**Finding a place in the city; low-income housing sub-markets revisited**

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SUMMARY: One of the key insights of pioneer works on housing in cities in the Global South was that there was a range of housing types in each city through which low-income groups built, purchased, rented or occupied accommodation. These needed to be understood if policies for improving conditions were to be effective. Some of the pioneer works also discussed how much these ‘housing sub-markets’ and their locations were shaped by labour markets and by politics. Although there were points of comparison between cities – for instance in ‘squatter settlements’ and houses built on illegal subdivisions – their relative importance and the range and relative importance of other relatively inexpensive housing submarkets differed. During the 1970s, there were also detailed case studies of housing sub-markets in particular cities and some detailed studies of particular ‘informal settlements’ and these highlighted how much these were shaped by local contexts. These works influenced many governments and international agencies to move to more support for upgrading and away from ‘slum’ clearance.

But this attention to city-specific understandings and to the priorities of low-income groups got lost in the 1980s and then in the 1990s swamped by the way that international agencies sought to incorporate some attention to housing issues in their policies. Most of the large and diverse range of housing sub-markets through which those with low-incomes got accommodation got termed ‘slums’ and as international goals and targets on ‘slums’ began to be set, so ‘slums’ had to be defined. But they were defined very loosely (and often with considerable inaccuracies). National governments are now meant to measure and monitor their ‘slum’ population.

This has been challenged by two recent literatures – those that document the diversity of housing sub-markets in cities and new sets of data on housing conditions coming from the profiles, enumerations and mappings of informal settlements undertaken by organizations and federations of slum/shack dwellers. The second of these has particular importance in generating the detailed local data to inform government responses, especially upgrading.

**INTRODUCTION**

My interest is in four shifts in the discussions of housing issues in cities in the Global South from the 1960s to the present. The first was the shift from a focus on describing ‘slums’ and identifying their characteristics (and often discussions of how these should be cleared) to far more detailed context specific understandings of the different ways in which low-income individuals or households find accommodation in cities. This discussion helped influence a shift from ‘slum’ clearance and over-ambitious attempts at mass construction of public housing (most of which failed) to a new focus on upgrading and serviced sites. The term slum came to be little used.

The second was the change brought by the shift to neo-liberal policies within many high-income nations and international agencies. This with its focus on cutting down government expenditure and ‘structural adjustment’ (that was meant to reignite economic growth) meant that the interest in housing and basic services and more broadly in urban poverty waned.

The third shift was a return to a focus on ‘slums’ but very much driven by international agencies. Suddenly, ‘slums’ and responses to their growth became part of the international discourse – from the setting of the International Development Targets in the mid 1990s to the Millennium Development Goals and now to the Sustainable Development Goals. But this was backed by inappropriate attempts to define slums and to measure slum populations – and some very suspect measurements (see Satterthwaite 2016).

The fourth was a return to how low-income groups find accommodation in cities and the different housing sub-markets through which they buy/rent/build/occupy accommodation but this time supported by new voices and data sources. Now there were the contributions from many federations or networks of slum/shack dwellers to a new literature and new datasets. These used their data gathering capacities to provide profiles of all informal settlements in cities with context specific information on each and maps showing their location and distribution within and around cities. There were also many informal settlements where these same federations prepared detailed enumerations with data collected from each household and with each plot boundary delimited. Both these provided the basis for organization and action – the first being to influence the way that local government responded, the second providing the basis for designing and implementing upgrading and tenure security. ADD REFS

Of course, there were other swirls and shifts within discussions of housing conditions and responses - and some of these will also be discussed. For instance, there were the discussions of whether support for ‘self-help’ housing was politically progressive or another way by which low-income groups were exploited. More recently, there has been a return to the construction of mass housing ‘for low-income groups’ in many nations and all the problems this brings (Buckley, Kallergis and Wainer, 2016).

But at least within countries where the needs and priorities of low-income groups gets some attention from local governments, upgrading of informal settlements has become much less controversial and community-led upgrading more common.

