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.

Read more:

Garikai Chaunza – Zimbabwe's High Court Stays House Demolitions, Thousands Already Homeless

Photo: www.newzimbabwe.com

fsrn.org. October 2014. In Zimbabwe, a court has ordered the government to halt a program of evictions and demolitions that has already rendered about three thousand families homeless. As the rainy season approaches, it's unclear if officials will appeal the decision. Garikai Chaunza reports.

The high court has ordered the government to stop demolishing homes in Harare and Chitungwiza, a bedroom community about fifteen miles southeast of the capital. In his ruling, Justice Nicholas Mathonsi said the demolitions were unlawful, adding that the action was a gross abuse of human rights.

The demolitions began in September, despite the country's recently-adopted constitution that guarantees every citizen the right to shelter. Residents say their homes were legally built, but officials claim otherwise.

"They demolished my house and all the property inside, beds, kitchen units and other household appliances," says Peter Makani, a 28-year-old father of two whose house in the Epworth area of Harare was razed. He told FSRN that police, "started firing the tear gas so that people could flee away before they demolish the houses." Makani says local council officials granted him a residential stand – or approval — to build his house in 2011, and he was surprised to see the same authorities violently evicting his family.

The houses in question were built under electric cables or on areas reserved for recreational facilities and wetlands. Residents say elected officials with the two local authorities granted the land allocations when they were campaigning during last year's national elections.
Officials have not issued a public statement following the judgment.

Read more: http://fsrn.org/thousands-already-homeless/

Dan McQuillan – Smart Slums: Utopian Or Dystopian Vision Of The Future?

Songdo – South Korea Photo: en.wikipedia.org

theguardian.com. October 2014. Life in a smart city is a frictionless; free of traffic

congestion, optimally lit, with everything from bins to buildings constantly reporting their status and managing their interactions with residents. The smart slum is still a peripheral idea, but we can speculate on the likely impact of extending this 'smartness' to slums and make two competing claims. Firstly, that development professionals should be wary of smart slums repeating some of the negative impacts of ICT4D; and secondly, that a push for smart slums could be appropriated for social justice.

The idea of the smart city is a vision of a networked urbanism. The promise is that environmental monitoring and feedback from embedded sensors everywhere will simultaneously deliver greener and more productive cities. The idea has been most fully materialised in brand new cities like Songdo in South Korea but is spreading to established urban centres like San Francisco, Amsterdam and Madrid.

Read more: http://www.theguardian.com/smart-slums-smart-city

The World Bank – Urban China ~ Toward Efficient, Inclusive, and Sustainable Urbanization

By 2030, up to 70% of the Chinese population – some one billion – will be living in cities. How could China prepare for that? Find the answers in the report *"Urban China: Toward Efficient, Inclusive and Sustainable Urbanization"*, as World Bank Country Director for China Klaus Rohland introduces it.

Download the report: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/18865

In the last 30 years, China's record economic growth lifted half a billion people out of poverty, with rapid urbanization providing abundant labor, cheap land, and good infrastructure. While China has avoided some of the common ills of urbanization, strains are showing as inefficient land development leads to urban

sprawl and ghost towns, pollution threatens people's health, and farmland and water resources are becoming scarce. With China's urban population projected to rise to about one billion – or close to 70 percent of the country's population – by 2030, China's leaders are seeking a more coordinated urbanization process. Urban China is a joint research report by a team from the World Bank and the Development Research Center of China's State Council which was established to address the challenges and opportunities of urbanization in China and to help China forge a new model of urbanization. The report takes as its point of departure the conviction that China's urbanization can become more efficient, inclusive, and sustainable. However, it stresses that achieving this vision will require strong support from both government and the markets for policy reforms in a number of area. The report proposes six main areas for reform: first, amending land management institutions to foster more efficient land use, denser cities, modernized agriculture, and more equitable wealth distribution; second, adjusting the hukou household registration system to increase labor mobility and provide urban migrant workers equal access to a common standard of public services; third, placing urban finances on a more sustainable footing while fostering financial discipline among local governments; fourth, improving urban planning to enhance connectivity and encourage scale and agglomeration economies; fifth, reducing environmental pressures through more efficient resource management; and sixth, improving governance at the local level.

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Mark Napier – Africa's Growing Cities: How Do People Adapt?

eldis.org. October 2014. With *World Habitat Day* on October 6, Dr. *Mark Napier* provides a timely insight on the urgent need to address unequal access to land and property. Specifically he reflects on how African cities grow and the way poor people can integrate themselves into urban economies – as explored in more detail in his recently released book, Trading Places: accessing land in African cities.

Debates about housing and land in African cities have tended to take place around a few key themes: rapid urbanisation, lack of urban planning, limited investment in urban infrastructure, the formation and perpetuation of slums, inappropriate building standards, insecure tenure and evictions, and poor living conditions, to mention a few. The Millennium Development Goals gave high priority to the issue by aiming to improve the lives of many people living in slums. More recently the discussion has grown to encompass the predicted effects of climate change, vulnerability to a variety of urban disasters, and what to do about this at a city-wide level. Many agencies are mulling this over when discussing how to frame the Post-2015 Agenda.

Read more: http://www.eldis.org/go/africa-s-growing-cities

'Give Slum Dwellers A Voice', Secretary-General Says In Message For World Habitat Day

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

New York, 6 October 2014. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message on *World Habitat Day*, to be observed on 6 October:

Over the past decade, efforts under the Millennium Development Goals have cut the proportion of people living in slums by more than half. Yet, over the same period, rapid urbanization, especially in the developing world, has seen overall slum populations rise. In some parts of sub-Saharan Africa, as many as 70 per cent of urban dwellers live in slums and informal settlements.

Slums are often located on the least desirable and appropriate land, such as flood plains and steep hillsides, and are inherently vulnerable to the increasingly severe weather events that climate change is causing. Many of the people who inhabit slums were pushed to migrate by the lack of opportunities in rural areas or their countries of origin. They regularly lack basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity and street lighting. Crime is often endemic, with women and girls particularly at risk. Unemployment, underemployment and the cost of transport to distant places of work add further hardship.

To achieve sustainable development and a life of dignity for all, we must address these issues. This year, World Habitat Day is devoted to giving a voice to slum dwellers. Often, people in the slums live in near-anonymity — no address, no census and no idea when their living conditions will improve. By learning from their experiences, city planners and policymakers can enhance the well-being of a significant portion of the human family. Let us hear from people who live in slums what has worked and what has not — and what we need to do.

Read more: http://unhabitat.org/give-slum-dwellers-a-voice