

# Self-determined Resettlement Schemes

Investigating the prospect of bottom-up projects for the urban poor



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## 1 Introduction

Space in urban areas is certainly not infinite; there is no doubt in that. So who will have to make sacrifices if free land in cities becomes rare? What happens if the capacity of a city reaches its utmost limits to accommodate further people but the population keeps on growing due to migration and natality rate? And how could the rising housing need be met in sensible way? A clear solution does not seem to exist. Yet, there are many different approaches of trying to tackle the serious need for accommodation, some more efficient and reasonable than others.

Three of the most common measures are off-city relocation, in-city relocation and on-site redevelopment. *Off-city relocation* implies that former slum dwellers are brought to remote locations in the countryside. Reasons for that are the present squatting on governmental or private land, safety issues and also the chaotic and dirty image that slums bear which make them a thorn in the government's side (Indrakesuma, 2011). Eviction according to an "out of sight, out of mind"-philosophy is a common code of practice and can be found all over the world. Yet, it makes me wonder whether it is really a win-win situation. In most of the cases, the governmental side benefits the most from this action since the off-city relocation of squatters spares the government from searching for costly urban plots or upgrading possibilities. At the same time, this action frees highly desirable urban land for new projects and rectifies the city's visual impression. However, the benefits for the one seem to be the loss for the other. In many cases,

the ‘relocatees’ are pushed to far-flung sites that do not only lack the same fundamental needs but also pull them away from their previous jobs and deprive them of new job opportunities. In addition, the relocation as such is often a harsh cut into the peoples’ social life because it pulls them away from their familiar environment and often separates neighbourhood communities. In the end, the lack of livelihood opportunities and the miserable living conditions often trigger the decision to return to the city and a life in an illegal settlement (Romero, 2013).

In comparison to off-city relocation, *in-city relocation* implies that informal settlers are given the opportunity to move to a safe plot of land in the inner city. This action aims at keeping the dwellers relatively close to their workplace or else at offering them other job opportunities. Nonetheless, such move procures a detachment of the familiar environment and possibly also the interruption of the community fabric which would better be avoided.

Last but not least, *on-site redevelopment* entails the advantage of allowing the poor to stay on their known piece of land and in their familiar surroundings by moving them simply to safer ground on site. This action seems easy, yet, it requires much planning, the consent of the land’s righteous owner and suitable ground for resettlement, thus making on-site redevelopment a less common way of practice.

The problem at hand is that life in a slum often lacks many fundamental aspects that people from first world countries take most willingly for granted: access to water and land, electricity, a functioning infrastructure, just to mention some. Therefore, this paper aims to discuss relocation and housing developments. How have they been handled in the past and how are they being handled nowadays? Most importantly however, this paper seeks to find the parameters that are needed to be set in order to turn relocation and redevelopment into prospective modes of operation that house the urban poor without a loss of life qualities? All these are matters of investigation within the following analysis.

## 2 Literature Review

### *Development after the First World War*

Over the past few decades, there have been a lot of different measures taken by governments, NGOs and planners in order to find solutions to the serious housing needs and the growth of informal settlements all over the world. Although the housing need for the urban poor has long been an issue and is actually increasing,

a concrete solution to the problem is still missing. Therefore, I would like to take a look at previous approaches to the problem in order to deduce the mistakes of the past and to find alternatives for the future.

As described by Paul Jenkins in “Planning and Housing in the Rapidly Urbanising World”, the housing issues were simply ignored for many years. The first countermeasures were finally taken in connection with post-war housing needs. In that case, the European countries initiated the upgrade of existing slums and the provision of basic housing units in consideration of incremental necessities. Financed by the government, local authorities were commissioned to supply housing for the ones in need while the private sector partook in the process, addressing the different income classes with state subsidies. When skilled labour started to be hard to come by, prefabrication and mass production were introduced to pursue the struggle for housing, providing complete emergency housing units. Soon after the housing supply of European countries, the focus shifted to the needs in the ex-colonies and the developing world. However, the governments were mistaken in their vision of the ideal solution, thinking that these countries were in need of modern housing to provide an auspicious working class with a prosperous livelihood. It was soon realised that the modern notion and design was quite unsuitable for the visualised purpose because the houses were often resold to the ones that were better off, thus defeating the primary purpose of these projects. At the same time, the provision of conventional housing was often pursued on peripheral land that deprived the dwellers of livelihood opportunities and the possibility of “household strategies”. The lack of consideration of more suitable solutions led to a further increase of informal settlements in urban areas. (Jenkins, et al., 2007)

