



Ghoniem, Cairo: Informal Settlement, 1986

I2UD DIGITAL LIBRARY STUDY GUIDE:

UNDERSTANDING INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND SLUM UPGRADING

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ABOUT THE I2UD DIGITAL LIBRARY

The Institute for International Urban Development (I2UD) is a not-for-profit institution dedicated to improving urban environments for vulnerable communities, by providing research on spatial development issues, advisory services to city leaders, and urban planning education programs.

The I2UD Digital Library is an educational database of 40+ years of urban planning research, designed to facilitate a global perspective of urban planning history for a broad, diverse public audience. The Library is coupled with an archival photography collection documenting urban development conditions in over 13 countries. The Library's curated Study Guides will provide a resource for engaging critical urban issues in classrooms, conferences, and development projects. Collectively, these resources offer comprehensive practical documentation and essential materials for understanding both successful and unsuccessful urban development practices, shedding light on the evolving approaches in this field over decades.

The Library opens a longitudinal knowledge bank of historical documentation to inform future research agendas for sustainable urban development. This project seeks to provide crucial historical resources for students, citizens, local governments, and young professionals to understand current issues threatening the environmental mosaic of our shared world. The I2UD Digital Library offers a comprehensive historical perspective on urban development initiatives in Global South cities, filling a notable research gap often skewed towards Western/Global North viewpoints.

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INTRODUCTION

Urbanization has been a defining feature of the 21st century, with a significant proportion of the world's population now residing in cities. Alongside this rapid urban growth, informal settlements, often called slums, have emerged as a prominent urban phenomenon, manifesting in various forms across the globe.

Estimates suggest that over a billion people live in such conditions globally, mostly in developing countries (UN-Habitat, 2020). Typically characterized by overcrowded and poorly constructed housing, limited access to clean water and sanitation, and insecure land tenure, informal settlements pose significant health, safety, and socio-economic risks to their residents.

Efforts to improve the living and working conditions of informal settlements have led to the concept of urban or slum upgrading. This holistic approach aims to enhance residents' living conditions and socio-economic prospects while integrating these areas into the formal urban fabric (UN-Habitat, 2016). This involves providing secure land tenure, upgrading housing and infrastructure, enhancing access to essential services, and promoting community participation and empowerment.

I2UD'S WORK ON SLUM UPGRADING

The Institute for Urban and Development Studies (I2UD) has been at the forefront of efforts to address the challenges posed by informal settlements through slum upgrading initiatives. For over four decades, I2UD and its dedicated staff have actively engaged in research, policy development, and on-the-ground projects to improve the living conditions of informal settlement residents worldwide.

Drawing on its interdisciplinary expertise in urban planning, architecture, sociology, and economics, I2UD has contributed to innovative approaches to slum upgrading that prioritize sustainable and inclusive urban development. Through collaborative partnerships with governments, non-governmental organizations, and local communities, I2UD has implemented a range of interventions to enhance housing quality, access to basic services, and economic opportunities for residents of informal settlements.

I2UD and its staff were early proponents in the international development sphere of utilizing a lens that focused on building on community assets instead of viewing informal settlements and the people living in them as liabilities or spaces to be removed from urban areas. Through its work, the Institute pushed for consultative and inclusive processes in slum upgrading and was an early proponent of incorporating principles of social inclusion in reference to informal settlements. I2UD staff always worked with local partners to ensure local voices and knowledge were incorporated into projects. Bringing together spatial and strategic planning with community development processes ensured that policies and programs were realistic and within the capacities of local authorities and organizations.

The I2UD Digital Library brings together internationally recognized tools and methodologies with a critical research lens. Projects and reports are built on and informed by decades of on-the-ground work and action research in informal settlements and developing cities. These approaches have benefited from a network and training programs that brought together policymakers, professionals, and community leaders to innovate and catalyze implementation. By facilitating knowledge sharing and dissemination, the I2UD library plays a crucial role in advancing the field of slum upgrading and promoting sustainable urban development practices worldwide.

