kingston, Jamaica, with the worst housing and community environmental conditions were among the most violent. And, because of prevailing levels of violence, efforts to upgrade these communities were far more difficult than in other low-income neighborhoods. Hence, poor housing and community environmental conditions tend to spawn not only poor

health but violence, which helps to maintain high levels of poverty. It also compromises efforts to improve human capital in the community by giving residents a healthy environment.

Insecurity of tenure also serves to make residents more vulnerable to exploitation by criminals, politicians, or local bosses. Money that might otherwise be invested in housing or land—a form of savings—is instead spent on obtaining promises of protection from eviction. Furthermore, with banking facilities largely absent in the poorest communities, savings are held in cash, either on the person or in the home. These resources are more easily lost or robbed than those held in safe storage. Worse yet, in the absence of clear and secure tenure rights, residents are at greater risk in the aftermath of natural disasters, fires, sectarian riots, or other activities that result in large-scale destruction of property. The confusion and desperation following such events often leads to new sets of negotiations and dependencies for those whose property has been destroyed. Reports from numerous cities in India where communal strife occurred frequently from the 1980s to the present have resulted in large-scale reorganization (ghettoization) of neighborhoods along religious lines. In most of these cases, the weakest sectors of the population have been further marginalized.¹⁹

Finally, even if self-built communities create decent homes and neighborhoods, other forces challenge their *sustainability*. Affordability, livability, and security cannot be maintained indefinitely if the families in these communities cannot find and sustain adequate sources of income. It stands to reason that when income falls to subsistence levels (i.e., covering the cost of a minimum food basket and essential medicines),

¹⁹ For a detailed description of the consequences of insecure tenure for improvements in housing and environmental sanitation and for personal security in Mumbai (Bombay), India, see YUVA. To understand how “ghettoization” along communal/religious lines occurs in that same city and others in India, see Khotari and Contractor. For a discussion of the links between urban renewal, ghettoization, communal discord, and global economic integration in Ahmedabad, India, see DaCosta.

other household expenditures will be curtailed. If this persists long enough, the consequences of the failure to maintain the quality of shelter or to pay water and electricity bills can become grave. Some of the main reasons leading to income shortfalls in self-built neighborhoods include the following.

The large distance between home and paid employment. Many self-built housing sites are located in the extreme peripheries of metropolitan areas. The dearth of inexpensive and relatively rapid public or private transportation networks serving these neighborhoods forces residents into difficult choices. The cost of commuting may consume a large part of the worker's earned income and his/her nonworking waking hours. Commuting times of four hours per day are not uncommon for residents of peripheral communities in some of the largest cities in the developing world.²⁰ For women commuters, the day often begins and ends in a dangerous walk through darkened allies and paths between home and the nearest transport depot. The absence of both parents from the home for such long periods often necessitates additional costs for child care, or the worse option of leaving children by themselves or with others who may not be able to care for them adequately. Long-distance commutes also negatively impact the ability of community members to participate in community-management or community-improvement activities. This may also negatively influence the security and environmental quality of the neighborhood, as well as the quality of governance that is possible in an already overworked community.²¹

²⁰ According to a recent World Bank (2001:310) report on Mexico, "the poor suffer the most because they live in peri-urban areas where the available public transport services are often badly organized and inadequate in terms of level of service and area served. A large percentage of the urban poor have to make several transfers and take hours to reach their destinations. Too often these trips cost more than 20 percent of their income and are made in unsafe buses." The groundbreaking study by CEBRAP (1978) documented the emergence of conditions such as these for São Paulo's urban poor in the midst of the "Brazilian Miracle."

²¹ In their analysis of women's changing roles in low-income urban communities for a joint UNV-UNRISD action research project, Lind and Farmelo note that the affects of austerity over the past two decades in Latin America and elsewhere forced women to assume triple burdens, i.e., household reproduction, income generation through employment, and maintenance of the management of their

A more general threat for sustaining decent housing and healthy communities is that of declining real household incomes. In developing countries, and especially in cities where the informal sector already provides the majority of employment opportunities, it is difficult to monitor income levels accurately. However, unemployment data provide some insight into household well-being. For those countries reporting data to the ILO in the 1990s, the trends were somber: in 11 of 17 Asian and Pacific economies, unemployment rates increased. In the 37 Latin America and the Caribbean states, unemployment rates increased in 15 and decreased in 7, with the rest remaining relatively stable. Twelve sub-Saharan states showed unemployment rates in the high double digits. Only Nigeria and Zimbabwe reported unemployment rates of less than 7 percent after 1995 (UNHSP 2003:99).

To this point, much of the discussion of self-building or self-help housing has been geared to the construction of shelter for ownership by individuals. There is, however, continuing interest in self-help housing developed by mutual assistance cooperatives, despite their relatively small contribution to relieving the housing deficit of the poor. Adherents to the cooperative movement cite long-standing governmental biases encouraging traditional forms of home ownership as the principal reason for eschewing mutual assistance cooperatives. Other reasons may include the more complex governance requirements of cooperative housing, the small amount of public or private resources available to them, and the dearth of institutional supports for cooperative housing. Within this last category would be legal and administrative frameworks encouraging urban governments to work with cooperatives, tax advantages similar to home ownership, the existence of training programs for prospective housing-cooperative participants, and so forth.²²

local environment and community. They ask whether these roles are simultaneously sustainable without an active role for the state.

²² In its review of the obstacles to establishing housing cooperatives, UNCHS (2001:209) highlighted the necessity of having a strong catalytic agent to mobilize low-income households into a group; the

This cursory review of constraints on self-help building shows that many factors can inhibit the construction of adequate housing and a healthy community. These range, first, from issues of immediate affordability of materials and access to land on which to establish a first shelter; then to the implantation of public amenities and access to them at affordable prices to make the shelter livable and healthy year-round; and, next, to physical security against theft, violence, and natural and man-made disasters; and, finally, to the capacity of households and communities to maintain the quality of the investments they have made in their homes and communities over a long period of time. The final section of this report seeks to identify those constraints on which UNV may be uniquely suited to work, and to sketch out how UNV might approach these problems.

What Can UNV Do to Promote the Realization of the Right to Adequate Housing through Self-Building Processes?

It may be reasonably argued that self-built housing, either by individuals acting on their own behalf or collectively, will be one of the largest, if not the largest, voluntary activity taking place in urban areas in the developing world over the next several decades. The pace of rural–urban migration and the parallel process of the wholesale urbanization of poverty make this appear inevitable.²³ UNV, as the UN agency responsible for concerted thinking and action in support of volunteer action

paucity of managerial, legal, or financial expertise among members; and the opportunity costs to poor people of involvement in collective action and management.

²³ Attention to humanitarian disasters, whether entirely man-made or natural or somewhere in between, will also engage massive voluntary responses, as will traditional forms of charity and more socially progressive forms of voluntary action by the middle classes of both developed and developing countries. But these are likely to pale in comparison with the numbers of hours and monetary value of contributions by people attempting to secure adequate housing in urban areas of the developing world. Never before in history have three billion poor urban dwellers simultaneously engaged in building or repairing homes However, “women’s work,” such as caring for children, the elderly, and the sick—predominantly undertaken by women and girls—taken together may rival the hours and value spent in the production of housing.

from the local to global level, may therefore wish to adopt strategies to understand these processes and then to disseminate the knowledge and information that society needs to make the best use of these volunteer impulses and energies. Having improved its analysis of self-building, UNV may then seek to channel this new knowledge to international organizations, national governments, and civil society organizations at all levels. The crucial aspect of this will be less in the technical aspects of self-built/self-help housing: physical design, the development of low-cost materials, or even the formulation of appropriate legal/legislative frameworks supportive of these processes. Many organizations are already making good progress in these areas. Rather, I would advise UNV to highlight and promote the “social inventions”²⁴ necessary to bring together these technical innovations into processes that are economically efficient, politically feasible, and socially sustainable.²⁵ Should these characteristics come together, one might even think of the volunteer effort as “transforming” societies as a whole.

