


# SLUMS

**NEW VISIONS FOR AN ENDURING  
GLOBAL PHENOMENON**

*September 20 - 22, 2018*

 #SlumsNewVisions



**JOINT CENTER FOR  
HOUSING STUDIES**  
OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY



**Harvard University**  
Graduate School of Design



**LINCOLN INSTITUTE**  
OF LAND POLICY

# SYMPOSIUM REFLECTIONS

## *EMERGING THEMES, FUTURE RESEARCH AND NEXT STEPS*

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Guilherme Formicki for his assistance in the preparation of this report. The full symposium can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2IJFUnVKxFQ&list=PLpMsNp6VpVu3D0uXyFvDSrMsZm7YulwRn>. The agenda is available here: [https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Harvard\\_Slums\\_Symposium\\_Schedule\\_rvsd\\_091718\\_0.pdf](https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Harvard_Slums_Symposium_Schedule_rvsd_091718_0.pdf)

# I. Introduction

This reflection is based on a three-day symposium sponsored by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, the Joint Center for Housing Studies, and the Harvard Graduate School of Design from Sept. 20-22, 2018.<sup>2</sup> This report is not intended to be a summary of the panels and discussions, but rather to highlight areas of convergence and divergence among participants, and to draw out themes that arose in our discussions. In addition, the report develops an agenda for future research and a follow-up conference.

The gathering proceeded from the recognition that slums are an enduring feature of the urban landscape. As stated in the Concept Note, the persistence of slums can be traced to “failures to effectively address poverty and inequality, distorted land markets, and systemic social exclusion. These failures are, in turn, rooted in the very way policymakers, global media, and intellectuals conceptualize and represent how, why and by whom slums are produced, maintained and reproduced.”

In recognition of this fact, the goals of the symposium were, “To advance new ideas, policies and tools that improve existing slums and generate alternatives to future ones.” To that end, symposium organizers posed the following questions:

1. How are slums represented in film and music from different geographies and periods?
2. How and for whom do slums become sites of opportunities for exploitation, survival, mobility and political power?
3. What are the conditions under which public authorities have tolerated the rise of slums and when they have acted to eradicate them?
4. Why have most policy initiatives regarding slums failed? Because of the way the issue was framed, the quality of data, available, political environment?
5. What kind of opportunities do slums represent and for whom?
6. How will global trends in the labor market, including demographic and technological shifts, condition the economic opportunities of slum dwellers?
7. What does a new approach to slums look like?
8. Are there any new innovative approaches now being tested?

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<sup>2</sup> The team who conceptualized and organized the event included George “Mac” McCarthy, Chris Herbert, David Luberoff, Rahul Mehrotra, Alejandro de Castro Mazarro, and Enrique Silva.

## II. Symposium Overview

Although our discussions did not answer all of these questions, the format was conducive to a rich interchange among the participants. The event's disciplinary and professional diversity enriched our discussions. The participants included five people from planning, four from architecture, four from economics, four from public policy, four from community work, three journalists/filmmakers, two historians, and two other social scientists. Twelve were from academia, ten from non-profits, three from international agencies and three from the Lincoln Institute. Among the geographies covered were: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, France, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, Senegal, South Africa, and the United States.

This disciplinary, sectoral and geographic diversity led to useful disagreements, starting with the very definition of slums and their causes, consequences, policy implications, and desirable interventions by external actors.

The Opening Session consisted of a presentation by Ranjani Mazumdar on "The Cinemagraphic Slum" using clips from feature films about slums and squatter settlements, including *Slumdog Millionaire*, *City of God*, *Los Olvidados*, *Salam Bombay*, and *Peixoto*. This approach illustrated the power of images in crafting perceptions, framing "the problem" and shaping acceptable policy responses. The graphic moving images had a powerful emotional content going beyond didactic messages and intellectual analysis.

The second day was a set of critical and theoretical discussions of slum issues, starting with their history in European cities before they were even labeled as such, and showing how this played out with rapid urbanization in the Global South. Panels followed on the role of real-estate markets in slum development and on potential measures to balance the inequalities created, and the importance of the informal economy. The final panel presented new approaches to slums, opening the conversation for the next day's presentations of innovations. Edgar Pieterse's phrase "*makeshift urbanism*" captured the feel of the topic.