USING THE I2UD DIGITAL LIBRARY AND THIS STUDY GUIDE

The I2UD Digital library is a vital repository of knowledge and resources on informal settlements, slum upgrading, and urban development. With a comprehensive collection of research papers, case studies, reports, policy documents, and photographs, the library provides valuable insights into the complexities of informal urbanization and the strategies for addressing its challenges.

Informal settlements and slum upgrading are complex and multidimensional topics debated and written about for many years among policymakers, academics, and practitioners. This study guide introduces these issues, the evolution of policies in implementing upgrading strategies, and how I2UD's work advocated and supported inclusive processes within this framework. The Institute engaged with these issues throughout its work in the Global South, and these concepts and methodologies can be found throughout the archived works. Researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and students can access the information housed within the I2UD library to deepen their understanding of informal settlements and inform evidence-based interventions and policies.

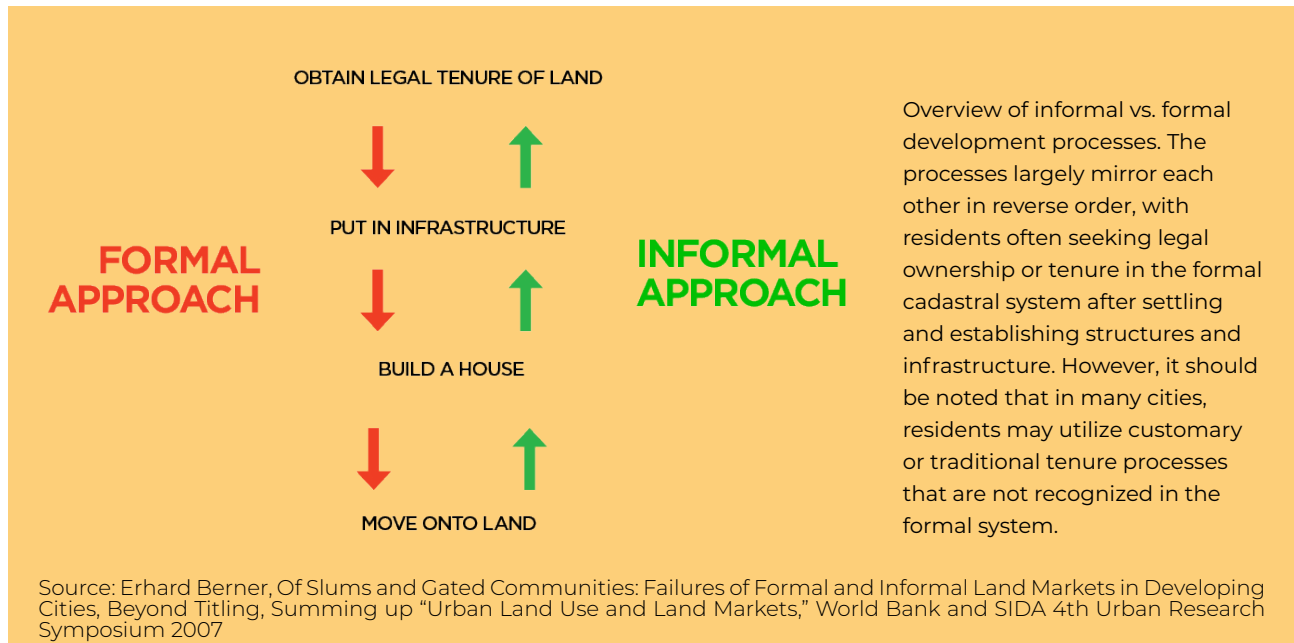
The resources available in the I2ud Digital Library reflect a variety of projects in which the staff was involved. These include action research, program and policy assessments, documentation of best practices, and the development of upgrading programs. Throughout the Study Guide, topical text boxes highlight and link to relevant I2UD digital library documents and photographs. Annex 1 provides a complete chronological listing of the projects by these project types (action research, assessments, best practices, and upgrading plans/programs).