In most successful pilot projects of self-built housing, local- and higher-level authorities, NGOs, and members of marginalized communities contribute in a concerted fashion the social, economic, and legal resources needed to empower individuals and groups to collectively build healthy and sustainable homes and communities. The main obstacle to these processes is the lack of political will on the part of governments to enact and implement legislation that unlocks these resources on a large scale. Powerful vested interests of urban land owners, large construction companies, real estate developers, and financial institutions that benefit from the

²⁴ A social invention is a new law, organization, or procedure that changes the ways in which people relate to themselves or to each other, either individually or collectively. Conger (2–3) provides a brief but fascinating chronology of exemplary laws, organizations, and procedures that qualify as “social inventions.”

²⁵ “Socially sustainable” in this context would be the achievement and maintenance of adequate housing for a growing proportion of the global population.

production of “formal” housing influence political processes to prevent urban decision makers from acting on what they know to be valid approaches to adequately housing the burgeoning masses of urban poor.

UNV’s response could be to act at the global level to promote an understanding of “flagship” mutual assistance/cooperative/self-building programs and their eventual limitations. Some of the steps that could be taken would include to

- ◆ Commission a blue-ribbon panel comprising representatives (in a voluntary capacity) from international NGOs, UN Agencies (including IFIs), grassroots organizations, and domestic development NGOs, and independent urban-governance specialists to undertake an in-depth, rolling analysis of these experiences.²⁶ This group should publish an annual report in conjunction with the UN’s Special Rapporteur (SR) on the Right to Adequate Housing of progress of specific countries (and possibly cities) in establishing an “enabling environment” for self-built housing.
- ◆ Establish a multilingual website for the exchange of experience among organizations participating in self-built housing experiences. The website would highlight, among other things, detailed aspects of collaborations among local authorities, NGOs, and community organizations in their efforts to implement holistic urban upgrading through collective self-building processes; and examples of the roles and responsibilities of government agencies, NGOs, grassroots organizations, and international donor agencies in promoting self-building processes.
- ◆ Establish, in conjunction with SR and the Blue-Ribbon Panel, indicators for monitoring the progress of national and local governments in supporting self-building processes that demonstrate high promise in improving and

²⁶ UNV has already taken the commendable step of commissioning an analysis of a range of mutirao (mutual assistance) cooperative housing developments in Brazil.

maintaining access to decent housing for low- and very-low-income urban residents. The indicator system would be elaborated in sufficient detail and simplicity of description so that grassroots groups could themselves apply the principles of monitoring in their own community.

These actions will not necessarily make a great difference unless the interest groups who oppose pro-poor self-building processes can be co-opted to support change or forced to give up some of the benefits they derive from the status quo. In democratic societies, this can be done, only with great difficulty, through some combination of the ballot box, independent trade-union movements, or legal-administrative processes that change the relative balance of power in society to favor the poor. It is unlikely, however, that such forces will come about without the poor participating fully in the political process pursuing such goals. In cities with formally democratic processes and over half the population living in slums, the poor are largely excluded from both self-development and from establishing their own political voice. Their organizations are too weak. Their access to education, health care, clean water, and sanitation are severely compromised. Their environments and social networks are under maximum stress. Such conditions are far more likely to lead to anomy than to concerted, well-directed political force.

- ◆ UNV may thus wish to give special attention to promoting those self-help processes that empower low-income citizens to do for themselves what they have to do and to forge the alliances that are needed to elicit fair and effective actions on their behalf by governments and the market. UNV's efforts may thus focus on processes that create or further the conditions of active citizenship through self-building processes. The author's untested hypothesis is that self-building processes such as the mutirao (mutual assistance housing

cooperatives) as practiced in different parts of Brazil and Uruguay are more likely to awaken the citizen's consciousness than more-limited self-building experiences that combine in piecemeal fashion grants or loans, low-cost materials, and access to land without seeking to put the process of house construction in its larger political, economic context of community- and nation-building.²⁷ However, cooperatives such as these developed in a particular institutional context that may not be replicated easily outside the Southern Cone of Latin America. Learning how to adapt these experiences to local conditions, or how to promote achievement of the necessary and sufficient conditions to allow such models to work elsewhere, is an important challenge, and perhaps one that UNV should take on by sponsoring exchanges among housing specialists and housing movement activists in different countries.

Although many countries have recently reduced their reliance on forced evictions to clear urban land of informal settlements, there remain, sadly, far too many instances of this inhuman behavior. In some fast-growing cities of Asia, forced evictions are becoming more frequent. The causes range from city beautification schemes, to mass relocations in the face of mega-infrastructure projects, to urban

²⁷ Burgess has argued that self-building of homes by low-income urban residents should not be encouraged because it represents a form of "double-exploitation." The urban worker, being unable to earn a salary that allows him/her to rent or purchase adequate housing with the wages of employment, must then exploit himself in his nonworking time by providing his own means of reproduction. In the present environment, where decent housing for low-income populations in developing (and developed) countries is almost nonexistent and is believed to be growing scarcer, this argument is moot. Poor people will either house themselves or go without. The key question is whether they will live in healthy homes and settlements. As the eventual majority of society, the urban poor's chances of success will depend to a large extent on their ability to exert the pressure needed to bring about social change. It is my impression that the long-term political socialization that occurs in some of these mutual assistance housing cooperatives provides one of the more promising avenues for developing the economic strength and political consciousness of the poor. It is from this point that collectively they may transform themselves and society by progressively lessening inegalitarian relationships that they have historically endured.

environmental improvements aimed at attracting international sporting events and cultural events. Today, when informal settlements or existing legal housing is destroyed without adequate compensation, many residents are unable to afford new mass-produced, low-income housing; nor do they have the skills or knowledge to avail themselves of the self-building option. Nor can they easily find suitable employment or means of accessing the social networks that sustained them in their former location. For these reasons, it is best to avoid evictions and instead help residents improve/renovate their housing incrementally. But this cannot happen unless forced evictions are avoided. Further more, it would be well to:

- ◆ Establish links with the Habitat International Coalition and COHRE (Center on Housing Rights and Evictions) to understand how to promote best practices in the preventing of evictions from and the destruction of self-built housing under the guise of urban development, when more socially sustainable options are viable.
- ◆ Prevent destruction of self-built housing (including deficient housing) resulting from sectarian violence (Ahmedabad and Mumbai, India, the Balkans, Palestine), as perhaps with “White Helmets” during periods of conflict.

Finally, the absence of efficient and affordable public transport necessitates strategies to “grow” employment with adequate wages in close proximity to the homes of low-income residents, whether in center-city slums or peripheral ones. If current trends continue, the jobs that will be created in peri-urban settlements will be in informal sector microenterprises, which already employ up to half of the workforce in many cities in developing countries. Among the most important industries for such settlements will be shelter construction and improvement. Indeed, Setchell (9–13), drawing from his own experience in the field of disaster relief and on work by Tipple

(1999) and Kellet and Tipple, estimates that the combined employment-creation effect, or *employment multiplier*, of one job created in low-cost, labor-intensive housing production/upgrading may be as high as six. Setchell calculates the multiplier as follows: “one direct livelihood opportunity in shelter provision and improvement; two opportunities associated with backward linkage activities; one in non-HBE (home-based enterprise) forward linkage activities; and two in HBE activities.”

Many of these shelter-oriented activities as well as the gamut of other microenterprises found in peri-urban and slum settlements locate themselves in the spaces adjacent to or inside the proprietor’s home. Without careful planning and execution of the home-working space—including its connections to essential services, the handling of production waste, and the ingress of inputs and egress of output—the mixing of economic and social reproduction under one roof can harm the health of family members, other workers, and neighbors. The higher the density of mixed-use establishments, the greater are the threats to the environment and human health. Holistic planning for the high-density, mixed-use low-income community is therefore crucial if healthy living and working conditions are to be established and maintained. Planning of this kind by residents has been rare in spontaneous or degraded core neighborhoods. Nonetheless, precedents do exist for both kinds of communities imposing sounder uses of both public and private space after settlement has occurred.²⁸

- ◆ UNV’s contribution to promoting holistic planning for mixed-use microenterprise neighborhoods would be to identify, perhaps in collaboration with UN Habitat, a range of cases of holistic planning experiences in spontaneous settlements and degraded urban centers that have managed to

²⁸ See, for example, cases of “integral development” in the Northern and Eastern Cones of Lima from the late 1980s to the present (Joseph), the cases of Mutirao 50 and Comunidades in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza in the 1990s (Correa de Oliveira), and ongoing efforts of “Microenergia” in Argentina described in the brief case in Appendix 2.B.

accommodate and promote microenterprises without sacrificing the health of local families, workers, or the environment. UNV could then work with specialists to codify or systematize the processes and lessons of these experiences and to publish them on its website in the UN languages. A longer-range goal might then be to establish a distance-learning program for holistic grassroots planners, whose “teachers” would be the leaders and participants of some of the successful cases UNV documents. These “distance professors” would be, of course, UNVs.