The four innovative experiences presented in the first panel ranged from Community Land Trusts in San Juan; to the Catalytic Communities Project in Rio de Janeiro; to social impact business creating kits to improve housing upgrading in São Paulo; to the creation of a community radio station giving voice to marginalized workers in Port Harcourt, in the Niger Delta. The second panel talked about training slum dwellers in São Paulo's urban fringes to design and build new housing units for themselves; about a Caracas project mixing art with social activism in run-down urban areas; about the difficulty of building trust even in the acclaimed case of Medellín's slum upgrading; and about favela and peripheral youth uniting to reclaim their history, assert their identity through cultural production and set own agenda for the metropolitan region.

The Closing Session allowed for a more equal exchange between panelists and audience members. Several speakers sat in a semicircle at the front of the room and anyone from the audience who wished to speak sat in one of the chairs facing them in the first row. After speakers responded to a question from the moderator, they rotated off, and audience members took their place.

### **III. Areas of Convergence**

Consensus prevailed about the timeliness and relevance of the topic, and the need for a more effective policy response to challenges of the informal sector.

Starting with Mazumdar's introductory lecture on the "Cinematic Slum", participants agreed that images and music depicting life in slums have an enormous impact on the way they are perceived in the public imaginary. Looking at the violent, often graphic film clips, we concurred that most representations of slums portrayed negative aspects that seemed geared to heighten dramatic impact. From that very first session we had no differences of opinion about the historical nature of slums from the beginning of urbanization, as pointed out by Brodie Fischer.

In our overall vision for goals we were strongly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goal #11 calling for "Inclusive, Sustainable and Safe Cities" and we came to the discussion with values aligned around social justice and citizen participation. Participants generally agreed on the need for affordable housing; access to job markets and clients of goods and services produced in the informal economy; and improved access to quality schools, health services, and public transportation.

All agreed on the desirability of high density concentrated city growth to avoid urban sprawl, and generally recognized that land markets if left unregulated would continually out-price the ability of low-income urbanites to pay. There was no doubt about the need for incentives and disincentives to adjust land prices to allow for a diverse city with a proximate labor force for the optimal functioning of the city as a whole, although there may have been differences concerning the social function of land. All participants recognized the historic nature of informal settlements, by whatever name (slums, precarious neighborhoods, squatter settlements) and the ongoing challenge of uneven urban development. And all recognized that often the existence of informal settlements is not even recognized.

There was also consensus regarding the relative failure of public policies to deal productively with informal settlements. We agreed that the barriers to sustainable inclusive cities are not necessarily a lack of good ideas, but rather a lack of incentives for

the state and/or the market to protect the public good and or lack of political will. And we all recognized time as a precious resource in any project, particularly, as Alejandro Echeverri pointed out “the long time it takes to build trust and the short time it takes to destroy it.”

Despite these points of convergence, most of our discussions involved differences of opinion, ranging from nuanced divergences of viewpoint to at times impassioned disagreements.

## **IV. Areas of Divergence**

Symposium participants disagreed on many matters, small and large on technical, political, economic and moral grounds. Among those, the following five issues stood out:

### **1. What are slums and why do they exist?**

Divergent perspectives surfaced in the first session when we attempted to define slums. Although we all agreed with Martim Smolka that “not all poor are in slums and not all in slums are poor,” we differed on preferred terminology and on the connotations of commonly used words including slums, informal settlements, shantytowns, squatter settlements, communities, precarious neighborhoods, subnormal agglomerations, etc.

The definitions can be loosely grouped as follows:

1. Slums are a normal part of unequal urbanization throughout history and across geographies (Brodie Fischer and Charlotte Vorms). Another version of this is that slums are not marginal to the rest of the city but tightly integrated into all aspects of urban life -- in an asymmetrical manner (Janice Perlman).
2. Slums are unsafe, unplanned, unsanitary areas; Slums consist of people occupying substandard housing; Slums are a solution of last result arising from an imbalances in housing costs and incomes (George Galster, Martim Smolka and others).
3. Slums are stepping stones to urban integration through self-help, mutual aid, and community organizing that improve livelihoods, living conditions, and prospects for the next generation (Theresa Williamson, Lorena Zárate, and Lyvia Rodriguez).
4. Slums are a part of the urban area needing special regulations, zoning, and design interventions to allow for spatial and socioeconomic improvements (Alejandro Echeverri, Fernando Mello, etc.).
5. Slums are industrial hubs. They are work areas where people generate livelihoods in the informal sector, which is the driver of most urban economies (Marty Chen).