While the I2UD Digital Library collection includes significant information on informal settlements, there are publications and academic literature that offer additional perspectives and experiences. For example, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) has published the [Environment and Urbanization](#) journal since 1989. The journal focuses on the Global South, 'where an estimated one in three of the urban population live in informal settlements and where more than half work within the informal economy.' A 2020 [editorial](#) by the editor, David Satterthwaite, highlights the fundamental importance of housing and the related issues of land, tenure, and informality. See Annex 2 for further practice and scholarly literature.

Adding to this wealth of resources, the I2UD Digital Library also hosts the [I2UD Photograph Collection](#). These galleries present a visual survey of urban housing, landscapes, and building typologies from the 1970s to 2010s, from around the globe. Galleries consist of around 4,000 images, digitized from 35mm film slides, a subset of the more than 12,000 slides in I2UD's collection. To complement this study guide a curated [Informal Settlements Photo Gallery](#) showcases the rich diversity of contexts and typologies of informal settlements captured in the I2UD archive. Spanning eight countries and twelve cities, these images offer a vivid portrayal of urban life, from sprawling panoramas of informal housing clusters to intimate street scenes and home interiors. These images highlight the complexities and nuances of informal urbanization.

INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS OVERVIEW

Informal settlements, colloquially referred to as “slums” or by various other terms depending on the cultural and regional context, represent a ubiquitous urban phenomenon found in many cities across the globe. While definitions provided by organizations like UN-Habitat offer insights, a more universally agreed-upon characterization of informal settlements still needs to be determined. However, commonalities exist, typically encompassing elements such as insecure land tenure, inadequate access to essential water, sanitation, and electricity services, and often substandard housing conditions.



Informal settlements, sometimes interchangeably referred to as “slums,” “shantytowns,” “favelas,” or “bidonvilles,” are characterized by their spontaneous and unplanned growth and often lack formal recognition. The absence of legal recognition frequently results in precarious land tenure, leaving residents vulnerable to eviction and lacking access to essential services municipal authorities provide. This lack of consensus underscores the complexity of informal urbanization and the need for context-specific approaches to address its challenges.

“

Informal settlements are residential areas where:

1. Inhabitants have no security of tenure vis-à-vis the land or dwellings they inhabit, with modalities ranging from squatting to informal rental housing,
2. The neighbourhoods usually lack, or are cut off from, basic services and city infrastructure and
3. The housing may not comply with current planning and building regulations, and is often situated in geographically and environmentally hazardous areas.

- UN-Habitat 2015

CAUSES OF INFORMALITY

The emergence and persistence of informal settlements are driven by a complex interplay of economic, social, political, and environmental factors. Economic factors such as rural-urban migration and the inability of cities to absorb the influx of migrants contribute significantly to the growth of informal settlements. Inadequate urban planning, weak governance structures, and institutional barriers also play crucial roles, perpetuating informality and exacerbating its consequences.

Social marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination further contribute to the formation of informal settlements, as marginalized populations seek refuge in urban areas where opportunities for livelihoods may exist. Environmental factors such as climate change-induced displacement and natural disasters can also force people into informal settlements as they seek shelter and safety in urban areas.

Moreover, applying a broader historical lens reveals the legacy of colonialism, which often led to spatially segregated cities and uneven service provision, further exacerbating urban inequalities. Structural adjustment programs in developing countries also had profound impacts, often dismantling social safety nets and deepening poverty and informality. Unrealistic planning and regulations, overly bureaucratic and exclusionary regulatory frameworks, dysfunctional legal systems, and political clientelism and corruption further contribute to the perpetuation of informality, as formal markets fail to cater to the needs of the urban poor. These systemic challenges underscore the multifaceted nature of informality and the need for comprehensive, multidimensional approaches to address it effectively.

PREVALENCE OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Informal settlements are a global phenomenon, existing in urban contexts worldwide and using various names. While there is no universally agreed-upon definition, some commonalities include non-secure tenure, lack of services and infrastructure, and spontaneous growth.

Despite the absence of consensus on their definition, informal settlements are prevalent and growing. Over 1 billion people live in them, with 70% of the housing stock in developing countries being informal. At least a quarter of the global population resides in informal settlements, with 80% concentrated in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Central and Southern Asia. The urban population in these regions is expected to double in the coming decades, dramatically increasing the absolute number of informal settlements and slum dwellers.