APPENDIX 2.A:

Unchs Best Practices: Homelessness and Housing

1. Appropriate Grassroot Level Intervention for Cost-effective Housing—India
2. Batikent Project—Turkey
3. Build Together: The National Housing Programme—Namibia
4. Burgerziekenhuis Hospital, Amsterdam—The Netherlands
5. Community Action Planning (CAP) Methodology—Sri Lanka
6. Co-operative Housing in Canada: A Model for Empowered Communities—Canada
7. Cost Effective Environment Friendly (CEEF) Shelter Development Strategy—India
8. Frauen-Werk-Stadt—A Housing Project by and for Women in Vienna—Austria
9. Graduated Plan of the City of Vienna for the Reintegration of Homeless—Austria
10. Homeless Families Program—USA
11. Housing Program for Rural Areas (Foundation Costa Rica—Canada)—Costa Rica
12. Housing Settlement Project in Shanghai—China
13. Improving Living Environments for the Low-Income Households—Saudi Arabia
14. Khuda-Ki-Basti—Innovation and Success in Sheltering the Poor—Pakistan
15. Lesotho Urban Upgrading Project (LUUP)—Lesotho
16. Low-Cost Housing—Malawi
17. Project on Sites and Services for Low-Income Family Groups—Argentina
18. Rough Sleepers Initiative (RSI) in Central London—United Kingdom
19. Self Built Affordable Homes to Rent—United Kingdom
20. Self-Contained Housing Delivery System—Thailand
21. Self-help Housing: Mutirao 50, Fortaleza—Brazil
22. Self-Management in Popular Shelter and Habitat Program—Venezuela
23. Shelter Upgrading in Agadir—Morocco
24. Single Family Housing Project in Timisoara—Romania
25. Settlement Upgrading Project (DUA/GTZ Project)—Senegal

Source of Best Practice Information: All of the program summaries are taken from the Best Practices Database compiled by UN-Habitat and with the support of the UNESCO-MOST Clearing House. The database is extensive and contains 700 examples of good and best practices which were reviewed and judged by independent technical committees and juries for the Habitat II City Summit in Istanbul in 1996, and

for the Dubai International Awards for Best Practices in Improving the Living Environment, in 1998. The summaries of selected good and best practices are included in the MOST Database because of their particular relevance to or impact on poverty eradication and on social cohesion. More information on the Best Practices Database, the Best Practices & Local Leadership Programme, and the Dubai International Awards can be obtained by contacting:

Best Practices & Local Leadership Programme
UN-Habitat
P.O. Box 30030
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: (254-2) 623029
Fax: (254-2) 623080
Homepage: <http://www.sustainabledevelopment.org/blp/> ;
Database: <http://www.bestpractices.org/>

APPENDIX 2.B: The Microenergia Egalitarian Development Approach: From Micro-Business Neighbourhood Networks to Decent Housing²⁹

Microenergia is a not-for-profit association from Argentina that believes in egalitarian development built on neighbourhood participation, micro-business networking and decent housing for low income communities. The hypothesis supported is that such communities naturally have the capacities to organize themselves to channel positive neighbourhood synergies of solidarity and enterprise, which are prerequisites for egalitarian development and the defense of human rights. Microenergia seeks out communities with these characteristics in order to provide guidance and support in their efforts to achieve egalitarian development. Microenergia encourages full participation of residents in discussing and planning concrete actions to solve those problems affecting the whole community, with a special focus on developing micro-business networks to alleviate urgent problems of poverty and employment.

In these communities, micro-enterprise is the natural survival response. A broad spectrum of artisan products are normally developed and marketed informally but being the profit very small and the strategy based on individual efforts, results impossible to generate the needed capital to grow and make the business more profitable. Microenergia invites to submit individual micro-business proposals, providing micro-credits, training, marketing information and trade possibilities for neighbors integrating network. Through on job training, focus on micro-business, in parallel to social development projects, the egalitarian development process is encouraged. A moral of social inclusion arise as results of community training and concrete achievements of community improvement. The participation through the best products in regional and international fair trade create a sense of local pride and

²⁹ With the kind permission of Fernando Murillo, Microenergia.

belonging to the community. This is followed up by decent housing improvements, afforded by the growing micro-business profits, accommodating habitat and micro-business infrastructures, normally become the trade mark of the micro-business neighbourhood networks.

The egalitarian commitment is assumed in terms of cross subsidies from successful micro-business networks to social projects attending the more urgent community problems. In brief, the approach consists of five basic components: Training, micro-credits, community infrastructure, housing and fair trade (see Figure A.1). Each component contributes to building local capacities to create the organizational and logistical infrastructure for build a development framework upon practices of democratic participation.

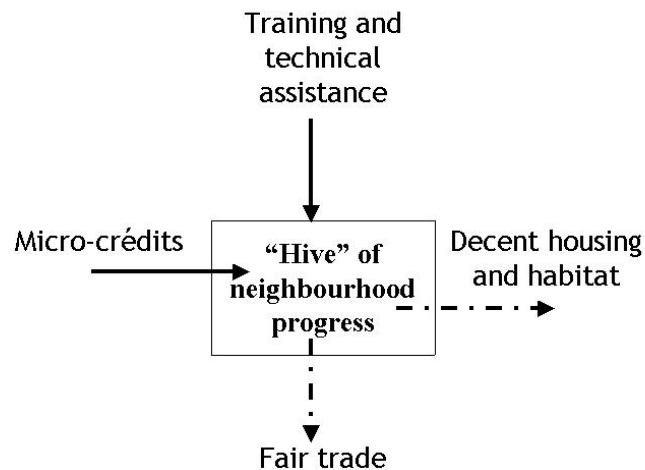


Figure A.1. The Microenergia Egalitarian Development Approach

The approach was applied to very specific conditions of poverty and marginality demonstrating its strength and weakness. In the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires (Argentina), the complete vision was implemented in Moreno, creating a “hive” or community centre, seat of micro-business and community development

networks. The results were very auspicious: A zero default rate, an important number of dwellings improved, reaching level of decent houses with micro-business shops and workshops, and a flourishing marketing community strategy. In the case of San Martin and the southern area of Buenos Aires, a protected workshop was supported technically and financially. Networks or “hives” were not, possibly because the high level of social fragmentation in the area.

In the case of communities located in the provinces, such as the case of Brea Pozo (Santiago del Estero), Andresito (Misiones), Esquina (Corrientes) and Aluminé (Neuquén) far away from the main markets, the provision of the on-job training scarcely generates any development, except in terms of fair trade. The possibility to sell their products in Buenos Aires, directly without intermediary, was the main interest. But sustaining a fair trade strategy demands much more than a help to certain communities to help their products. It is necessary to build a platform from where products from vulnerable communities be promoted and sold in the big markets, with the support of public institutions. An initiative of this kind, known as the “First sample of egalitarian development” was launched in the historical “Cabildo” of Buenos Aires. Together with the Ministry of Interior, the “Cabildo” invites municipalities throughout the country to exhibit products of vulnerable communities. The response was very positive, attracting a huge number of applications. It is expected that such strategy will encourage a capacity building process for local governments committed with egalitarian development principles.

The experience to the date provides valuable inputs to discuss the approach potential for democratising development opportunities in the age of globalisation.

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CHAPTER THREE:
SECURITY OF HOUSING TENURE IN THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF
CHINA: BACKGROUND, TRENDS, AND ISSUES¹

Conflicts caused by forced removals and demolitions are, as before, the main factor vexing social stability in Shanghai. A few private eviction companies’ methods are wanton and vicious. Some companies employ thugs in the dark of night to destroy families’ exterior stairs, doors and windows; secretly cut their electrical wires, break their water pipes . . . to make it impossible to live a normal life, forcing them to move. Even more extreme, they commit crimes taking lives.²

The historic problem of security of tenure, whether to land or housing, largely solved during the early years of the People’s Republic of China, has again become an issue of great concern.