These diverse definitions and the lack of consensus did not prevent us from continuing with our panels and discussions but **did** condition the rest of the debate insofar as each way of defining slums implied a different diagnosis of the problem, different policy implications, and different actors taking the lead.

For example, when slums are seen as unsafe, substandard and unsanitary, the logical solution is to get rid of them. That was in fact, the prevailing approach in Latin American cities in the 1960s-1980s. However the relocation of the population into public housing complexes created more problems. Governments risked overspending on these housing complexes, and they ruined the livelihoods of residents by distancing them from their jobs. Furthermore, housing complexes were politically unpopular, and tended to revert to slum-like conditions, with drug traffic following the vulnerable population.

On the other hand seeing slums as housing solutions, stepping stones to urban integration and/or centers of a thriving informal economy implies support for their continued existence in the same location and improving the quality of life and access to services where they are. The definition of needing special zoning comes into this approach insofar as it enables the communities to thrive on their own terms.

Those with a historical perspective saw slums as a natural feature of urbanization. They pointed out that in Europe when the industrial revolution and land use changes led to urbanization, there was no differentiation among urban areas. The designation of “slums” came long after these low income communities had been in existence, along with a recognition of the need they fulfilled in rapidly growing cities (Brodie Fischer and Charlotte Vorms).

## **2. Are slums the problem or the solution?**

Most conference participants, but not all, rejected the notion that slums are a problem that needs to be solved. Others argued that slums are the de facto solution for housing those urbanites who are excluded by the state and the market from affordable rental or ownership. This led to a vibrant discussion. Some agreed that slum residents make important contributions to the city, providing their labor, consumer power, and intellectual capital. This is often referred to as the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) perspective.

Sharp disciplinary differences emerged in this conversation, as several economists argued that the ABCD perspective constitutes a form of “misplaced romanticism,” and that no rational person would choose to live informally if they had the financial resources to live elsewhere. Yet, most of the sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists, especially those who had done fieldwork in slums and informal communities, contested that view, pointing out that many slum residents have the financial resources to leave but choose to stay for reasons including proximity to support networks of family and friends, richness of the culture, a sense of roots and loyalty in the fight for their rights. Others

stay because they can expand their homes as their families grow, use their homes as workplaces to generate income, and feel at ease with non-conformity (Marty Chen, Theresa Williamson, Janice Perlman, Lorena Zárte).

This divergence of opinion was also reflected in disagreements about the purchasing power and financial capabilities of slum dwellers. Those who believed that people stayed in slums for lack of other options disagreed with those who argued that the purchasing power in slums is considerable, their cost of living may be more expensive and they actually pay more for consumer goods and basic urban services (Marty Chen, Theresa Williamson).

### 3. Investment priorities and timing

Given diverging points of view, it should come as no surprise that group members differed on what **type of investment** should be prioritized. Some reasoned that investment in housing projects, public works and urban infrastructure would equalize the living standard between the formal and informal sectors. This is the standard approach in slum upgrading projects.

Others argued for greater focus on human and social capital, in such areas as education, health, job training, livelihoods, mentoring, cultural activities and recreational spaces. Their point was that once people had good education, good health and a reasonable income, they could deal with the rest--either by installing their own services as in the past or by making effective demands on the state to provide the same services for them as for the rest of the city.

Institutional capacity building was another pressing need that arose in our conversation, which has not received sufficient attention from researchers. It is hard to know how to fund or support efforts to strengthen the rule of law or build capacity of state and local governments. Obviously all of these are needed, but historically governments and international development agencies have focused on the built environment over human, community or institutional capabilities.

We agreed that politicians gain greater visibility through investing in physical projects with tangible results during their administration as compared with social and institutional investments. (Both Sumila Gulyani who is now at the World Bank and Michael Cohen who was there, critiqued the Bank for incentivizing public works over institution building and social support).

**Timing** and **location** of investments were also points of disagreement. Given the cost of on-site upgrading we understood the appeal of anticipating and directing future settlements to the outskirts by laying out serviced subdivisions. This “sites and services” approach appealed to some but others pointed to the less-than-successful variations of this approach since the first pilot test in 1972 in Dakar. For incoming migrants generating income was key to survival so being near the job market was essential.