Informal settlements can be located in different city areas, from the center to the periphery. Depending on their location, the legal status of the land and buildings, and population pressures, these settlements may transform over time into more permanent neighborhoods. It is not unusual within one metropolitan area to find informal settlements that exhibit diverse morphologies and typologies, ranging from large mixed-use districts to waterfront settlements, escarpments, easements, sidewalk settlements, backstages, adherences, enclosures, high-end subdivisions, and high-rise informal structures. These varied forms highlight the complexity of informal urbanization and the need for tailored approaches to address its challenges. For residents living in informal areas, rent, housing quality, transportation, and access to employment are essential factors in deciding where to live. Regardless of tenure insecurity, informal settlements provide more affordable access to these services, which are lacking in formal housing networks.

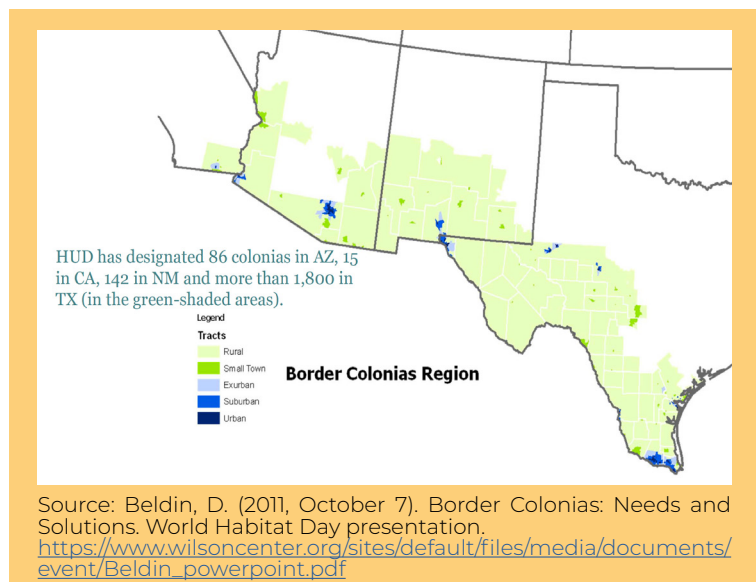
INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

While informal settlements are often associated with the Global South, they also exist in the United States, particularly along the U.S.-Mexico border. These settlements, known as “colonias,” have developed due to a combination of regulatory gaps and economic pressures, providing a cheap way for land and home ownership.

Until the mid-1990s, county governments in border states such as Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and California lacked the authority to regulate land subdivision outside city limits. This regulatory gap allowed landowners to illegally subdivide and sell plots without the necessary infrastructure. As a result, many colonias emerged, characterized by a lack of basic services and amenities.

Colonias can vary from small clusters of homes in rural areas near agricultural work to large communities in suburban areas outside cities. These communities typically lack potable water, sewer services, and electricity. Roads are often unpaved, and housing units are constructed from aging mobile homes or materials that residents could find. Access to essential services and proper infrastructure can make life challenging in these areas. Still, many are bustling neighborhoods offering affordable housing for recent immigrants, often excluded from the traditional housing market.

A major issue in colonias is the provision of water services. Many colonias lack access to clean and safe drinking water, relying on unsafe sources, which leads to significant health risks like waterborne diseases. The lacking and insufficient infrastructure often results in residents using contaminated wells or storage tanks. Furthermore, many residents rely on trucking in or purchasing expensive bottled water. While state and federal funding aims to improve water infrastructure, progress is slow, and residents continue to face daily struggles to access clean water.



One solution to improve water services is absorbing colonias into nearby cities to provide necessary infrastructure and services. However, this faces challenges such as taxing low-income households and the legislative gap where neither city nor county governments take full responsibility for services. Policies need to be designed to facilitate the integration of colonias into municipal service areas without imposing undue financial burdens on residents. Legislative reforms could grant counties more authority and resources to manage these areas effectively, ensuring that basic services such as water, sewage, and electricity are accessible to all residents.