In the 60s, a new strategy was to supply “mortgage finance via savings and loans associations” (Jenkins, et al., 2007). Yet, due to a limited capacity of public investments, hope was soon put into international aids. (Jenkins, et al., 2007) At the same time, first self-build<sup>1</sup> developments were implemented in Latin America which were soon followed by further “state-sponsored self-build housing programmes”. However, political issues and a lacking efficiency led to an abatement of the pursuit of such projects. (Jenkins, et al., 2007)

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<sup>1</sup> self-build: This is a rather top-down oriented method, providing dwellers with a design and enabling them to construct their own house or parts of it according to the predetermined plan.

As a result, a new strategy was formulated: self-help<sup>2</sup> housing. Highly promoted by the vision and views of Patrick Geddes, John F.C. Turner and William Mangin, self-help housing was seen as great means to encounter the pressing housing needs by empowering the ones in need to take their future into their own hands. (Jenkins, et al., 2007)

This was highly endorsed by Janice Perlman's view in "The myths of marginality". She voiced that slums were a great pool of will power, motivation and positive diversity and that "it is misleading to assume that poverty is a consequence of individual characteristics of the poor rather than of the condition of society itself" (Perlman, cited by Jenkins, Smith and Wang, 2007).

In return, John Turner promoted self-help housing by saying that the dwellers should be given control and autonomy in the entire process. According to Turner, the new dwellers were to live in the planned housing and must therefore know best what they need. In addition, he pressed that the dwellers also bear great knowledge about the locality and local materials and settings which could be of great advantage. Hence, self-help housing could be a means to create a large number of housing units at a low price due to cost-reducing labour while boosting the spirit of the dwellers and widening their knowledge. (Jenkins, et al., 2007)

After simply encouraging self-build housing, he later enhanced his view and endorsed self-managed housing developments. He promoted that the process of planning and building houses autonomously would increase the dwellers' attachment to the houses which eventually constitutes a will for maintenance. According to Turner, it was important to approach such housing projects from a bottom-up orientation in order to strengthen the community and the local development. Until today, Turner is known for his strong notion of housing as verb and process rather than as noun and commodity. (Jenkins, et al., 2007)

His opinion was that "(...) an effective housing policy has to follow moving away from direct housing construction to sites-and-services as already intended but ensuring a momentum that would increase investment in infrastructure (...)" (World Bank, 2000). In order to support the urban poor in the self-help housing process, he launched a project called "Tools for Community Regeneration" (TCR) which constituted a database of tools to facilitate "any community-led initiative". (World Bank, 2000)

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<sup>2</sup> self-help: The term implies more autonomy in the housing management. Based on the ambiguity of the dweller, he takes matters into his own hand and constructs his house independently or with a certain building assistance from the government or certain agencies or organisations.

All of this resulted in the “direct promotion of ‘self-help’ housing policies as an alternative to conventional housing delivery, and a significant proportion of self-help housing projects became internationally sponsored.” (Jenkins, et al., 2007)

While the policy-makers’ view poses a total contrast to this, seeing “informal settlements as areas of social breakdown” (Jenkins, et al., 2007), Turner’s view resurfaced in largely implemented projects by the World Bank. The bank’s first projects simply provided “sites and services”<sup>3</sup>, followed by upgrading and relocation projects, then the promotion of employment activities and dweller participation and finally general programmes rather than “individually isolated ‘projects’” (Jenkins, et al., 2007). However, opposed to Turner’s view, the World Bank’s projects did not follow the notion of housing as process, implementing mostly top-down projects that were subsidised by governments. The World Bank focussed mainly on “affordability, cost recovery and replicability” (Arroyo, 2013) while neglecting a system of micro-credits and loans for incremental expansion and maintenance work. At a later stage, they started to offer loan schemes but those were usually not accessible to the people in need. (Arroyo, 2013)