**THE FIRST SHIFT**

The first change discussed here is the shift from a focus on ‘slums’ and their characteristics (and an assumption that slum clearance was needed) to far more detailed context specific understandings of the different ways in which low-income individuals or households find accommodation in cities and support for their household or community strategies to do so. This was driven by a small group of academics mostly from high-income nations but what these shared was experience on the ground and an active engagement with responses that worked for low-income groups. The great diversity in needs and priorities within ‘low-income’ populations was a central theme of John FC Turner’s work, as was his discussion of how to support housing (household and community) processes that could respond to this diversity of need and a strong critique of the conventional processes that did not (Turner 1976). He illustrated this with detailed examples of particular households and how well their housing served their priorities including supportive squatter shacks that worked much better for their residents than standard modern house in terms of cost, access to labour markets and services and supportive social networks. John Turner emphasized how when housing is planned by government agencies, it imposes standard ‘solutions’ which drastically reduces personal choices and the opportunities for residents to use their own skills, initiatives and material resources to house themselves.

This theme of the diversity among low-income groups in housing needs and priorities was also central to Lisa Peattie’s 1976 paper presenting her reservations about sites and service schemes – as these can repeat all the mistakes of public housing. As she notes, good policy would make site and service projects small with a wide range of locational choices and land prices and within each project a variety of lot sizes. This theme was also evident and strongly illustrated by researchers who documented in great detail the housing submarkets within particular informal settlements – see Peattie 1970, Lomnitz 1977, Perlman 1979, Schlyter and Schlyter 1980 and Moser 1982. Anthony Leeds’ seminal study in Rio highlighted the range of housing sub-markets used by low income groups and described each – see table 1. There was also a United Nations report put out in 1980 edited by Mahdu Sahrin with strong city case studies of slums/informal settlements (see for instance Nitaya and Ochareon 1980, Das 1980, Keyes 1980 and Rodell 1980). The need for government policies to support household and community initiatives was also evident in Otto Koenigsberger’s insistence that if a government wanted to improve housing, it should not build houses (Koenigsberger 1979).

Table 1: Different housing sub-markets used by low-income groups in Rio (early 1970s)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The different housing sub-markets | % of Rio’s population |
| Cabeçca de porco or casa de cômodo: rooming houses | 5 |
| Avenida or vila proletária or de lavadeiras; 1-2 two rented units with shared toilets/faucets/wash tanks | 5 |
| Parque proletário – government temporary housing meant to supply roofs and walls to persons without shelter. |  |
| Conjunto – multi storied single building or set of buildings.  Built by variety of organizations including labour unions – so can be occupationally specialized such as bank clerks, sailors, navy, public functionaries | 10 |
| Popular housing. Sometimes called conjuntos or vilas  Vila Esperança, vila Kennedy, Vila Paciência. Produced by slum redevelopment. Embryo housing. So far from city no labour markets have developed | 5-7 |
| Subúrbios, vast expanses of fairly humble separate houses on official streets with little or no paving often no lights, poor water, few or no sewers; | 10-15 |
| Tugurios. Areas of once good but now decaying housing and urban services, rented rooms, apartments, pensions with room and board, cheap traveller hotels | 10 |
| Squatter settlements – very diverse in quality | 20 |
| Favela de quintal |  |

SOURCE: Leeds 1974

Alan Gilbert made many contributions to our understanding of informal settlements and housing sub-markets, especially in those that were inhabited by tenants – see Gilbert 1982 and 1983; this was also supported by publications by his doctoral students that examined rental markets – for instance Amis 1984 in informal settlements in Nairobi and Edwards 1982 in Bucaramanga.

One hot issue at this time was whether support for self-help housing was progressive or another way in which capitalism exploits the poor (as they had to use their labour to build and as this helped cut housing costs which allowed lower wages – see Ward 1982 and Burgess 1982). There was also a growing number of detailed case studies on the politics of informal settlements – see for instance Payne 1982 and Connolly 1982 in Ward 1982.

This paper cannot do justice to the list of authors that could be included as ‘pioneers.’ It is also not clear where the line should be drawn between pioneers and those that followed; should pioneers be defined by what are judged to be original contributions or by publication before a year set as a cut-off point. Early works that include an interest in supporting policies that work with the residents of informal settlements include Dwyer 1975, Peil 1976, Mabogunge, Hardoy and Misra 1978, Caminos and Goethert 1978, Roberts 1978, Portes 1979, Marris 1979, Drakakis Smith 1981 and Gilbert and Gugler 1982 (and earlier works by some of these authors).