In addition to colonias, informal settlements in the U.S. can be linked to discussions about the unhoused population. Policies like camping bans have sparked debates about the rights and needs of these populations versus urban management and aesthetics. These policies often push unhoused individuals to live in makeshift shelters or encampments, which can be considered a form of informality due to the lack of permanent structures and services.

Despite being in one of the world's wealthiest countries, residents of colonias and other informal settlements, including the unhoused, face significant hardships similar to those globally.

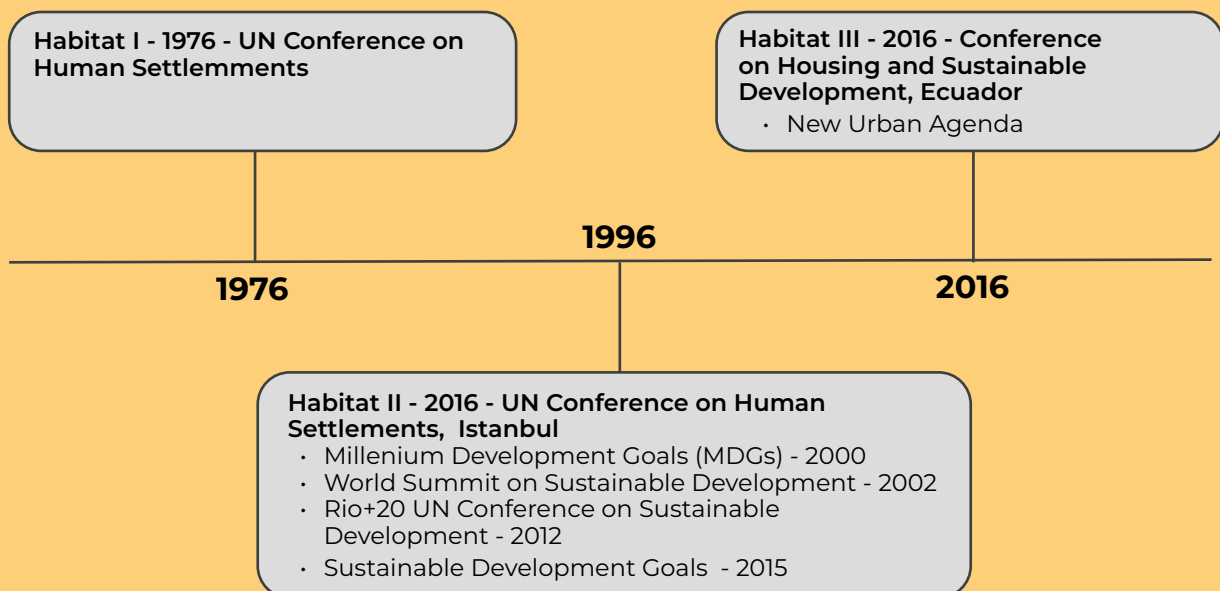
EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL APPROACHES TO SLUMS AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

THROUGH THE LENS OF THE HABITAT CONFERENCES

Habitat I, the seminal international gathering of urban development policymakers, practitioners, and NGOs, took place in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976. This landmark event, organized through the UN, is held every twenty years, with Habitat II hosted in Istanbul in 1996 and, more recently, Habitat III in Quito in 2017. These UN-officiated meetings are preceded by a comprehensive preparation process involving country reports, regional conferences, and thematic working groups, culminating in an adopted agenda. The recommendations from these Habitat conferences serve as a guide, informing policies and projects developed by member countries, local authorities, and international organizations.

I2UD contributed to and participated in both Habitat II and III, giving its staff a unique opportunity to capture trends and the evolution of urban development policies and practices. The evolution of these agendas over time raises many intriguing questions. How have these agendas shaped the urban-related policies, programs, and projects undertaken by international, national, and local communities? What issues have consistently remained at the forefront, and what new challenges have emerged? And perhaps most importantly, how have the approaches to these issues evolved over the years?

HABITAT - THREE MAJOR CONFERENCES SINCE 1976



HABITAT I (1976) - VANCOUVER DECLARATION

Date and Location

Vancouver, Canada in 1976.

