

Laura Amaya - From Bogotá To Bombay: How The World's 'Village-Cities' Facilitate Change



Photo: stealmag.com

stealmag.com. October 2014. Perched behind the fog that conceals Bogotá's mountains is William Oquendo's house. It is a labyrinth of doors and windows, wherein a bedroom opens into the kitchen and a bathroom vents out into the living room.

Five thousand 5,000 kilometers away in Rio de Janeiro, Gilson Fumaça lives on the terrace level of a three-story house built by his grandfather, his father, and now himself. It's sturdy; made out of brick and mortar on the ground floor, concrete on the second, and a haphazard combination of zinc roof tiles and loose bricks on the third. The last is Gilson's contribution, which he will improve as his income level rises.

On the other side of the world in Bombay (Mumbai since 1995), houses encroach on the railway tracks, built and rebuilt after innumerable demolition efforts. "The physical landscape of the city is in perpetual motion," Suketu Mehta observes in 'Maximum City.' Shacks are built out of bamboo sticks and plastic bags; families live on sidewalks and under flyovers in precarious homes constructed with their hands. And while Dharavi—reportedly the largest slum in Asia—has better quality housing, running water, electricity and secure land tenure, this is not the case for most of the new migrants into the city.

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