In contrast to that, the Habitat Agenda of 1996 stressed the need to facilitate the dwellers’ participation in a transparent housing development (Arroyo, 2013). A large debate was started, disputing on the accuracy of Turner’s approach. Yet, since the opposing side did not suggest any improvements within their critique, self-help housing continued to be implemented as before. (Jenkins, et al., 2007)

### *Nowadays*

It becomes apparent that the previously mentioned notions have created a recent shift in action. While off-city relocation has been established as one of the common housing methods for the urban poor, many governments have started to realise that this process as such is certainly not an ideal solution to their housing problem and must be altered. Not only because it is a rather inhumane move to relocate the poor to far-flung sites and deprive them of any source of livelihood, but also because it leads to a high remigration rate. (Romero, 2013)

Besides, authorities and governments have finally started to realise that the informal settlers are one of the major contributors to the land’s economy and

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<sup>3</sup> „sites and services“ is a term used to identify projects (especially implemented by the World Bank) that supply land, housing, communal facilities and infrastructure (The World Bank Group, 2016)

diversity. In fact, informal settlers do not only contribute to the economy by personal purchase and consumption but also by constituting the most substantial field of labour that keeps a city's economy running. In the case of Manila, the contribution of the informal settlers accounts to almost half of the employment sector (Romero, 2013). Thus, this makes eviction off city an irreplaceable loss for the local economy.

Attempts of improvement include plans in which the off-city relocation should remain code of practice, yet, in a more acceptable way that would offer the relocatees with new livelihood opportunities and a safer and healthier life style. The reason for sticking to the overall idea of off-city relocation is the obvious lack of sufficient urban land in the city centre that could accommodate the resettlement of slum dwellers. (Asian Development Bank, 2000) In addition, there is also the make-believe pretence to revive the country's agriculture in order to cantingly motivate the action of pushing the poor to the countryside. (Hodal, 2013)

One example for a revised off-city relocation plan is set by the government of Brazil which has drafted a policy that should protect informal settlers in the inevitable case of relocation. In the year 2013, Brazil's government has expressed that informal settlers shall only be relocated in the most urgent cases. More precisely, land can only be cleared from informal settlers if there is a hazardous risk, serious health impairments, a disturbance of the environment or a pressing need of land for infrastructural project purposes (Vigo, 2013). In these cases, involuntary resettlement would be permitted if certain rules are being followed: The community should be thoroughly assessed, alternatives should be considered and "effective economic solutions" should be found in response. "Failure to follow these regulations will result in suspension of funds for the project" (The Cities Alliance, 2013).

In addition, auxiliary efforts are coming from abroad. For instance, the Asian Development Bank has decided to support the Philippines financially because it has been asserted that the country is in need of a more "holistic and multidisciplinary" (Asian Development Bank, 2000) solution to manage its massive slum problem in the near future.

Looking at the status quo of nowadays' procedure, it cannot be denied that the off-city relocation method has established itself as a strong option since many cities cannot provide sufficient space in their centre to accommodate all informal settlers. Yet, it seems that governments have not learned from their inconsiderate

evictions off city and are still not seeing the value of informal settlers nor understanding housing as 'process'. Hence, prospective solutions should try to uphold the carefully developed social network of the individuals and their communities as well as maintaining the city's economy in order to create an upwards cycle for the city.

To draw a conclusion out of the historical development, it can be said that it took many years and steps to reach some more or less humane solutions to house the urban poor. After ignoring the urgent demand for housing altogether, conventionally built houses, the lack of reasonable finance strategies as well as feasible urban slum policies accounted for the lack of success. Even if self-build and self-help housing schemes are comparably better ideas, the implementation was still often missing a bottom-up approach that would not only allow for participation by the dwellers but for a proper partaking in the management.

### 3 Argument, Critique or Discussion

#### *Today's off-city relocation*

In order to understand the status quo and the current mind-set on informal settlements, it is inevitable to survey today's procedure for housing methods more thoroughly.