Objectives

Habitat I aimed to address the challenges of rapid urbanization and promote sustainable urban development. It focused on housing, infrastructure, environment, social equity, and governance issues.

Key Outcomes

- Adoption of the Vancouver Declaration, which emphasized the need for governments to provide services and reorganize informal settlements in ways that encourage community initiative.
 - Establishment of the UN Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) in Nairobi, Kenya, to coordinate global efforts in urban development.
 - Recognition of the importance of considering human geography in development policies and establishing ministries and agencies responsible for territorial planning and management.
-

On Slums/Informal Settlements

Shift in Policy Lens: Prior to Habitat I, informal settlements were often viewed solely as problems to be eradicated through clearance and relocation efforts. However, the Vancouver Declaration reframed the lens by recognizing the agency and contributions of residents in informal settlements and advocating for policies that support their integration into the urban fabric. This underscored a shift towards policies focused on slum upgrading, infrastructure improvement, and inclusive urban development. Instead of viewing informal settlements as obstacles to development, the conference highlighted them as dynamic and vibrant communities requiring targeted interventions to improve living conditions while preserving their social fabric.

Key Outcomes

- **Lack of Actionable Strategies:** Despite its emphasis on community participation and the importance of integrating informal settlements into urban planning, Habitat I was criticized for its lack of concrete commitments and mechanisms for implementation. Critics argued that the conference failed to provide actionable strategies for addressing the complex challenges of informal settlements.
- **Failure to Address Root Causes:** Habitat I primarily focused on addressing the symptoms of informal settlements rather than tackling the underlying structural factors such as poverty, inequality, and land tenure issues that perpetuate their existence.

HABITAT II (1996) - ISTANBUL DECLARATION AND HABITAT AGENDA

Held in Istanbul over 16 days, more than 3,000 delegates from 171 countries participated together, including parliamentarians, local authorities, intergovernmental organizations, and NGO representatives. In addition, a parallel NGO Forum was organized with 8,000 registered representatives. For the first time in a UN conference, NGOs were invited to speak and participate in working groups to help draft agenda recommendations. The outcome was the Habitat Agenda, a 191-page document with hundreds of government commitments, including a Global Plan of Action. Notably, the need to focus on the urban environment and climate change was highlighted in the actions. The conference also set the stage for adopting the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. The action plan promoted, where appropriate, the upgrading of informal settlements and urban slums as a practical measure and pragmatic solution to the urban shelter deficit.

Date and Location

Istanbul, Turkey in 1996.

Objectives

Habitat II aimed to assess progress made since Habitat I and formulate a global action plan for sustainable urban development. It focused on urbanization, housing, infrastructure, environment, and governance.

Key Outcomes

- Adoption of the [Istanbul Declaration](#) and Habitat Agenda, which promoted the upgrading of informal settlements as a pragmatic solution to the urban shelter deficit.
 - Increased engagement of NGOs in the conference process, allowing them to speak and participate in drafting agenda recommendations.
 - Highlighting the importance of focusing on the urban environment and climate change in development actions.
 - Laid the groundwork for subsequent global development agendas, including the Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.
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On Slums/Informal Settlements

Policy Reaffirmation: Habitat II reinforced the policy shift initiated by Habitat I, emphasizing the importance of upgrading informal settlements as a pragmatic solution to the urban shelter deficit. This reaffirmation solidified the integration of slum upgrading into broader urban development strategies. The Istanbul Declaration and Habitat Agenda provided a comprehensive framework for action, guiding governments towards policies that promote inclusive, participatory, and sustainable approaches to informal settlement development. The Istanbul Declaration and Habitat Agenda provided a comprehensive framework for action, guiding governments towards policies that promote inclusive, participatory, and sustainable approaches to informal settlement development.

Criticism

- **Implementation:** While Habitat II resulted in the adoption of the Istanbul Declaration and Habitat Agenda, there were criticisms regarding the implementation of the commitments outlined in these documents. Some observers argued that many governments failed to translate the recommendations into concrete policies and actions.
- **Limited Impact on Slum Upgrading:** Despite endorsing informal settlement upgrading as a pragmatic solution, Habitat II faced criticism for not providing adequate resources or mechanisms to support slum upgrading efforts effectively.