## 4. Role of the state

There was disagreement among about the degree to which the government should be the leading actor in addressing informality. While most agreed that the state needed to play a role, some felt that it was the key actor and that public policy and programs were the most important part of the equation. Case studies from from Medellín (Alejandro Echeverri), São Paulo (Fernando de Mello), Puerto Rico (Lyvia Rodriguez) and Caracas (Alejandro Haiek Coll) served as the basis for a rich discussion about government intervention in informality. A key takeaway from this discussion was the difficulty that government projects face in gaining people's trust. Echeverri said that in Medellín, "It took 10 years to gain trust and a year to destroy it." Janice Perlman observed similar dynamics in the PAC-Favela upgrading program in Rio de Janeiro.

At the other end of the spectrum, some found that the state was often more harmful than helpful and that community-based initiatives generated better and less costly outcomes (Sheela Patel, Theresa Williamson and Alejandro Haiek Coll). Brodie Fischer argued that the state is needed to make resource distribution more equitable and correct market inefficiencies and to set the parameters about what communities can and cannot do. A good example is that even Community Land Trusts need the state in order to function.

We debated the target of policy-making. As Marty Chen noted, "If the problem is inequality, it cannot be solved within the unit of the slum.... It's an issue of structural injustice....We need to look at the larger power system." Ultimately, we agreed that the state, the informal economy and citizen action do not operate in separate universes.

## 5. Role of outside experts

Related to the role of the state, we were of different minds on the extent to which outsiders are needed for diagnosis, baseline data collection, project implementation and evaluation. Sheela Patel and Michael Uwemedimo, spoke about community house-to-house survey data collection, providing a much-needed source of information to local authorities in Indian cities and the Niger Delta respectively.<sup>3</sup> Others including Theresa Williamson, Marty Chen, Lyvia Rodriguez, Lorena Zárte, Edgar Pieterse, and Janice Perlman indicated the importance of local participation at all stages of slum projects.

The case of Thailand was interesting in this regard: In Bangkok the government gave money directly to the Urban Poor Federation and not a cent was left unspent or wasted, as this was of community-wide importance and under community control. Samsok

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.cmapping.net/the-human-city-project>

Boonyabancha was to have presented this case, but was unable to attend. The opposite case is India where 75% of funds designated for slum upgrading were unspent (Sheela Patel).

Even the supposed neutrality of design and planning are value-based. As Alejandro Haiek Coll said “architecture is a political act.” José Baravelli added that housing construction, when done by the community for the community as a form of empowerment. The related topic of “who decides”, “who has the power to act?” and on whose behalf is one of the emerging themes discussed below under Overarching Themes.

## V. Emerging Themes

Two themes that had been embedded in the conceptual framework of the conference and in the selection of speakers arose repeatedly in our discussions. The first concerns land regularization for slum communities. The second revolves around power inequality and claims for citizenship and the right to the city.

### 1. The Land Regularization Conundrum

What were lessons learned from socially conscious programs like community land trusts and cooperatives and where has ‘land value capture’ served the public good (i.e. financing low cost housing land acquisition)?

**Land tenure**, land use, zoning, and other urban planning tools have been used to exclude entire communities from land ownership and preclude affordable housing in desirable locations. On the other hand, these same instruments can be used to ensure that residents obtain legal ownership of the land on which their homes are built, a right that in most cases they have never had. The argument in favor of individual land title in slums is that the residents should have the same ability to capitalize on their property as anyone else, by selling or renting. The fear is that this might lead to gentrification or “white expulsion” where the market succeeds where government policy failed in removing the slums. The imagined scenario is that once people have title they will sell at what seems like a windfall, but in fact will prove inadequate to afford alternative housing in proximity to jobs and social services and will end up with the poor pushed ever further out from the center. To avoid this, new forms of collective ownership and land banking for low income housing are being explored.

**Community Land Trusts (CLTs)** Land banking and land-sharing cooperatives. Insofar as these prove successful and replicable they will open a path to a new wave of

public policies. Lyvia Rodriguez presented the ENLACE Project in San Juan as a potential model for Rio de Janeiro and elsewhere. The San Juan government owned a parcel of land on the banks of the El Caño Martín Peña River. This area was contaminated by debris, silt, and sewerage runoff and occupied by squatters, whose homes were flooded when rains were heavy. The government dredged the channel, drained the land, and deeded title to the community in the form of a Community Land Trust. Residents, city authorities, and the Puerto Rican government agreed to establish this CLT as a way to transfer land ownership to settlers to insure they could remain there even when prices rose as a result of the environmental cleanup.