There is also a large literature on informal settlements and their residents in Latin America in Spanish which often gets overlooked – see for instance Matos Mar 1962 and Sanchez Leon et al 1979. This quick review does not do justice to the pioneering work in the late 1960s and 1970s done by researchers and research institutions in Latin America (such as CEUR in Argentina, DESCO in Peru, CEDEC in Brazil and SUR in Chile). Pioneers often worked within programmes, seminars or publications supported by CLACSO (El Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales) and SIAP (Sociedad Interamericana de Planificación). Their influence outside the region took awhile to spread, in part because their work was not published in English or French, in part because the authors intended their work for a Latin American audience. Some of these institutions were founded by academics pushed out of universities by dictatorships and some of the pioneer authors had to spend time abroad because of such political circumstances. Of course, I know best the works from the 1960s and early 1970s of Jorge E Hardoy and his co –authors – see for instance Hardoy 1972, Hardoy, Basaldúa and Moreno 1968, Hardoy and Tovar 1969, Hardoy and Schaedel 1969 and Hardoy and Geisse 1972. But any serious mapping of pioneers who helped change understandings of informal settlement development and policy responses would need to pay far more attention to Latin America and to the work of researchers such as Jorge Hardoy, Guillermo Geisse, Alfredo Rodríguez and Abelardo Sánchez León.

It is also a little humbling to go back to work that preceded those discussed above (although some of the authors mentioned above were also active in the 1960s see Turner 1966, 1968). Prominent among these was Charles Abrams whose 1964 book has many insights into informal settlements and the social and political context within which they developed. Abrams includes a description of the diversity in the types of squatter: owner-squatter (owning shack but not land); squatter tenant (hiring off another squatter); squatter holdover (former tenant who ceased paying rent) squatter landlord (usually a squatter of long standing who has rooms or huts to rent) speculator squatter (squatting in hope of making money) occupational squatter (small business on land they do not own) semi-squatters (reaching some agreement with land owner), squatter co-operator (part of group with common foothold). Juppenlatz (1970) describes informal settlement upgrading starting in Rio de Janeiro from the early 1960s. He also describes in detail the failure of relocation programme for squatters evicted from privately owned land in Quezon City in 1953 (and in many later years). William Mangin’s writing on informal settlements from the 1960s was also influential (Mangin 1967).

Thus, one of the key insights of pioneer works on housing in cities in the Global South was that each city has a range of housing types through which low-income groups build, purchase, rent or occupy accommodation. They can include those who sleep in open spaces. Some discuss how much the form that these ‘housing sub-markets’ and their locations and costs were shaped by labour markets or by government policies. Although there were some points of comparison between cities – for instance in ‘squatter settlements’ and houses build on illegal subdivisions – their relative importance and the range and relative importance of other inexpensive housing submarkets differ within each city and even in a single city over time.

The influence of many of these pioneer works can be seen in United Nations documents and in some shifts in policies and practices by some governments and international agencies (see Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1981 and 1989). This included a shift from over-ambitious attempts at mass construction of public housing (most of which failed or only served the non-poor) to a new focus on upgrading and serviced sites. The influence of some of the pioneers’ can be seen in the Recommendations for National Action that 132 national governments endorsed in Habitat the first UN Conference on Human Settlements in 1976. It can also be seen in the World Bank’s support for upgrading and serviced sites and in UNICEF’s support for community-based slum and squatter upgrading. Of course, this oversimplifies; for instance John Turner questioning whether the World Bank had really understood the approaches he advocated in their serviced site schemes. But at least by the late 1970s, there were many examples of new policies and practices by governments and international agencies around support for informal settlement upgrading and more bottom-up approaches.

One modest publication proved very influential – *SELAVIP News* produced by Fr. Jorge Anzorena since 1976. This contained accounts of Fr. Anzorena’s visits to grassroots organizations and of their struggles and initiatives around housing and land. As his network of contacts grew, so did he receive contributions for SELAVIP News from housing activists around the world. Perhaps this was the first journal to see the scale and scope of innovations coming from community organizations and to recognize their capacities to get change. His newsletter was the first to document many of what are now well known grassroots organizations and initiatives – and his network of contacts helped form the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights in 1989.