In this context, one exemplary case for off-city relocation projects of nowadays is the plan of Muntinlupa City, supported by the Asian Development Bank. The Government of Japan has offered \$1,000,000.00 for every \$200,000.00 that is being given by the LGU of Muntinlupa. At the same time, the informal settlement families are encouraged to reduce the costs by contributing labour of their own, thus accommodating the bank's funding system. (Asian Development Bank, 2000)

Moreover, certain requirements are predetermined to ensure a better life quality of the families after off-city relocation. Thus, it has been declared that the new off-city location shall be equipped with the necessary needs of the settlers. Furthermore, self-help activities should be encouraged to advance the project's success and enhance the people's confidence which might trigger further self-organised project initiatives. In addition, bridge financing should be provided and a feasible land banking fund introduced. For further support, collaborative work relations shall be launched to create a close network for future projects and stakeholder interaction. Besides, the Asian Development Bank has expressed special interest in upholding the settlers' livelihood by obtaining the accessibility

of their previous jobs in the city as well as offering new job opportunities and credits for potential initiatives. (Asian Development Bank, 2000)

In comparison to that, projects such as the governmentally launched “Balik Probinsya” are off-city relocation projects that incorporate sources of livelihood by means of agricultural self-sufficiency and income-generation. The idea is to base the projects on an “entrepreneurial agriculture scheme” (Hodal, 2013), providing the dwellers with land and support them with seedlings, facilities and skills, given by the Department of Agriculture and the Agrarian Reform. All this should eventually result in further, self-initiated business ideas. (Hodal, 2013)

### *Today’s in-city relocation & on-site redevelopment*

My personal encounter with an on-site redevelopment project was the NHA project “Manggahan Residence I” in Manila where the settlers had been relocated from one side of the road to the other side after their previous settlements had been destroyed by flooding. The first phase of the project accommodates 240 families in two five-storey buildings. In the end, a total of 900 families is supposed to be resettled at a cost of P50 billion (Bacani, 2015).



Figure 1: Manggahan Residence (Sanger, 2016)

The first phase is highly thought-through, managing everything from garbage disposal to visitors screening to ensure safety and comfort. The maintenance of the project is ensured by the inhabitants’ physical participation and by a collective payment of P300 per family which is given to the homeowner association to fund communal investments. The thoroughly organized community system creates trust in the project and encourages the will to maintain the project and participate in its communal activities (Michelle, 2016). The appraisal of the local residents also demonstrated that the matter of housing is a matter of self-fulfilment and status in society, thus reassuring John Turner’s view of housing as ‘process’ which invigorates and sustains both the individual and the neighbourly community.



Figure 2: Community Gardens (Sanger, 2016)

This complies with projects of ACCA, the Asian Coalition for Community Action, which supports projects in currently 15 Asian countries with social and financial means over a five-year-period, facilitated by the “Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation”. The main ideas behind their project funding is to bring the money straight to the people in need, keep it in the city and enable its growth while



investing into direct community activities or the establishment of important interdisciplinary relationships which could spur further projects. Important is that the money should not go into administration but rather into projects and networking, by providing seed funds and community development funds (CDFs) and institutionalizing projects without giving the management control out of the poors' hands. Besides, the entire action is supposed to create a “positive political influence” and political relationships (Archer, 2012).

The funding system of ACCA appears to be remarkably effective, allowing the communities to decide for themselves where the money should be invested, thus creating trust and confidence that can lead to further potent project initiatives which, in turn, can attract new investors, more members or even generate further money resources. Especially by placing small amounts strategically in certain projects, a cycle of new money-generating activities can be facilitated.