The El Caño experience is one case of **Land Value Capture** that was discussed as a promising way to finance affordable housing, urban infrastructure, and land acquisition. In general, Land Value Capture is a mechanism for communities and the government to benefit from the increase in land prices generated by public investment. San Juan's case was unusual insofar as the enhanced land value was transferred to settlers. In most cases, land price appreciation generates tax increments, which go to public funds and fuel new urban projects.

Private developers generally profit from increased land value, too. They buy cheap land in the urban peripheries and subdivide it into small lots to be sold at low cost to incoming migrants or poor urbanites. When the government is pressured by these newcomers into providing basic services, the resulting increase in land values gives developers greater profit from the sale of the remaining plots.

**Government sites and services** programs were promoted by international agencies as a low cost solution for absorbing incoming migrants and displaced urban poor, against the will of local and national governments, and with dubious outcomes for the poor. Although these **peripheral subdivisions** were marketed as a form of land ownership, in many cases (Brazil and India were mentioned) the costs proved prohibitive and the lower middle class bought and occupied them. Ironically, we learned that the government response was to shrink the plots, make the units smaller, and make roads too narrow for cars, so that only the poor would want to live there.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, finding the cheapest possible land has extended peri-urban sprawl ever further from existing infrastructure, putting a cost burden on the city. Some argued that densifying the urbanized area close to job markets would be better for the poor and for the urban environment.

Of course in some countries ownership and access to urban land are in the public domain, not an individual matter. Singapore, for example, turned the entire country into a Community Land Trust, as did Korea, through land value capture. In Sweden, housing

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<sup>4</sup> Variations of sites and services have been tried include one-room core houses connected to the water and power grid; the Hydraulic Wall, consisting of a poured concrete floor and one standing wall with connections to water and electricity; and the least expensive option, demarcated plots of land on a grid with the possibility of service connection through sweat equity/self-help.

co-ops, not individual ownership, are the norm, made possible by universal human and housing rights and full access to credit.

This seems to be diametrically opposite to the Latin American experience with **Public Housing Projects**, with generally small apartments in 5-story walk-up apartment buildings in remote areas, where former slum dwellers must pay monthly “rents” for 30 years to own their units. Most never make it and are punished in various ways. These complexes are expensive to build and maintain and have generally been unsuccessful at cost recovery, leading to evictions for residents and financial debt for the government.

From the residents’ point of view **On-Site Upgrading** is almost universally the preferred approach<sup>5</sup> and **Removal** is considered to be the most detrimental and devastating policy. The effects of slum eradication and relocation on the community and the city as a whole are to increase socio-economic and spatial segregation and to suffocate the informal economy. As Marty Chen said, “The informal economy cannot survive on the periphery.” There is also a cost to wiping out a community’s collective history, solidarity and attachment, which are central to the meaning and identity of most residents.

## 2. The Power Inequality Conundrum

The theme of systemic/endemic inequality in power and resources between slum residents and other urbanites came up repeatedly, as did other concepts associated with deep democracy and equal standing in the eyes of the law. Some of the key questions raised across all of our sessions were: “Who decides what?”; “Who benefits from slum production and reproduction?”; and “Who is a full citizen versus a *pseudo citizen*?”

### A. Who decides?

In discussing this we touched on several areas including who determines the delineation between formal and informal and how the boundaries of slum communities are drawn when the line between them is fuzzy. This fine line can be a life-or-death matter when decisions are made about which houses will be included in either removal or upgrading. The same question applies to what economic activities are defined as formal versus informal or legal versus illegal. (Sheela Patel, etc.) We agreed on the permeability between the formal and informal sectors but not necessarily on the degree. Some said

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<sup>5</sup> Since the mid 1980s at least 15 countries have created National Slum Upgrading Programs, which have the advantage of leaving the community in place maintaining the informal economy, access to diverse forms of livelihoods and support systems. An evaluation of these programs done by the World Bank Institute shows that, while the plans mandate community participation in data collection, diagnosis of the problem, formulation and implementation of the intervention and monitoring/evaluation, this is often not followed in practice. In many cases-but not all--projects start late, run behind schedule, fear going over budget and therefore tend to eliminate the participatory process, and even end up removing the community to public housing for various reasons.

there is no actual boundary because the two are so interconnected that the formal city/economy cannot function without the informal (Marty Chen). Edgar Pieterse agreed with this point, adding that *the urban economy is circular*, as money and materials are recycled and reused within and between the formal and informal economies.<sup>6</sup>

Sheela Patel added that in India, slums serve surrounding neighborhoods, as recognized in the city of Orissa, when the government tried to evict a slum and the nearby neighborhoods opposed it. They did not want to lose the cheap, locally available labor pool who worked as maids, nannies, cooks, janitors, plumbers, electricians, building security, construction workers, etc. However, we do know that wherever the boundary is designated the **stigma** of the slum is deep and persistent. As Theresa Williamson said, “The stigma against favela residents is so bad in Rio that some people have to rent an address to get through a job interview.”