**THE SECOND SHIFT**

Any interest in understanding and acting on urban poverty (and the housing issues associated with it) got doused in the 1980s from the changes brought by the shift to neo-liberal policies within many high-income nations. This also led to a realignment of international agencies towards a more neo-liberal agenda and even for bilateral agencies to return to promoting their own country exports. UNICEF stopped supporting community-driven upgrading (it was judged too staff intensive and not going to scale) and the World Bank support for upgrading and serviced sites lessened (Satterthwaite 1998). This focus on cutting government expenditure and ‘structural adjustment’ that was meant to reignite economic growth meant that the interest in housing and basic services and more broadly in addressing urban poverty waned. Most of the pioneers who had helped push the first shift were still active and during the 1980s, more research showed the range of ways in which low-income groups found accommodation and how their form and relative importance varied in response to local contexts (including government responses). In 1984, when Jorge Hardoy and I were invited to brief the World Commission on Sustainable Development (the Brundtland Commission) on housing issues (this was published later in Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1989), we could draw on all these studies to highlight the diverse range of housing sub-markets through which low-income groups acquired/purchased/rented/occupied accommodation and how the range of these in each city was shaped by local contexts. This leads to an interest in who are the low-income groups seeking accommodation (Table 2), what are their priorities (Table 3), how do they get accommodation and access to services (Table 4) and the kinds of housing submarkets that they use (Table 5). These tables were produced to encourage a more city-specific, context-specific analysis of the barriers facing low-income groups in getting accommodation. But there are points of comparison that are worth exploring. For instance, where do those individuals who rely on casual labour opportunities/day labourers live because they need accommodation close to sources of demand? How common and important are dormitories where beds are rented (and these include hot-beds rented by shift so two or three persons use a bed every 24 hours)?

**Table 2: Who are the low-income groups seeking accommodation in cities?**

• Households with low but steady incomes (including many lower rank public employees)

• Households with low but fluctuating incomes

• Single people/childless couples with low incomes (and/or seeking to save as much as possible...)

• Most students

• Low-income older people (often with low/falling pensions)

• Temporary residents with low-incomes seeking to minimize what they spend on housing because they are saving or sending remittances to their family

• Weekly commuters/seasonal or circular migrants

• Those who suffer discrimination in getting access to housing, land or credit to build housing (women? Particular ethnic groups?)

Table 2 is a reminder of the diversity in need and priority within ‘low-income groups.’ For instance, the housing options available to households with low but steady (formal) employment have more possibilities of getting loans for housing than those without this. Table 3 emphasizes how housing priorities differ among low-income groups. Single persons will often choose poorer quality accommodation than households with children to maximize the amount they can save or send back to their family. Some low-income groups face more constraints than others in seeking accommodation – for instance those who suffer discrimination in getting access to land or housing or loans. Table 4 lists the ways in which they get accommodation and table 5 gives examples of housing sub-markets they use to do so.

**Table 3: What are the priorities of each individual or household in regard to housing?**

• Location for income/livelihoods

• Cost & how to pay

• Size and quality of house

• Provision for electricity and paved roads and paths

• Quality of site (& space for expansion)

• Quality & accessibility of services (water, sanitation, solid waste collection. health care, schools, public transport….

• Tenure/security

• Permanency

• Shelter as savings account (for owners including de facto owners)

• Extent to which they can help build the shelter

Table 4: How low-income groups get housing

* renting

A house, apartment, shack, room or open space

* leasing
* invading
* purchasing
* inheriting
* Informally using
* sharing
* getting from employer

**Table 5: Housing sub-markets used by low-income groups**

• Renting rooms in inner-city tenements or sub-divided housing (where the structures are legal but with high levels of overcrowding and shared facilities; these are usually well located in relation to labour markets)

• Renting rooms in other formal housing structures (including public housing)

• Renting a room or a bed in cheap boarding/rooming houses (these cheap boarding houses are often clustered in locations with income-earning opportunities)