Remarkable is the projects' notion of connecting people to help one another but also to exchange experiences and to learn from one another. (Asian Coalition For Housing Rights, 2014)

This idea can also be found in a different manner when looking at the work of “Next City” and the Rockefeller Foundation’s Informal City Dialogues which ought to inform and connect cities to improve their living conditions for the urban poor. A good example promoted and publicised by the Informal City Dialogues is an in-city relocation housing project in Bangkok. The case study focusses on a group of 66 families from the “Banana Plantation Neighbourhood” who decided to take their future into their own hands after being threatened with eviction (Still Life Projects, 2013). For that matter, they sought help from the Community Organization Development Institute (CODI), an institution of the Thai government. It originates from the former bodies of the Rural Development Fund and the Urban Community Development Office which conjointly induce a collective development fund. CODI’s aim is to provide communities in need with low-interest loans and micro-credits.



Figure 3: Former “Banana Plantation Neighbourhood”  
(Still Life Projects, 2013)



Figure 4: Autonomous design of the new neighbourhood  
(Still Life Projects, 2013)

In general, CODI tries to support community organisations by promoting their actions and their role within social processes. Besides, they collaborate intensely with them and other stakeholders such as policy makers and development partners. Due to their excellent network, CODI has the ability to make use of many different resources and know-how. According to their motto “Every region should be stable, every community should be strong, and the people should be happy”, they try to “support and empower urban and rural community organizations through financial assistance, career development, housing development, and environmental improvement” (CODI, n.d.).

In the case of the “Banana Plantation Neighbourhood”, CODI agreed to provide the families with 90 baht at a low interest rate for every 10 baht that they managed to raise by themselves. Determined by this, the community managed to conjointly raise enough money and purchase a suitable plot in the inner city. The strength of this program is that, despite the governmental funding aids, the people have the freedom to decide for themselves where and how they want to build their new homes. This means that the community needs to work and decide together, thus strengthening the community bond. Moreover, the freedom to take personal choices uplifts the peoples’ confidence and spirit, hereby encouraging them to be proactive. Besides, personally raising money for one’s home and working for its implementation increases the personal attachment to the new home and enhances the overall neighbourhood atmosphere positively. (Still Life Projects, 2013)

All the mentioned examples show that there is definitely a way to manage and implement on-site redevelopment as well as in-city relocation projects for the urban poor with relatively down-to-earth funding systems that do not simply contribute a sum of money but that get the ball rolling, creating remunerative relationships, a close-knit community fabric, the basis for new initiatives and political and societal respect. In the case of CODI’s projects, it even shows that it is possible to create governmentally run organisations that support housing projects for the urban poor without superimposing a building design or other unsuitable restrictions.

Consequently, this means that the best procedure for the urban poor in case of imminent off-city relocation or eviction is to pair up with other families and find a social funding system such as ACCA, CODI or a loaning scheme such as a community-mortgage plan (CMP) which forwards an amount of money at a low

interest rate or a work contribution by these families. As seen in the examples, this appears to be a well-functioning scheme that makes the poor work hard for the project's success and demands a well-considered use of the loan. Thus, it will affect the morale of the people involved, build up the personal confidence in one's ability to take matters into one's own hands and strengthen the entire community. Taking the given examples into consideration, it can clearly be said that it is highly important to connect fund-based relocation projects with the establishment of relationships and an interdisciplinary network which can bring important new stakeholders on board of the project and lead to a more efficient implementation or even potential for further projects in the future.

Successful, self-managed relocation projects will most certainly also lead to a change in the common perception of informal settlements and their dwellers, thus, hopefully creating a slow shift in the acceptance of informal settlements in the inner city fabric. Repeated project achievements might actually influence the way of how the urban fabric will be planned in the future and might lead to a more respected inclusion of urban poor in an intermingled patchwork of diverse groups of people. This might be a far-fetched vision but it would be bitterly necessary to improve the reputation and accepted importance of the urban poor in the heads of today's politicians and the overall society.

Besides, it seems extremely important to publish project achievements and share experiences with others in order to ensure a continuation of equal projects. If experiences are exchanged and issues are interdisciplinarily handled then there might be some hope in fundamentally improving the life of the poor.

## 4 Urban Shelter Design

Reviewing and analysing all these different projects helps to understand what is needed for a successful housing project for the urban poor.

It starts with the fact that the new dwellers should be given the power and autonomy to manage their own housing project. It has become apparent to me that a simple allowance to voice one's opinion or to be given a shovel and some building materials does not necessarily suffice to create a successful housing development. It often needs a lot more parameters and certainly a governmentally supported bottom-up approach if the dwellers ought to feel comfortable in their own homes.