For anyone with a low or unsteady income in farming, manufacturing, or service provision, in the city or the countryside, the fear of eviction is constant. Even economically better-off residents may suffer eviction, but they are more likely to receive adequate compensation and/or to better weather the negative consequences of forced eviction.

This brief case study highlights the scale of the problem of insecure tenure to land and/or housing in China, the variety of forces that generate this insecurity, and emerging policies and practices that may help reverse the current negative trends.

The groups of people in China most affected by insecurity of tenure in China include the following:

- ◆ Farmers, whose insecurity of livelihood in the countryside forces them to migrate to the cities in search of income-earning activities. Lacking an urban

¹ Case study prepared for Enhancing Urban Safety and Security: Global Report on Human Settlements 2007. Available from <http://www.unhabitat.org/grhs/2007>.

² Shanghai Municipal Commission, Vice Secretary, Liu Yungeng, 3 February 2005. Reported in the Southern Weekend, 4 March 2005.

residence permit, and in the absence of policies supportive of rural migrants, their security of tenure to shelter in the city remains tenuous, at best. Some 150 million migrant workers live in major metropolitan centers for a large part of the year.

- ◆ Former state-sector workers who have been laid-off or paid-off³ by their employers and are living in original “welfare” housing that they bought from their employer during earlier housing reforms.⁴
- ◆ Non-state-sector workers holding urban residence permits whose incomes do not allow them secure tenure to housing. These may be long-term inner-city residents who are/were employed in either collective or informal enterprises and who have been renting or subletting affordable housing from private parties or local authorities.
- ◆ Registered and nonregistered urban residents of informal/illegal settlements, dangerous/dilapidated housing (*weijiufangwu*), and residences that are illegally constructed or noncompliant with the housing code (*weifaweiguifangwu*).
- ◆ All other residents of property demolished under force of eminent domain.⁵

³ Laid-off (*xiagang*) state-sector workers receive a minimum maintenance allowance and reduced access to health care and other welfare benefits. Paid-off (*maiduan*) workers have agreed to free the employer from any liability to the worker after payment of an agreed-upon lump-sum severance payment (Wang, 2000, pp. 848–849). Those unable to find new employment may apply for social support in the form of a minimum wage (*dibao*) of approximately 300 RMB/month (US\$1.25/day) in the most expensive cities. In Shanghai the disposable income of 15.5 percent of the population in 2004 was at or below this level (SHTJNJ, 2006: DigitalShanghai graph).

⁴ As many as 50 million urban residents were thought to be poor in 2000, and could thus be expected to have only a tenuous grip on adequate housing. Quoted from report cited by Solinger (2006).

⁵ Local and national authorities have broad powers to acquire legally occupied land deemed to be needed for advancing the public good. This “eminent domain” power is frequently used to optimize—from the standpoint of either engineering or public expenditure—the installation of infrastructure (whether for public transport, communication, sanitation, water supply, or energy generation and delivery, etc.), environmental remediation or protection, recreational or cultural facilities, public buildings and plazas, and removal of dangerous or illegal structures.

The paper is divided into the following sections. The first describes the transition from insecure pre-communist tenure systems in the countryside and the city to collective tenure systems in force until roughly the beginning of the 1980s. These assured adequate access to land and housing in the countryside and to a spartan, if egalitarian, allotment of housing in the cities. The second section describes briefly how tenure insecurity first began reappearing in cities with the advent of rural workers entering the cities looking for cash income in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Section three discusses forces that began to push rural workers off their land in ever larger numbers, exacerbating livelihood concerns in the countryside and increasing the pressure on urban centers to house those leaving the countryside for work in the cities. The fourth section examines the relationship between housing reform in urban areas and increasing insecurity of tenure for the previously securely housed workers of the state and collective sectors. The final section before the conclusion discusses the role of China's burgeoning informal settlements that provide housing to low-income groups in and around many of the country's growing cities.

Post-1949 Security of Tenure (1949–early 1980s)

It is not surprising that a low-income country with a huge and diverse land mass and population and a history of tumultuous political and economic change would be afflicted with problems stemming from insecure tenure. It is nonetheless surprising how quickly China has evolved from a country with relatively secure tenure for all during most of its post-1949 history to the opposite during the last decade.

China's largely successful transition to a highly globalized mixed economy from a minimally open command economy in the years since Deng Xiaoping announced the Four Modernizations in 1978 has much to do with this: land has become a scarce commodity. Prices now more accurately—if still incompletely—

reflect the expected return on investment to alternate uses. Land prices have risen dramatically during the past decade, while the development of the legal and administrative infrastructure governing the allocation, transfer, and conversion of rural and urban land has only just begun to adapt itself to existing and emerging economic pressures. As urban and industrial development have expanded westward in the past decade, problems of insecure tenure that were originally found only in the fast-growing coastal cities and their suburbs can now be found throughout the country.

Among the first priorities of the Communist Party after taking power in 1949 was to reverse the age-old problem of insecurity of tenure in the countryside. Within three years, the government implemented an agrarian reform that redistributed rural land to peasants. In theory, former landlords and peasants were to receive the same land allocation; in many cases landlords got significantly less. The effect of the redistribution was to destroy the local landowning class and to replace it with the Communist Party. Depending on population density and the quality of land, the distribution ranged from 0.16 to 1.1 acre per capita. Almost as soon as land redistribution was complete in late 1952, the collectivization of rural land into what were to become *people's communes* began. By the time this process reached fruition in 1957, the collectivization had passed through three progressively integrated stages of agglomeration and cooperation: mutual assistance teams, semisocialist agricultural producers' cooperatives, and cooperative farms. In the final stage of agglomeration, People's Communes grouped on average some 30 cooperative farms, comprising about 5000 households or 25,000 persons. The communes organized all economic and political activity within the territory occupied by its constituent farms, including the administration of villages, taxation, health, education, old-age care, recreation, and so

forth. The communes also appropriated ownership of land, housing, livestock, and other property. Single persons or childless couples lived in communal dormitories.⁶

In the cities, private property was gradually nationalized during the first half of the 1950s and redistributed for use by government offices, industrial departments, state and collective enterprises, and residents. Investment in new housing remained minimal in most cities until the 1980s and often only kept pace with the need to take down dangerous or otherwise unsuitable structures serving as housing. Housing allocations were controlled by city housing offices and work units that were able to build housing or dormitories for their workers.⁷

For the large majority of city residents, possession of an urban household registration granted access to a welfare package that included employment, housing, health care, education, and access to a minimum level of rationed goods. Either the local authority or the urban household registration-holder's work unit (a state or collective employer) was responsible for arranging access to these goods.

Despite the emergence of reforms such as the family (individual) responsibility system in agriculture and the institution of employment contracts of limited duration in the urban state sector, rural and urban collectives tended to maintain established responsibilities to their members for ensuring access to land or housing throughout the 1980s. In the countryside, families or individuals contracted with the rural collective to lease a plot of land for a fixed price. Revenue received beyond the lease price remained in the hands of the lessee to apportion to fees, taxes, production costs, investment, and so forth. The family's original housing entitlement remained unchanged.

⁶ Hsu, 1976:783–787.

⁷ In its effort to protect key industries from attack, between 1965 and 1971 the government built or moved large-scale industrial plants to remote locations in the center and far west of China. Construction of these “greenfield sites” typically included dormitories for workers, many of whom vacated housing in the enterprise's original location.

In the cities, even if health and retirement benefits were among the first casualties of urban reforms, housing benefits tended to remain stable into the 1990s. When urban labor contracts were not renewed, or were done so only with a drastic reduction in real income, workers' housing entitlements were rarely affected. Top-level decision makers perceived that adding homelessness on top of precipitously falling incomes among the traditional worker elite of the state sector was too great a threat to social stability to be considered.

Emerging Insecurity of Tenure in Chinese Cities (late 1970s–early 1980s)

The spread of the household responsibility system and the growing opportunities to market excess grain and side crops in free markets during the early 1980s gave rural farmers incentives to work more efficiently on the land they tilled now that their incomes and individual efforts were intimately linked. Many farmers found they could bring crops in with fewer hands than under the cooperative system. Excess labor initially flowed into township and village enterprises, creating additional wealth and consumption in the countryside, and for a time helped diminish income inequality between the countryside and the cities.⁸

Even with these positive changes, township and village enterprises could not absorb all the surplus labor in the countryside. By the mid-1980s, rural migrants could be found circulating in large numbers in Beijing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenzhen, and, to a lesser extent, in the other major port cities. Migrant workers sought urban wages not only because these were higher than those that could be earned on the farm but also because they were paid largely in cash rather than in kind.