• Renting a room or a shack in an illegal settlement (that range from those with relatively secure tenure to those with insecure tenure and from central to very peripheral locations)

• Renting a land plot on which a temporary shack is built (including rooftops)

• Renting space – eg in hot beds, cages, public sites, warehouses, workplace, graveyards….. (Mostly with quick access to labour markets)

• Employer-provided room (eg domestic servants)

• Building a home in an informal settlement (that range from those with relatively secure tenure to very insecure tenure),

• Building a home on illegal subdivision

• Invading empty houses/buildings or part constructed buildings ….. (often with central locations)

• Building a home within a site & service scheme

• Building house or shack in a temporary camp or on the pavement

SOURCE: Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1989

During the 1980s, there was also a good range of new books and papers keeping alive the interest in informal settlements – for instance Angel et al 1983. There were more general works that included this as in Stren and White 1989 and Rodwin 1987. The designation of 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless produced good new material and discussion but not within most governments and international agencies. There is also the journal *Medio Ambiente y Urbanizacion[[2]](#footnote-2)* set up in 1983 to share experiences and encourage and support more progressive attitudes and policies towards informal settlements in Latin America.

There were also detailed case studies of particular ‘informal settlements’ and these highlighted how much these were shaped by local contexts – see, for instance Sobreira de Moura 1987, Hardoy, Hardoy and Schusterman 1991 and Schusterman and Hardoy 1997). Of course, all this shaped by need and demand – for instance the inner city cheap accommodation in historic Quito and Cusco used by weekly migrants (Hardoy 1983). Of course these markets are shaped by what government does or does not do – for instance the decline in informal settlements when government policies bulldoze these and strongly control new informal settlement development.[[3]](#footnote-3) There are examples of particular housing submarkets in particular cities – for instance the pavement dwellers in Mumbai (SPARC 1985), the cage dwellers in Hong Kong (Society for Community Organization 1993) the squatters on top of high rise buildings, and the use of warehouses at night for cheap accommodation (Aina 1989). See also the October 1989 issue of *Environment and Urbanization* (1989) on the theme “beyond the stereotype of slums; how poor people find accommodation in Third Word cities” which includes a particularly interesting case study of Thika entitled “The poor don’t squat” (Andreasen 1989).

**THE THIRD SHIFT**

The failure of structural adjustment to help reduce poverty (which was what it was meant to do) and then of water and sanitation privatization to address the needs and priorities of low-income groups helped usher in a greater interest in ‘slums.’ So too did the (slow and partial) growth in understanding that the scale and depth of urban poverty was being under-estimated and many of its dimensions ignored (see Wratten 1995). The new focus on ‘slums’ was very much driven by some international agencies and by the construction of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with its commitment to specific targets and to measuring progress towards these targets. For those engaged in defining and promoting the MDGs, it did not matter that the target for ‘slums’ was very partial; it only asked for significant improvements in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 which is a far less ambitious target than in most other MDGs (where they were halving or reducing by three quarters…) And why was the target date set for 2020 when other targets are by 2015? For them, it was important because it got ‘slums’ into the big UN discourses. It was meant to get national government commitments – and the wording was careful; it was not recommending replacing slums but significantly improving the lives of slum dwellers. The Sustainable Development Goals gave as goal 11.1 “By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums.” The SDGs also commit to equal access for all men and women to health care, primary and secondary education, safe and affordable drinking water, adequate sanitation, affordable and sustainable energy and financial services. There is also a commitment to providing a legal identity for all which has particular importance for most in informal settlements who have no identity papers and often cannot get on the voter’s register. Few local politicians will act on their behalf if they cannot vote. There are even commitments to achieving full and productive employment and decent work as well as access to adequate and affordable housing for all. But what is so odd about all this is the stunning list of commitments yet so little attention to who will actually implement them and with what funding and support. National governments have been pledging their commitment to goals such as these within the United Nations for 40 years. Commitments within the UN to universal provision for water, sanitation and health care were made in the 1970s.

The MDGs and now the SDGs emphasize measuring and monitoring and of the need for more data. With the MDGs mentioning slums, so there was the desire to have national, regional and global figures on slums. But this means lumping together all the diverse housing types that ‘slum’ households inhabit as ‘slums.’ And producing annual figures for slum populations in each nation – when there are no data on this (no nation is doing representative sample surveys on ‘slums’ each year to monitor progress and at best censuses are every ten years so many of the figures on slums must be guesses or projections).