Besides, housing for the urban poor needs an accurate policy basis and the trust of politicians and other stakeholders. Unfortunately, the process of gaining trust is very long and requires a better reputation of the urban poor. If society's view of the poor as a 'ravaging, unbehaved, dirty and violent beast' maintains, then it will be very hard to turn self-managed on-site redevelopment and in-city relocation into a code of practice. No one likes to let go of control, especially if it is to be handed to people who are seen as being irresponsible, uneducated, parochial and unmotivated. Thus, an important criterion for successful housing projects for the urban poor is in fact to improve the reputation of informal settlements and their dwellers. As soon as they are given trust and approval, they will most certainly prove to have earned it righteously. As the above mentioned study cases show and as I have personally experienced in low-income projects in the Philippines, most of the dwellers are eager to take care of their own housing unit and even plan to put effort into maintenance, improvement and expansions if they feel comfortable in their environment and if there are communally managed maintenance schemes which demand care for the sustainment of the area.

Moreover, for a successful redevelopment or relocation project, it is inevitable to initiate seminars and workshops to build up the pool of capacity and give the dwellers the necessary know-how to build stable, site-appropriate houses that are weather-resilient and suitable for the climatic conditions of the area. This know-how can be passed onto others so that everyone is enabled to build a safe and sustainable house that is worth to be maintained over the following years.

In addition, the supply of tools and materials might be helpful to pursue a housing project because some of these things might be hard to come by with a limited budget and the missing relationships. It could be possible to make contact between the dwellers and certain construction companies that could loan a set of old tools and machines. This thought conforms to John Turner's role model project of "Tools for Community Regeneration".

A different approach that is taking the idea of 'sites and services' much further is the suggestion that governments could launch housing projects by constructing the basic framework which requires the most know-how and tools and consumes the most costs. If projects could be handed over in an "unfinished" way that is defined to the preliminary building works, then time and costs could be saved. In that case, the dwellers could be given the possibility to adjust and refine their housing unit according to their own personal tastes and needs.

Thinking about this, a project springs to my mind that has been brought to my attention a couple of years ago when the American architect Alfredo Brillembourg from Urban Think Tank was holding a lecture in my previous university (Technical University of Munich). He came to us to present the highest vertical slum in Caracas, Venezuela – the so-called Torre David. The slum had evolved in the 90's when the construction of an office tower remained incomplete, allowing informal settlers to move in and spread over the total of 45 floors (Wikipedia, 2016).



Figure 5: Torre David (Schwartz, 2014)



Figure 6: Roof-top gym (Boer, 2012)



Figure 7: Unfinished openings (Schwartz, 2014)

The building skeleton that the people took over constitutes a pure, naked concrete tower without any finishing. Over the past few years, more and more families had moved in and created an impressive, well-functioning community network with individual shops, a roof-top gym and numerous other functions.

Taking advantage of the rawness of the building, they had started to place pipes and electricity, put up walls and partitions and refine it with personalized features. They had even introduced an inner transport system in which a motorcycle taxi system had run between the first ten stories of the building in order to compensate for the lacking lifts and facilitate a better movement between inside and outside (Dewey, 2013).



Figure 8: Staircase without railings posing a danger to the dwellers' safety (Schwartz, 2014)



Figure 9: Skeletal elevator shaft (Dewey, 2013)

In the context of this paper, Torre David poses a great example of an informally evolved settlement that has developed a remarkably efficient communal network. It underlines the views of Turner and Perlman, proving that squatter dwellers create a group of motivated and often skilled people that like to take the design of their environment into their own hands if there is space to do so. Breaking the community bonds and relocating families – like it has occurred in the case of Torre David in 2014, when all inhabitants were brought to different and highly remote locations off city – poses a clear loss for a city and its economy.

Besides, this example of a vertical settlement arouses interest in investigating whether medium and high rise buildings could be one solution for the pressing housing needs. Since land has become extremely valuable and rare, it should be questioned whether higher housing constructions do not in fact constitute a better use of land in the future.