In the early phase of rural–urban migration (from the early 1980s), most migrants worked on construction sites, in small private restaurants, in homes as maids

⁸ Selden, 1993:182–186.

or nannies, or on the streets as hawkers or short-term laborers, carpenters, masons, and so forth. Much of the cash these migrants earned found its way back to the family in the countryside to build new homes or expand the ones they already occupied.

Because rural workers did not possess urban household registration cards, they could not legally live in the cities. This forced many into an uneasy “clandestinity” by which housing provided by the temporary employer contributed implicitly a portion of the worker’s wage. Hawkers slept under tables in the markets where they sold vegetables, maids on a sofa in the employer’s home, carpenters in the rooms of the persons who hired them to build furniture or refit an apartment, construction workers on the work site, restaurant workers on the floor of the restaurants during closing hours, and so on.⁹ Still, authorities did find workers sleeping in the open or wandering the streets looking for shelter, and many were incarcerated and then sent back to their hometowns. If they were lucky, these migrants could still return to the home on the piece of land in the countryside allotted to their family.

Urbanization of Rural Land and Weakening Security of Tenure (since 1985)

From the mid-1980s onward, large swaths of rural land in the near suburbs of major cities effectively entered the “urban” land market, threatening peasants’ security of tenure to land and housing.¹⁰ Between 1986 and 1996, 31 cities in China expanded their land area by some 50 percent, absorbing a roughly equivalent amount of land classified as rural.¹¹ When this occurred, farmers were offered cash settlements or urban household registrations and employment as compensation for their lost farmland.

⁹ Wang, 2000, p. 855; Solinger, 1995, p. 134.

¹⁰ Cai, 2003, p. 666.

¹¹ In reality, the distinction between rural and urban land near large cities was often by that time purely administrative. Buildings housing township and village enterprises or the high-density rural population already occupied land that had been farmed five years earlier. Ownership of the land remained, however, with the collective until the land was officially converted to “urban.”

Replacement housing or additional compensation was often part of the package if the house was lost in the transition.¹² Not infrequently, promises of employment did not materialize, or the employment that was offered yielded income lower than that obtained previously from farming. Village leaders' frequent manipulation of land-use decisions for personal advantage often figured in such processes and led to numerous small and large conflicts with the local population.¹³

China's landmark 1992 legislation detaching land-use rights from ownership of urban land, which by definition was held in "state ownership," moved the foundation of the real estate market forward by allowing legal persons to transact land-use rights. This legislation quickly brought government agencies, enterprises, and service providers at all levels into the real estate market because it gave each an incentive to consider alternate uses for un- or underused land that they controlled.¹⁴ During his "southern tour" that year, Deng Xiaoping urged southern provinces—and by extension the rest of the country—to learn from the example of the Pearl River Delta to be much bolder in their efforts to stimulate economic growth and development.

The combination of these events created a "big enough" bang to unleash a sustained flood of domestic and foreign investment that kept China's GDP growth rate at approximately 9 percent for the rest of the decade and to the present. These investments focused on infrastructure and amenities to attract and retain much larger flows of foreign investment and technology than were absorbed in the 1980s. Among them were the following:

¹² Selden, 1993, pp. 198–201.

¹³ Cai, 2003, p. 663. Cai describes the power imbalances between farmers and their leaders at the village and county level as the source of these manipulations. Leaders often commandeer farmland or other communal property and use it for their own purposes or rent the land to others without offering adequate compensation to the aggrieved farmers. Despite presenting hard evidence of misdeeds, farmers all too often found town or county officials from whom they sought redress uninterested in pursuing justice. Indeed, higher officials often participated in the illegal taking of agricultural land.

¹⁴ Implementation of land-use fees in cities from 1988 began the process of getting occupiers to consider "how much land they actually wanted to keep control over."

- ◆ Power-generating facilities (especially large dams), airports, train stations, ocean and river port facilities, subway and light rail systems, water and sewage treatment plants, and intra- and intercity highways;
- ◆ Full-service industrial parks or economic development zones; and
- ◆ Urban renewal, including new urban streetscapes, grand plazas and parks, world-class cultural facilities, hotels, and apartment and villa complexes for expatriate workers.¹⁵

These new facilities required large quantities of land, much of it already occupied, whether for farming or housing in the peri-urban areas or in the city itself. In almost all cases, persons living on or around the areas affected by these projects had no choice but to move or be moved. Impacts on farmers and their families have been severe because in many cases their land was seized with little if any recompense. Table 3.1 lists some of the chief uses for agricultural land seized under these conditions.

Table 3.1. Causes for Large-Scale Rural Land Seizures and Relocations

Hydropower projects:

The Three Gorges Project is only the most famous among these, resulting in more than 1 million persons being relocated.^a Farmers' compensation has often been much less than promised, whether in cash, in kind, or employment, and resulted in worsening impoverishment for many. Long after the resettlement officially ends, tensions remain high in the regions where relocations for such projects have taken place.^b New projects of a similar nature and projected negative outcomes based on past relocation experiences find farmers swift to react: in November 2004, an estimated 100,000 farmers clashed with police in Hanyuan County in Sichuan Province because of the unacceptably low compensation they were being offered to make way for a new dam nearby. China's leaders had to impose martial law and send in paramilitary police to stabilize the situation.^c

¹⁵ See Yusuf and Wu for descriptions of investment strategies of Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Tianjin during the 1980s and 1990s.

Table 3.1 (Continued)

Economic development zones:

Following Deng Xiaoping's urging during his 1992 inspection tour of China's southern provinces, urban authorities in many parts of the country set out to replicate efforts of Shenzhen, Xiamen, Shantou, and other successful export processors to attract foreign investment. This resulted in a massive investment in new "economic development zones." By 1996, within the areas requisitioned for construction of the zones, approximately 300,000 acres of land remained undeveloped for lack of investment. Roughly half was agricultural land, of which half could not be converted back to agricultural use. Proper compensation to the farmers was often ignored.^d Still, the number of economic development zones continued to grow, exceeding 6,000 by 2003. Among these, 3,763 had already been ordered shut down after a series of investigations begun in the same year revealed they had been set up on illegally seized farmland.^e More closures may result, as investigations are pending for many of the more than 2,000 remaining zones.

University cities:

These are a recent variant of economic development zones in which local authorities and university officials take over suburban agricultural land for the construction of new educational and research facilities. For city officials who preside over the installation of such facilities, demonstrating that they are able to do things on a grand scale while significantly pumping up local GDP is key to gaining promotions. For universities, the attractions include economies of scale in shared educational facilities and urban networks, modernized physical plants, expanded enrollment capacity, and, typically, an opportunity to raise revenue through real estate projects within the zones. By the end of 2003, the 50 university cities that were already established occupied land surface equal to 89 percent of the land occupied by all of the other universities in the country.^f

Villa and golf course complexes:

Exclusive residential complexes have sprung up in the suburbs of China's large cities. Many of the country's 320 golf courses are among their chief amenities. Indeed, the world's largest golfing complex, Mission Hills, is sited just outside the city of Shenzhen, adjacent to Hong Kong.^g According to official sources, among the first 200 courses completed only a dozen were built legally.^h In November 2004, the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources classified golf courses among "*the five most egregious examples of illegal land seizures in China, noting that nearly a third of the land was taken improperly and that compensation had not been paid.*"ⁱ

Transportation infrastructure:

In 2002, 84 percent of the nation's 147 airports were losing money for lack of business; similarly, super highways and ring roads outside the largest cities are quiet enough to be used for drying grain during the harvest season. Chinese economist Zhou Guangsheng attributes this phenomenon to overlapping and premature investments in transport infrastructure by cities that are too close together to each be served by three high-speed transport modes.^j The rapid expansion of the high-speed (bullet-type) rail network will make matters much worse for the airports as passengers abandon air travel for the cheaper and more comfortable trains. Today, despite five years of sustained high economic growth nationally, 33 percent of all passenger arrivals and departures occur at the airports of Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou.^k Meanwhile 75 percent of the nation's other airports continue to lose money.^l