The criteria for defining slums (that provides the basis for measurement and monitoring) are also inappropriate. UN-HABITAT reports on the number of slum households and initially defined these as group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following: durable housing (a permanent structure providing protection from extreme climatic conditions); sufficient living area (no more than three people sharing a room); access to improved water (water that is sufficient and affordable, and that can be obtained without extreme effort); access to improved sanitation facilities (a private toilet, or a public one shared with a reasonable number of people); and secure tenure (de facto or de jure secure tenure status and protection against forced eviction) (UN-Habitat 2010). The last of these got dropped later, perhaps because the information sources drawn on did not have this. The definitions for water and sanitation were also changed to who has ‘improved’ drinking water ‘sources and sanitation so use could be made of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Monitoring Programme data – but as this Programme admits, for ‘improved’ provision, these are a long way from safe and adequate provision (Satterthwaite 2016). If it was possible to get data on who has safe, regular, easily accessed, affordable water and who has sanitation to a standard that limits health risks it would greatly increase the slum population in many nations.

For slum populations, UN reports suggests that the MDG target to significantly improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 has already been met. A 2013 report on MDG progress said: “Between 2000 and 2010, over 200 million slum dwellers benefitted from improved water sources, sanitation facilities, durable housing or sufficient living space, thereby exceeding the 100 million MDG target” (United Nations 2013), But a more careful look at the data suggests otherwise – with the apparent drop in the number of people living in slums likely to be due to changes in how slums are defined. For instance, there are no Government of India statistics or reports showing the drop reported by UN statistics in the proportion of the urban population living in slums from 42 to 29 per cent between 2000 and 2010. There are also other nations said to have large drops in the proportion of their urban population living in slums that are not backed up by local analyses (see Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2012 for more detail).

During the 1990s, there were still detailed case studies of informal settlements, including documentation of upgrading schemes and of finance schemes to support them. There was also more attention to evictions and to seeking to get action on housing on the basis of citizen rights rather than needs. There was also a growing literature on the high risks faced by many informal settlements from disasters because they grew on dangerous sites (although this had been documented earlier see Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1984) and how this might be further exacerbated by climate change. The interest in better understanding the needs and priorities of tenants continued (see the many papers on this in *Environment and Urbanization* 1997). Although most aid agencies and development banks continued to ignore these kinds of issues, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency started supporting a range of upgrading programmes – mostly in Central America (Sida 1997, Stein 2001, Stein and Castillo 2005)).

One final innovation is of note here – the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) in Thailand. When Somsook Boonyabancha came to head this in 2001, it became a national fund that provided loans direct to grassroots organizations (and then to their networks) to allow them to develop their housing solutions. Most are residents of informal settlements and most used this support to negotiate (and pay for) ownership or tenure of the land they occupied. As they became legal, so the conventional utilities were extended to them (Boonyabancha 2005, 2009) In many ways, this is the closest to what John Turner was emphasizing – the importance of supporting households and communities to make their choices about what works best for them. This actually had a longer history in that the Urban Community Development Office (UCDO) that preceded CODI also had this approach (Boonyabancha 1991).

**THE FOURTH SHIFT**

In the last decade, there has been a return to how low-income groups find accommodation in cities and the different housing (and land for housing) sub-markets through which they buy/rent/build/occupy accommodation. Some of these are from case studies – for instance Krishna, Sriram and Prakash 2014 in their study of ‘slums’ in Bangalore that show the very large differences between different ‘slums’. Box 1 shows this as it compares conditions, tenure, location, services and resident characteristics for 14 notified slums and 18 ‘blue polygon’ informal settlements (blue after the blue tarpaulins often used for roofs). .