Two excellent and largely unknown examples of informality in the midst of formality in the US context were raised by Peter Ward about Texas and Jake Wegmann about Los Angeles. In these cases, unseen from the street level, but visible from an aerial view, are unregistered houses in the backyards of suburban developments. Los Angeles has about 100,000 units that are invisible with half a million inhabitants, not counted by any census. The residents in these hidden homes have full urban services on the same system as the houses on the street, they pay rent and utilities in cash, but neither they nor the homeowners pay taxes on those units.<sup>7</sup> Are these “slums”? Are they a problem or a solution?

Theresa Williamson cautioned that if and when local governments learn of these informal units and start to formalize them, that families may be priced out. Consequently, the city would lose this source of affordable housing, a cultural and social asset, cheap labor and a considerable consumer market.

Another aspect of the power-inequality conundrum that we discussed under the rubric of “who decides” is how ‘best practice’ (or ‘good practice’ according to Sheela Patel) is defined and how the success or failure of policy intervention is determined as well as the reasons for the outcome. We asked, “Do slum programs tend to fail because of the way they were framed, the political environment, or the way we measure success?” That led to a debate about what to count when measuring progress towards goals. Instead of counting hardware (number of new units, water or electric connections, etc), should we be counting access to housing markets, water, education, health care, mobility etc.? (Nick

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<sup>6</sup> This coincides with the concept of “the real economy” developed by Ignacy Sachs, Jorge Wilhelm and others, who contend there is no such thing as separate formal and informal economies insofar as in “the real economy” they are intertwined and co-dependent.

<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, the NYT ran an article on October 30, 2018, “*California Today: Los Angeles Tests Housing the Homeless in its Own Backyard*” about a new program that provides loans to homeowner families to finance the construction of exactly such houses in their backyards, if they agreed to rent them to homeless families for at least 3 years. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/30/us/california-today-los-angeles-homeless-housing.html>

You). Or, neither of the above, but the outcomes i.e. not just access to water but the quality, accessibility and reliability of the water supply.

## **B. Who benefits?**

This turned out to be one of the richest veins of discussion. As Brodie Fischer summed it up, “the center benefits from the vulnerability at the margins.” Theresa Williamson added, “Informality persists in part because there are constellations of interests invested in keeping certain places informal.” In the political realm, she continued, “the opacity of slums allows all sorts of manipulation by politicians as slums are considered outside the laws that protect citizens’ rights”.

Many people pointed out that the urban economy benefits from cheap labor. Others added that the city benefits from self-built housing, since it cannot meet the demand, and community-installed urban services.<sup>8</sup> Several people pointed out the enormous sums collected slum landlords collect from renters and their collusion with political power. Sumila said, “The supply side needs to be responsive and responsible.” As an example she stated that 92% of the Kibera slum dwellers in Nairobi are renters, and that they pay a total of USD\$30 million in rent. The landlord collecting this money is the sister of the strongman dictator, Arap Moi. Sheela added that in Mumbai, “In almost half the places we go to fight against evictions of slum dwellers, the units are owned by people of wealth and power such as judges who buy the shacks and sell them at a profit, -just as any other land speculators.” Peter Ward added that in the U.S. and Mexico, even within slum communities, minorities and the poor are exploited by those with relatively more wealth and power and do not feel they have a voice.

## **C. Who can claim citizen rights?**

Throughout the three days many expressed concern about the vulnerability of slum residents – the stigma in the job market, the lack of good schools or health care, the pseudo – citizenship which does not guarantee equal treatment under the law, and the lack of safety and security within and outside their own communities. Not having the same standing as other citizens denies slum residents the right to make claims on the state and to benefit from the entitlements of membership in that state.