Table 3.1 (Continued)

Notes:

- a. Estimates of relocations from Three Gorges Project continue to vary, as does the fate of the migrants. However, an estimate of 1.13 million seems to be a middle figure (Jing, 1997). The same source (p. 90) reports the finding of China's own Leading Group for Economic Development of Poor Areas that over 70 percent of the 10.2 million persons relocated in other reservoir projects from the 1950s to the early 1980s live in extreme poverty.
 - b. Jing, 1997; Probe International. Updates are discussed occasionally on the website of Probe International, <http://www.threegorgesprobe.org>.
 - c. Bezlova, 2004.
 - d. Cai, 2003, p. 671. Local governments also found outright sales or leasing of agricultural land to be a good source of income. These brought in between 30 and 70 percent of local authorities' income between 1987 and 1994 or, totally, about 242 billion Yuan. Peasants received about 10 percent of this amount (Cai, p. 672).
 - e. Yardley, 2004.
 - f. Zou, 2003. In one of the most egregious land-grab cases of this kind, city and provincial officials of Zhengzhou acquired nearly 1,000 hectares of agricultural land without payment. They also hid their actions from the city office of the State Bureau of Land and Resources, from whom they were bound by law to seek approval of their planned action. Once caught in the fraud, Zhengzhou city officials directed the city office (of Land and Resources) to help cover up continuing efforts to bring their project to fruition. Within nine months of acquiring the land, city officials completed construction of the facilities and moved in five universities. Apparently local officials could count on success: three other university cities had already been built in Zhengzhou City (China Daily, 2006).
 - g. Jenkins, 2006.
 - h. Chao, 2004.
 - i. Yardley, 2004.
 - j. Zhou, 2005.
 - k. Kahn 2003.
 - l. ZJOL, 2007.
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Urban Housing Reform, Housing Markets, and Security of Tenure

In the early 1990s when larger coastal cities began construction of new housing on a large scale and installing infrastructure and amenities to attract foreign investors, relocations rapidly grew to a large scale. Residents who had to be moved were usually given replacement housing, though not always near their former residence. Few people objected as long as the new apartment was roughly as

commodious as the former and gave access to the kinds of amenities they were accustomed to in the previous residence. A marked reduction in commuting time from home to school or home to work might still trump the apartment's physical amenities. On the other hand, residents did complain bitterly when a new and larger apartment was not near a good school or when it lacked proper shopping facilities. Worse yet were apartments in new, tall buildings where water pressure was low or elevators were slow or functioned erratically or where markets for food and other necessities had yet to be established nearby.

The typical response to relocation remained, nonetheless, much as it was in the 1980s: "*the country is trying to develop, we should cooperate.*"¹⁶ In any case, urban residents did not feel attached to their homes as long as they felt they could eventually trade up by moving elsewhere when a more attractive option opened up.

Compensation did not become an issue for city dwellers until later in the decade, when the deepening of housing reforms, and specifically the abolition of welfare housing in 1998, encouraged large numbers of renters to buy the dwellings they inhabited. Employees of urban state-owned enterprises, government agencies, and other state and better-off collective work units were among the first to take advantage of the policy change because they had little choice in the matter and their employers or the housing bureau were offering them advantageous terms.¹⁷ With that transition, owners developed a keen sense of property rights. Almost as quickly, they

¹⁶ "*Guojia qiu fazhan, women yinggai peihe.*"

¹⁷ Urban housing reform spanned from isolated experiments the late 1970s and early 1980s to near universalization in the major urban centers today. The process comprised many different initiatives: the first consisted of raising rents in small increments to cover the costs of housing provided at minimal cost—estimated for 1991 by Zhang (2000) at about 1 percent of the average worker's salary (quoted in Duda, Zhang and Dong, 2003, p. 2)—to eventual full privatization of financing, construction, and ownership except for residual rental housing for very-low-income groups. For succinct descriptions of how this process worked for persons in the state sector prior to and after 1998, when welfare housing was abolished, see Plafker, 2001, and Yu, 2006.

began demanding compensation for anything that compromised the value or use of their property, especially if it was to be torn down to make way for new construction.

At the time, government regulations concerning eminent domain and eviction did not (and still do not) leave room for debate: if local authorities approve a project requiring land occupied by individuals or other public or private interests, the local authority has priority. The authority involved must follow established procedures concerning notification, waiting period, right to fair compensation, and appeal in situations of disagreement on compensation or improper behavior of the parties involved in removal/eviction processes. Unfortunately for the dislocated party, failure to follow mandated eviction and removal procedures does not halt the eviction process to allow independent review of the case. Eviction and demolition can proceed legally before judgment is rendered.

It is difficult to estimate the number of forced evictions in cities across China. National and city statistical annuals do not provide detailed time series on relocations carried out under the use of eminent domain. Piecemeal data must be collected from press reports, specialist publications, and internet debates of uncertain accuracy. Estimates of forced and violent evictions are even rarer. Case studies and research reports by government offices and university researchers often do provide first-hand data on the processes and scales of impact in specific cases.

In large cities undergoing urban renovation, expansion, and reconfiguration, the numbers of relocations are almost always large. As mentioned earlier, highways and roads have to be installed to permit the flow of millions more motor vehicles than were on the road 10 years ago; subway and light rail systems need to be extended to move similarly large numbers of people. Preservation of historic neighborhoods mostly entails moving low-income populations out and installing new residential and tourist amenities for a smaller but more comfortably housed urban elite. Decades of

poor maintenance of older post-1949 buildings (15–50 years old) means they are more likely to be torn down than renovated. Prestige projects—museums, art galleries, opera houses, grand plazas, parks, parking facilities, and so forth—also absorb large tracts of core city land formerly occupied by housing. Urban megaprojects such as the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai generate an even larger number of forced evictions and relocations. At the same time, they require substantial government investment in hardware and marketing that are justified more on their potential to catalyze economic and social transformation in the city and country than on the intrinsic economic or social benefit of holding the event in China.¹⁸

Tenure Security for Migrant Workers

The number of migrants workers¹⁹ from distant and nearby rural locations reached somewhere between 85 and 120 million persons by the year 2000.²⁰ While this population contributed greatly to the refitting and expansion of Chinese cities in the 1990s and increased massively the number of persons in need of housing in or near the cities, the formal housing delivery system made no provision for them. But as Wu²¹ has shown in Shanghai, where policies toward migrants have been relatively progressive, neither steady nor lengthy employment tenure in the city had freed migrants from insecurity of tenure to housing by the new millennium:

¹⁸ Neither the Beijing Olympics nor the Shanghai Expo (2010) are likely to break even during the course of the events. Nor are the long-term costs of sustaining the specially built facilities likely to be covered by subsequent uses. See Owen (2005) for Beijing and Asiaone (2006) for Shanghai.

¹⁹ Migrant workforce or “floating population” (*liudongrenkou*). Other commonly used names for migrant laborers include *nongmingong* and *wailairenkou*.

²⁰ ADB 2004, p. 16; Yan, 2005; Wu, 2005.

²¹ Wu, 2005, p. 15.

It is no exaggeration to say that once in the city, migrants continue to be on the move. With substantially higher mobility rates than local residents, they experience much more residential mobility. But such mobility is not necessarily driven by the need for tenure or even amenity. Few migrants make the transition from bridgeheaders to consolidators after years of living in the city, a trend in migrant settlement seen elsewhere in other developing countries. Instead most remain trapped in the private rental sector or staying in dormitory housing. Home ownership is yet to become attainable for migrants, and self-help housing is largely absent because of the intolerance of municipal authorities.

Today the size of the floating population may be as high as 150–200 million and is expected to expand further with the migration to the cities of another 300 million rural residents by 2020.²² With the rapid expansion of the migrant workforce, affordable housing options in the city center or on work sites have become scarce. The overflow is now taking refuge in informal settlements. More and more, these resemble in size and form peri-urban settlements that characterized rapid urbanization processes in other developing countries beginning from the 1950s. In China, the earliest of these developed in the 1980s on the peripheries of the faster growing major cities, that is, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Beijing. At first, when they grew large enough to draw the attention of local authorities, they were suppressed and eventually torn down.