**BOX 1: Comparing two sets of ‘slums’ in Bangalore**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 14 ‘notified’ slums | 18 ‘blue polygon’ informal  Settlements |
| * Housing: permanent materials, electricity, drinking water… * Mostly city born * Location in city, little eviction threat * No links to rural areas * With identity cards/on voter register * Low proportion of scheduled caste * Most children in school * Reasonable access to basic services * 85% with title to land or house | * Housing: temporary materials, no electricity or piped water * Mostly migrants * On city periphery; large eviction threat * Very strong rural links (& remittances) * Most without these * High proportion of scheduled caste * Few children in school * Very inadequate access * All tenants |

SOURCE: Krishna, Sriram and Prakash 2014

But there is now a new set of voices and data sources on housing conditions and on the housing markets used by those with low incomes coming from the contributions of federations or networks of slum/shack dwellers to documenting conditions. This has helped generate a new literature on housing conditions in informal settlements but this is produced by grassroots organizations, networks and federations of slum/shack/homeless people with support from local NGOs. They are also produced to generate and inform local action, both by the federation members and by local governments.

These include over 200 cities where profiles have been done of all informal settlements with context specific information on each (and each settlement with its own name) - for example see Livengood and Kunte (2012) for documentation on over 300 informal settlements in Cuttack, Pamoja Trust and Slum Dwellers International (2013) for documentation of over 60 settlements in Nairobi and Dialogue on Shelter and Zimbabwe Homeless People's Federation (2014) for documentation of over 60 settlements in Harare. Other examples are described in Makau, Dobson and Samia (2012) for five cities in Uganda and Muller and Mbanga 2012 for cities in Namibia. See also the use of city-wide informal settlement surveys within many cities where community initiatives are being supported by the Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACHR 2015; see also *Environment and Urbanization* 24:2, 2013). Some city-wide studies have been done to assess current the provision of provision for sanitation (see Banana et al 2015).

In some cities or in specific settlements, far more detailed enumerations have been undertaken with data collected from each household – see, for instance, Karanga 2010 for Kisumu, Chitekwe Biti et al (2012) for Epworth and Baptist and Bolnick 2012 for Joe Slovo in Cape Town. The profiles and mapping of all informal settlements provide the basis for discussions of city-wide responses by the federations and local governments while the more time-consuming enumerations of particular settlements covering each structure and household take place to support the specific upgrading initiatives to be developed there (Patel and Baptist 2012, Chitewke Biti et al 2012).

The similarities between the documentation produced and the methodologies used is not a coincidence as almost all these profiles, mapping and enumerations have been undertaken by federations and support NGOs that are members of Slum/Shack Dwellers International.[[4]](#footnote-4) The idea of careful community-led documentation of informal settlements is not new – it was first used in the 1970s (see Arputham 2008, 2012). But it has become one of the main tools used by the many networks or federations and it was supported by many exchanges as federation members in one city or nation visited other federations to learn about how to do profiles, mapping and enumerations or to share their experiences in doing so.

Of course, these were all generated to stimulate and support local action, investment and upgrading in the informal settlements they documented, not to contribute to national and global ‘slum statistics. But when considered together they provide a large number of new datasets on conditions in each informal settlement (or other housing types used by low-income groups) across many cities. They also present a challenge to the conventional ways in which national governments and international agencies are generating ‘slum’ data.

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1. A personal note. I have been very fortunate in meeting and getting to know many of the pioneers in this field and in working with some of them. Jorge E. Hardoy was the most influential of them. I first came into contact with him in 1974 as he was advising the President of IIED on a book she was writing on housing and urban development (Ward 1976) and I then came to work with him from 1977 to 1993 as he directed a new work programme at IIED on Human Settlements and set up IIED-America Latina. I interviewed Otto Koenigsberger in 1974 for this same book – and took his advice to take the diploma at the Development Planning Unit (where I was taught by and learned so much from John FC Turner, Caroline Moser and Ronaldo Ramirez). I was course assistant to John Turner for a three month course he ran at the Development Planning Unit in 1979 and have followed his work since then. Through my work with Jorge Hardoy, I also met Lisa Peattie, Janice Perlman and Alan Gilbert and some of the pioneers from Latin America. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is available open access on-line see http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/0326-7857 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. I remember a lecture on this in relation to Chile by Ronaldo Ramirez but I am not sure whether this was published [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See [www.sdinet.org](http://www.sdinet.org) for details of enumerations and mapping and of the other core practices of the federations [↑](#footnote-ref-4)