Some noted that, as wages have often constituted the key to citizenship, those with steady income and stable jobs are more likely to be justly treated. Others like Charlotte Vorms disagreed, saying that the key was “law and rights” such as social protection that are guaranteed to all national citizens in Europe regardless of job status or place of

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<sup>8</sup> As a Rio favela resident remarked, “I always hear the government marvel at how much we can do with so little, and they use that to justify not investing in our basic needs.”

residence. Both Charlotte and Brodie spoke of *equality of security* as part of full citizenship.

In Rio and elsewhere in Brazilian favelas, the state has tried to conflate consumption with citizenship, so successfully that residents will often show their electricity bill as proof of citizenship. This is the kind of reasoning that led to defining “middle class” by an index of domestic appliances they owned

Another train of thought teased out of our discussion concerned the pervasive stigma of being from a slum and the cost of discrimination in terms of the job market external as well as self-esteem internally. Janice Perlman’s research showed that living in a favela was a greater source of discrimination than race, gender, place of origin, or location on the periphery. This held true across three generations. As gender and race became less stigmatized, the negative image of being a favela resident remained deeply ingrained. As Theresa Williamson said, “*The stigma against favela residents is so bad in Rio that some people have to rent an address to get through a job interview and get the job.*”

In the absence of deep commitment to democratic practice the only leverage for inclusion, equal opportunity, social justice, or voice is citizen action. In that regard it was inspiring to hear of the new initiatives that youth from the favelas and peripheries of Rio are taking to re-define their identity through cultural production, re-capture their history through interviews with community elders and creating favela museums, through speaking out as community correspondents and even holding police accountable through social media apps. While Jorge Francisco Liernur was critical of “celebrating the identity of slums, others felt that defying the negative narrative with a positive one of pride was of utmost importance.

## **VI. Future Research**

### **1. Policy Research**

The overall policy question is: Given the constraints of the political economy, where are possible points of intervention to include slums as part of the urban resource base? What incentive systems are needed to reward these? What changes in public opinion?

We would benefit from longitudinal research on the long-term impacts of previous policy interventions. The topics that we hope to learn about are: mitigating the disruption of displacement; fostering social, economic and spatial inclusion; overcoming negative stereotypes; and fostering income generation.

**A. Mitigating impacts of displacement** of slum residents due to state programs or market forces. As cities expand and real estate values rise in the urban periphery, informal settlement dwellers are at an increased risk of expulsion. What can be learned from research on the impact of displacement in cities in the Global South and Global North? What price do people pay in physical and mental health and how does that trauma transmit across generations? What is the cost of removals to the city?.

What happens to those who are removed or displaced when their communities are partially or completely eradicated or their homes removed due to environmental risk? Where do they go? What happens to them and their families?

What might be done to mitigate these impacts: Social rent? New units in low-rise/high-density apartments in the same area? Cash buyouts? Rental apartments near the city center? What else could be done through zoning and regulatory incentives to keep displaced residents near their sources of income? Future research would investigate existing experiences, locations and outcomes.

**B. Facilitating inclusion and social justice.** As discussed, many policies targeted at connecting slum areas with their surrounding neighborhoods have focused on improving urban infrastructure and/or the physical security of residents of informal settlements. To address the exclusion and lack of equal treatment under the law, additional tools are needed. Cities like São Paulo, Curitiba, Medellín, Singapore and Hong Kong have taken some steps towards inclusion that might teach us what worked and what did not. Obviously this is a society-wide issue needing many action fronts. Are there examples of complementarity among place-based, poverty-based and rights-based approaches?

**C. Overcoming negative stereotypes.** Research has shown that the stigma and discrimination faced by slum residents is a greater, more persistent barrier to work opportunities than stigma of race, gender or birthplace. Given the association of slums with violence and danger, what can be done to counteract that? Are there any experiences that have eroded those stereotypes? Are there any initiatives -- mass media or social media, school programs, cultural production, social movements -- that have challenged if not changed perceptions? For example, the TV campaign “Where do you hide your prejudice”, the film “Favela Rising”, the TV series made by Search for a Common Ground in conflict zones using soccer competition to surface and combat stereotypes of the “other”.

**D. Building upon the knowledge, skills, assets and resources** of slum dwellers **for income generation** and sustainable livelihoods. Ample evidence exists of the creativity, cultural production, and intelligence of community residents. What programs exist to connect this talent pool with mentors, internships, educational and job opportunities, or entrepreneurial expertise and start-up capital? What about preparing them for careers in the growth sectors of the economy. What about training for active participation in local government and political life? What impacts might these actions bring?