Among the largest and most famous of these cases was *Zhejiangcun* (Zhejiang Village). Before its demolition in December 1995 at the insistence of local authorities, Zhejiang Village housed a population of some 100,000 persons, and thousands of enterprises. The village largely governed itself, establishing health clinics, water and sanitation systems, recreational facilities, schools using the Zhejiang dialect, and so forth.²³ It also proved itself to be a major boon to Beijing residents who rented land to

²² In this scenario, China's total urban population will reach some 830 million persons (CCIDED, 2005, p. 12).

²³ Jeong, 2002.

the village and who bought the village's prodigious output of low-cost fashionable clothing.

Beijing's population of 16 million includes roughly 3.6 million migrants.²⁴ Of the reported million-plus people living in Beijing's 332 informal settlements, the 2002 census estimated that 80 percent were migrants. Today the numbers are thought to be much larger, but according to officials, the flows in and out of informal settlements are so large it is impossible to be sure.²⁵ More certain is that many cities around China are planning to suppress or redevelop informal settlements in the built-up or soon-to-be-urbanized suburbs. In Beijing's case, the 2008 Olympics are adding urgency to this task. According to the plan for Olympic construction projects, the 171 informal settlements within the 4th Ring Road and surrounding the Olympic stadium site will be liquidated. Between the end of the Olympics and 2010, another 61 informal settlements within Beijing's 5th Ring Road will be completely gone as well. The fate of the remaining 100 informal settlements in the municipality has yet to be announced.²⁶ Where the residents of the first 232 informal settlements demolished prior to 2008 will go remains unclear.

Relocations Caused or "Facilitated" by the 2008 Beijing Olympics

The mayor of Beijing, Mr. Qisan Wang, has said that some 300,000 people will be relocated from sites where facilities for holding the 2008 Summer Olympics are to be constructed.²⁷ This includes competition venues, the athlete's village,

²⁴ Beijing Municipal Statistical Bureau, 2006 (referring to 2005 data, based on sample surveys).

²⁵ Li, et al, 2006.

²⁶ Li, et al, 2006. The guidelines for "*zhengdun*" of informal settlements are expected any time. The Chinese definition of "*zhengdun*" in the urban context can mean any of the following: "consolidate," "clean up," or "tear down."

²⁷ "*Dongqian*," meaning "relocation," is the term most frequently used in the Chinese press to describe the process of getting residents to move from their homes. Another term, "*chaiqian*," also appears frequently. This means to move because one's home has been torn down. Adjectives that are applied to "*chaiqian*," such as "*qiangzhixing*" and "*yeman*," mean "forced" and "savage." Formal/systematic data

management facilities, green spaces, transport lines, hubs, and amenities for visitors. However, if the standard for assessing the impact of the 2008 Olympics on relocations is widened to include urban development activities that were either speeded up, enlarged, or facilitated by the politics of “holding the best Olympics ever,” then the impact will be much larger.²⁸

Among the projects “helped along” by the Olympics are the following:

- ◆ the expansion of the capital’s transportation network—including the airport, subway, and light rail network, the extensive demolitions in the Qianmen quarter, and its planned reconstruction;
- ◆ the approval and construction of a CBD on the city’s East Side;
- ◆ a new round of massive public contracts and investments in the high-tech corridor of Zhongguancun;
- ◆ the clearance of old *danwei* (work-unit) housing in the central east corridor between the 2nd and 4th ring roads to make room for high-end residential developments, luxury shopping complexes, and entertainment districts; and
- ◆ large environmental remediation projects, including the rustication to Hebei Province of the main facility of the Capital Steel Factory.

An estimate made elsewhere of the number of persons directly affected by demolitions/relocations in the capital for the period 2000–2008 inclusive—the high tide of Olympic preparations—is 1.5 million. This would include Mayor Wang’s estimate of those moved because of Olympic construction. By comparison, for the

on these qualified forms of “*chaiqian*” do not exist in the public domain. As indicated in the opening quotation of this paper, however, public figures do admit that the scale of forced evictions amounts to a serious social problem.

²⁸ Formal planning documents issued at the national and city level have emphasized that one of China’s goals in holding the Olympics is to make the Beijing Games the best ever, thereby proving China is a first-rate country.

nine-year period 1991–1999, demolitions/relocations directly affected 640,000 persons, or roughly 70,000 persons annually. The average for the pre-Olympic period is nearly 2.4 times larger, or 164,800 annually.²⁹

Whether the some 400,000 migrant workers living in the informal settlements within the capital's 4th Ring Road have been included in the mayor's relocation estimate is unclear.³⁰ In all likelihood they have not, because very few migrant workers own property legally in Beijing. Moreover, because they are renters in illegally constructed or dangerous buildings, they have virtually no protection against eviction or the right to a resettlement allowance. The total direct costs of holding the Games have been estimated at US\$37 billion. The actual cost is likely to be considerably higher if losses to individuals are calculated.³¹

Looking Forward

Between 2007 and the year 2020 China's urban population may increase by 300 million persons over the current level of approximately 550 million.³² Most of this growth will come from rural residents moving into urban settlements. As many as 200 million persons of rural origin already spend the majority of their time working in cities. Many of these will not return to the countryside except to visit family members who have remained behind. Very few of these workers have secure tenure to their

²⁹ Westendorff, 2007.

³⁰ The Official Workplan for the 2008 Olympic Games calls for the eradication of 171 of the existing 332 informal settlements before the Games start. The number of migrant workers affected is a rough estimate based on the following calculation: of the nearly one million persons living in Beijing's 332 informal settlements, 80 percent, or about 800,000 persons, are estimated to be nonresidents (migrants). If the migrant population is distributed roughly equally among the *chengzhongcun*, then slightly more than half (171 of 332) would be affected by the pre-2008 Olympics demolitions.

³¹ The costs of demolishing housing, removing debris, and moving residents figure positively in the city's GDP, yet no accounting is made of the residents' losses of informal income, health, convenience, or social networks.

³² FN 17 provides one source of urban population growth. Johnson (2005) quoting World Bank projections states that urban growth will grow to 850 million in 2015 from 520 million in 2005. In either case, these figures should be considered rough estimates.

housing in the cities. Unlike registered urban residents, migrant workers do not typically need to find housing for their entire families and are accustomed to moving in order to find work or more affordable accommodation.

Sample survey data from 2004 confirm that living conditions of migrant workers are crowded and rarely provide adequate sanitation and cooking facilities.³³ This should not be surprising given that 45 percent of migrant workers surveyed earned less than 500 RMB (US\$60) per month. Wages such as these in China's major cities make home ownership virtually impossible and rental of minimally adequate housing difficult.³⁴ Inadequate housing of migrants reflects their inability to afford secure tenure and the benefits deriving there from. Although systematic comparisons between Zhejiangcun of the early 1990s and the many informal settlements spread around Beijing today are impossible to make, anecdotal evidence suggests that migrants once could both afford and benefit from secure tenure, if only for a few years. There may be important lessons to learn from such comparisons where they may be found side-by-side today.

For many of the approximately 50 million urban low-income residents with urban household registration, neither security of tenure nor living conditions may be much better than for migrants. Those families who own a home or still live in a heavily subsidized apartment may rent out part or all of their homes to migrants, including foreigners, to cover expenses. But these homes, especially in central locations, are being demolished to make way for urban development projects, many of which are reconfiguring on a massive scale the social, economic, and residential

³³ Wang 2006.

³⁴ A sample survey of migrant workers in six major cities found only 2.5 percent purchased their own homes (Wang, 2006). Although many migrants have permanent homes in the countryside, one would expect, given the combination of weakening tenure to these and the policy to encourage large numbers of rural residents to transfer to urban areas, growing numbers of migrant workers to seek secure(r) tenure for themselves and family members who are following them to the cities in greater numbers.

functions of the city. The current supply of state-owned or -controlled low-rent housing can cover only a fraction of the demand, while the purchase prices for a subsidized apartment are far beyond the means of these families (see section titled **Urban Housing Programs for “Low-Income” Residents**). The pressures are therefore building to find simultaneously a solution to the housing needs of both migrant workers and registered long-term, low-income residents.

For the lowest-income registered residents—those receiving government support in the form of a minimum income—open market rentals are also out of reach, and ownership is unthinkable. Table 3.2 uses recent data from four coastal cities, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen, to demonstrate the challenge the lowest-income stratum in these cities face in accessing housing that may provide reasonably secure tenure. The cities chosen have greater resources and capacity to build low-income housing than any other cities in China. They also have relatively large and well-functioning secondary markets for both rentals and purchases of apartments for persons unable to access newly built accommodations.