Returning to the parameters of a successful housing project for the urban poor, it would be a clear facilitation of such projects to supply the deprived with micro-credits and loans which are easy to acquire for people with a limited budget and low income. One of the best examples for that is the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh which has been extremely successful over the past few decades due to the fact that it trusts in the will and ability of the credit receiver which motivates and encourages those in return to faithfully repay the credit (Åstrand, 2016). Micro-credits and loans could facilitate expansion, maintenance and improvement work by the dwellers themselves, thus allowing for the sustainment of the buildings and the housing area.

In conclusion, the most important parameter for a successful housing project under the premise of redevelopment or relocation is a bottom-up process with transparency and autonomy for the self-managing dwellers. The housing process should also include educational workshops and the supply of tools and materials in order to facilitate a secure, sustainable development while ensuring potential micro-credit schemes to allow incremental maintenance work and expansion. At the same time, such projects rely on a trustful collaboration between the different stakeholders and a strong support of the acting community organisations.

For the future, it might be worth considering to provide skeletal building structures that offer the urban poor with a secure framework that can be built upon according to personal needs and means, promoting a quicker and cheaper way of

battling the housing need while ensuring the dwellers' safety and considering their individual budget.

## 5 The Role of Architects

After investigating the possibility of self-managed housing schemes for the urban poor, one might ask: But what about the architects? If the projects are initiated by the urban poor and partially financed by funding systems, what is the role of the architects in this? And what is their overall stand in the development and improvement of urban shelter?

Next to site-specific and climate-considerate design, the architect's focus should be directed towards sustainable, long-term solutions for housing projects, even for 'urgent architecture' after natural catastrophes. The architect should ensure that the design of such projects is not a pure matter of budget but concerns the lives of individuals and should therefore be treated with more respect and consideration. It should be a clear priority to use safe, standard quality materials and construction methods to ensure the people with safe and comfortable homes. The housing design should also be of permanent nature because it is important to create attachment to one's home in order to feel "at home". Like John Turner has said, housing should always be viewed as process, not as commodity.

At the same time, urban shelter projects should be more considerate of public outdoor spaces because my experience of socialized housing projects in the Philippines has shown me a great lack of thoroughly designed communal space. The focus should lie on a more considerate design that incorporates safety, comfort and social interactions. This would facilitate a stronger interaction of the community and strengthen the social bonds. A strong community body constitutes a clear foundation for communally managed projects and decision-making, thus facilitating communal housing developments. Urban shelter projects can only function well if they are built upon a strong, close-knit community that acts as one and takes care of one another. Besides, care for the community would also result in care for the project itself and its maintenance, thus securing the endurance and success of a project.

For the topic in question, the architect should try to help improving the general image of informal settlements and their inhabitants. As Turner and Perlman have righteously explained, informal settlements are sources of knowledge as well as pools of motivated people who are waiting for an opportunity to take action.

Slum dwellers are eager to grow and prosper from work and experience. Therefore, they should be trusted with the autonomy for the self-management of their own environment. This could ensure the success of urban shelter projects because it would consider the true needs of the residents.

In this regards, the architect should start planning to incorporate the presence of the urban poor in the inner city fabric because they play an important role in urban activities and the employment market and because they add diversity to urban life. This might also be a good advice for architects that are active in first world countries where the poor are pushed to the outskirts of a city, increasing the commuting traffic and segregation within the city. In this connection, the architect could act as mediator between the different stakeholders in order to secure a peaceful project execution that is based on trust.

All in all, this illustrates that the architect's role in urban shelter projects is extremely diverse. An architect should plan for permanent housing solutions that are adjusted to the peoples' needs and the climatic conditions. He should search for a better way of interconnecting the urban poor with the rest of society within the inner city fabric by mediating between the different stakeholders. And most importantly, he should collaborate with the deprived families and contribute to the safe and sustainable housing development by the autonomous dwellers. All these aspects constitute the need for an architect. He should take it upon himself to embrace this essential role in order to take part in the battle against social inequality and to facilitate an equally dignified life for everyone.



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