## **2. Innovation Research: From Pilot Projects to Public Policy**

Experience shows that innovating and scaling up are like “swimming upstream” or “going up the down staircase” to quote from our speakers about advances in slum policy. As difficult as it is to change attitudes and biases, it is even more difficult to change behavior and even harder to change public policy. The biggest leap of all is implementation.

Many studies have been and are being conducted in cities and slums worldwide, with a small but increasing part by slum dwellers themselves. If history is any guide, this new knowledge creation will take years to be reflected in practice and decades to be reflected in policy—if ever. What could be done to connect research with action in real time?

Research on how to facilitate and accelerate these transitions would be of inestimable value. A key research question here is: How to scale up from initial ideas and pilot projects to public policy while maintaining the integrity of the core idea and the adaptive capacity for contextual change? How to create the conditions to stimulate innovation? How to detect and nurture start-up initiatives? How to overcome obstacles to reaching scale? And how to refresh the creative impulse and leadership with critical curiosity?

## **3. Urban Services Research**

There is an important opportunity to bring recent advances in science and technology to bear on providing water, sanitation, energy, food, building materials, road surfacing, and income to informal communities. Our costly, centralized and wasteful urban infrastructure was developed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and not fundamentally changed to date. It is nearly impossible to retrofit the existing urban infrastructure using these new processes, materials, biological and chemical systems, and designs. However most of the current billion in slums and all of the next billion could benefit from the application of advances in science and technology to urban infrastructure. Collecting and connecting the relevant research on leapfrogging from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure would be a major research contribution for which significant funding is likely available.

## VII. Follow-up Symposium

At the end of the symposium, participants enthusiastically endorsed the idea of a follow-up meeting. Building on a productive set of conversations, people felt the need to learn from a more in-depth examination of solution-oriented case studies over a longer period of time. Researchers, including junior scholars, presenting on these case studies could invite a community leader or organizer or government representative to speak directly from their experience.

Participants also thought that more time was needed to discuss the innovation case studies, and the presentations could be enhanced by including more visual materials, including videos, posters, maps and photos. The panels would be followed by breakout sessions for those who want to adapt the approach to their own cities.

Sumila Gulyani summed up the theme for the next meeting with the following provocation: “Will we do better by the next billion who will live in slums? If we don’t change our approach, there will continue to be no room for the poor.” Janice Perlman added a quote from an Aboriginal woman who said “if you have come to help me, you can go home again, but if you see my problem as part of your own, perhaps we can work together”.

The symposium organizers, George “Mac” McCarthy, President of the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy; Chris Herbert, Managing Director of the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies; David Luberoff, Deputy Director of the Joint Center for Housing Studies; and Rahul Mehrotra, Chair of the Department of Urban Planning and Design drew the meeting to a close and thanked participants and staff.

## VIII. Participants

Jose Baravelli, Tereza Architecture and Urbanism

Martha Chen, Harvard Kennedy School and WIEGO

Michael Cohen, The New School

Alejandro de Castro Mazarro, Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (2019)

Fernando de Mello, URBEM Institute of Urbanism and Studies for the Metropolis

Alejandro Echeverri, Center for Urban and Environmental Studies of EAFIT University; Former Loeb Fellow

Brodwyn Fischer, University of Chicago

George Galster, Wayne State University

Sumila Gulyani, The World Bank

Alejandro Haiek Coll, Lab.Pro.Fab and Umeå University

Chris Herbert, Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies

Jorge Francisco Liernur, University Torcuato di Tella

David Luberoff, Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies

Ranjani Mazumdar, Jawaharlal Nehru University

George McCarthy, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

Rahul Mehrotra, Harvard Graduate School of Design and RMA Architects

Sheela Patel, Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres

Janice Perlman, The Mega-Cities Project

Edgar Pieterse, African Centre for Cities

Lyvia Rodriguez, Executive Director, El Cano Martin Pena ENLACE Project

Enrique Silva, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

**Martim O. Smolka**, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

**Michael Uwemedimo**, Collaborative Media Advocacy Platform and University of Roehampton

**Charlotte Vorms**, University of Paris

**Peter Ward**, University of Texas at Austin

**Jake Wegmann**, University of Texas at Austin

**Theresa Williamson**, Catalytic Communities

**Nicholas You**, Global Business Alliance

**M. Lorena Zárate**, Habitat International Coalition