Table 3.2. Housing Market Challenges for the Very-Low-Income Group in Four Coastal Cities

City	Purchase of previously-owned housing	Monthly rental for ordinary apartment (by no. of bedrooms)			Social support per person per month	Total social support for family of 3	Months of total social support to rent 1 br	Months of total social support to buy 1.0 m ² of economic housing
	Hsng/m ²	1 br	2 br	3 br				
Beijing	8,916	1,550	1,987	2,487	290	870	1.78	5.1
Shanghai	12,774	1,844	2,267	3,464	290	870	2.12	7.3
Guangzhou	5,960	1,270	1,595	2,357	300	900	1.41	3.3
Shenzhen	9,645	1,642	2,076	2,632	300	900	1.82	5.4

Note: All prices are in Chinese Yuan (RMB).

Source: January 2007 Real Estate Index Monthly Report, <http://www.sofun.com>, Real Estate Portal, 14 March 2007, accessed 5 April 2007.

In each of the four cities, the minimum income payment is either 290 or 300 RMB (US\$35 or 36) per person per month. For a family of three, the maximum monthly payment would be 900 RMB (US\$108). A family of this size and income would almost certainly rent a one-bedroom apartment in what is called a “common” apartment block. These would typically be in buildings left over from the mass-produced, undecorated apartments of the pre-housing-reform era or even from the late 1990s. But they might have an independent kitchen and bathroom. Many multi-story buildings would not have elevators, however. In each of the four cities, one month’s rent exceeds the total family support from the government by a low of 140 percent to a high of 210 percent.

The prospects for purchasing a one-bedroom apartment are even more dismal. For one square meter of a low-end apartment in the secondary market, the purchase price might be roughly one-half of the overall average of second-hand housing in a given city. In Guangzhou the ratio is most favorable: 3.3 months of a family’s total government stipend would purchase one square meter. In Shanghai, the same square meter would require all the family’s payments for 7.3 months. This analysis suggests that migrants and families on government assistance are likely to be competing for the lowest end of the informal rental market as the remaining stock of publicly operated housing is privatized and/or torn down.

China’s leaders recognize the seriousness of the problem of assuring adequate housing for all urban residents. The government is seeking to use both market and nonmarket methods to rein in the explosive increases in housing costs, to build or purchase from the market rental housing for the lowest-income strata, and to offer subsidized housing to help middle-income families purchase their first homes. Low-income (rental) housing along with subsidized commercial housing will be located adjacent to the major mass-transit arteries, as is being planned for Beijing and has

been implemented to some extent in Shanghai. While such accommodations may be at some distance from the central city, the new communities are being designed to offer convenient access to full health, educational, commercial, and recreational infrastructure. Expanding the coverage of the housing provident fund and instituting supports to help low-income families obtain mortgages, along with measures to fully integrate migrant-worker housing needs into formal urban-housing plans, are recognized as important problems but have yet to see major policy initiatives taken up by lawmakers. Moreover, the supply of affordable housing being offered to many urban markets through formal channels will fall far below the need for at least the next few years.

In the meantime, the principal focus of government policy, announced on 3 April 2007, is to rein in costs and prices of housing supplied through the Economic Housing program and the commercial housing market. The core of policy is to root out corruption in the planning, bidding, permitting, financing, land assemblage, and clearance, construction, marketing, and management of real estate projects. The assumption is that this will reduce the waste of public and private resources, diminish the impact of speculation, and allow a matching between the needs of consumers and quality of housing supplied by the market (Ministry of Construction, et al, 2007). Many of the concerns being targeted in the current initiative have been recognized for years. Responses were conceived by the responsible ministry, which then directed provincial and city-level offices to implement the directive. As a whole, these initiatives have not been implemented effectively. The newly announced policy intends for close cooperation among eight ministries³⁵ in investigating problems, implementing corrective measures, and continuing monitoring of performance. However, even under the most optimistic scenario for implementing the policy and

³⁵ Construction, Development & Reform, Land, Tax, Finance, Audit, Legal Investigation, Industry & Commerce.

corrective measures, the near-term housing problems of low-income households are likely to grow.

Urban Housing Programs for “Low-Income” Residents

Shanghai’s low-rent housing (*lianzufang*) program is the country’s largest and most developed. Yet, in 2006, 0.5 percent of households meeting the program’s criteria participated in it (21,460 households out of a city total of 426,000). To qualify, households must meet the city’s requirements of being both income- and housing-poor.³⁶ The much larger publicly assisted housing program, Economic Housing (*jingjishiyongfang*), receives government subsidies in the form of land contributions, and reduced taxes and fees to qualified purchasers. These subsidies can reduce the price of a similarly designed and situated commercial apartment by as much as 50 percent.

Still, as a number of researchers inside and outside China have calculated, middle- and low-middle income residents do not generally find Economic Housing affordable. Households in these income categories need as much as ten years to accumulate the money needed for a down payment. Simulations using Beijing data have shown that mortgage options available in China today barely allow middle-income families to cover their total costs of living in the subsidized (Economic) housing. For the next-lower income category, simulations show low-middle-income households running significant deficits.³⁷

Aside from lack of affordability, the Economic Housing program suffers from other flaws, including high maximum-income requirements, lax investigation of purchaser credentials, and a high level of illegal sales that bring the apartments into

³⁶ Yang, 2007.

³⁷ Duda et al, 2005, pp. 22–24.

the open market. Perhaps the program's most egregious flaw is the overabundance of large apartments (of more than 100 square meters and some as large as 250 square meters) it supplied instead of small apartments (between 70 and 90 square meters) as intended. The larger apartments effectively price low- and middle-income families out of the market and subsidize high-middle-income buyers, who then frequently rent out the apartments on the open market.

According to Tomba,³⁸ by 2002 the open market purchase price of an average 80 square meters apartment in Beijing had already reached 33 times the average yearly family disposable income in the city. Even if appropriately sized Economic Housing were available, the lower two-thirds of the city's income distribution could not afford to buy one.³⁹

Concluding Remarks

For most of China's history since 1949, families generally held secure tenure to land and housing. The picture is changed considerably today. Peasants have been forcibly driven from their land by pollution, illegal land requisitions, large infrastructure projects, and insecure livelihoods, among other reasons. As workers in the cities, migrants find that their wages and instability of employment rarely permit access to long-term housing. As a result, many migrant workers live in accommodations that are of the lowest quality, and that are not infrequently officially labeled as dangerous or illegal and earmarked for demolition.

While urban workers with stable formal-sector employment have managed to purchase adequate housing, those who have lost their jobs or have retired on inadequate pensions or disability benefits cannot afford to buy apartments.

³⁸ Tomba, 2004, p. 20.

³⁹ Duda, et al, 2005, p. 26.

Commercial rental options are also out of reach. These new urban poor are trapped in the remnants of the state-operated housing system, in which rents are still heavily subsidized. These apartments, often located in core urban areas, have been allowed to become run down, and are prime targets for demolition. Forced evictions have occurred in significant numbers in these communities, very likely causing the families involved long-lasting distress. Migrant workers who house themselves in urban *chengzhongcun* and rundown, low-rent apartments that are also targets for demolition are likely to form a large part of the demand for government-sponsored low-rent housing. The supply of such apartments in the near term is far below the numbers needed.

Government efforts to induce the private sector to produce housing that will meet the needs of all but the most vulnerable members of urban society have fallen short of expectations, causing great uncertainty for low-middle-income families. If recently announced policies to regulate the mainstream urban housing supply system do not have a strongly positive effect in the next few years, insecure housing tenure may well become the chief worry of the large majority of China's urban citizenry.

Despite the many prospective solutions being discussed at the highest level of government, it is unlikely that action can be taken in time to avert a housing crisis for the lowest income groups in many cities. Fast economic growth has produced a massive increase in the per capita residential housing space occupied by *hukou* holders in Chinese cities. At the same, however, the precariousness of tenure to housing for the lowest income decile of this group has risen sharply. Tens of millions of migrant workers and family members without urban *hukous* subsist in unhealthy and/or dangerous communities in both the centers and peripheries of China's largest and fastest growing cities. They will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

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