Habitat II – I2UD Digital Library Resources

[Habitat II Conference Research Papers: “Cities of the Global South” – “Leadership and Best Practices”- “Tenure Rights and Development Control”](#). Research papers presented at the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul, Turkey, covered three topics: 1. [“Cities of the Global South”](#) for a dialogue on Land Policy and Rural Urban Linkages; 2. “Leadership and Best Practices” for a panel on Governance and Best Practices; and 3. “Tenure Rights and Development Control” for a forum on Building Housing to Feel at Home.

Summary: The presentation discusses how cities in the Global South face significant challenges amid limited resources, necessitating a shift towards community-based initiatives for development. Effective partnerships between municipalities and communities are crucial for addressing evolving societal needs and fostering economic and social progress.

[Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme](#), Review of International Urban Development Projects, Funded by UN-Habitat, 1995. In 1995, the Unit participated in the “Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme” by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UN-Habitat). Twenty-eight case studies from sixteen countries cover slum upgrading, land regularization, affordable housing, infrastructure and service provision, and community empowerment and inclusion. Documents include a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ between the Unit and Habitat agency and Best Practices guidelines for pre-screening cases.

HABITAT III (2016) - NEW URBAN AGENDA

Like the previous conferences, Habitat III, held in Quito, was preceded by numerous regional and thematic meetings and preparatory reports. The adopted ‘New Urban Agenda’ reflected a broader theme of ‘transformative commitments for social inclusion and ending poverty’ that included:

- Sustainable Urban Development for Social Inclusion and Ending Poverty;
- Sustainable and Inclusive Urban Prosperity and Opportunities for All; and
- Environmentally Sustainable and Resilient Urban Development.

The New Urban Agenda strongly emphasizes the themes of economy, environment, and social justice and references the ‘right to the city’.

Date and Location

Quito, Ecuador, in 2016.

Objectives

Habitat III aimed to reinvigorate global commitment to sustainable urban development and address emerging urban challenges. It focused on urbanization, inclusivity, resilience, and environmental sustainability.

Key Outcomes

- Adoption of the [New Urban Agenda](#), which emphasized transformative commitments to social inclusion and ending poverty.
- The “right to the city” concept was introduced, recognizing the equal use and enjoyment of cities and human settlements for all inhabitants without discrimination.
- Reinforcement of the importance of promoting inclusivity, accessibility, affordability, and sustainability in cities and human settlements to foster prosperity and quality of life for all.

On Slums/Informal Settlements

Policy Evolution: Habitat III further evolved policy perspectives on informal settlements by embedding them within broader social inclusion, poverty eradication, and sustainable development agendas. The New Urban Agenda recognized informal settlements as manifestations of urban inequality and called for transformative actions to address their root causes. The conference elevated the discourse on informal settlements by framing them as housing issues and complex socio-economic and spatial challenges that require holistic and integrated solutions. It emphasized the importance of recognizing the rights and agency of informal settlement residents. It highlighted the need for cross-sectoral approaches that address housing, land tenure, infrastructure, and social services in a coordinated manner.

Criticism

- **Ambiguity:** The New Urban Agenda received criticism for its ambiguity and lack of specificity in certain areas, leading to concerns about its practical implementation. Critics argued that the document's broad language and aspirational goals made it challenging for governments to translate it into actionable policies and programs.
- **Limited Engagement with Grassroots Organizations:** Despite efforts to include civil society in the conference process, some grassroots organizations felt marginalized and criticized the lack of meaningful engagement with communities directly affected by informal settlements. They argued that their voices were not adequately represented in formulating the New Urban Agenda.
- **Continued Challenges in Implementation:** Like previous conferences, Habitat III faced challenges in translating its commitments into tangible outcomes. Implementation efforts have varied widely across countries.

Habitat III – I2UD Digital Library Resources

[Habitat III Regional Report for the Arab Region](#). 2016. Funded by UN-Habitat (ROAS) and United Nations (ESCWA). One of five regional reports, corresponding with the five UN regional commissions, as part of the global preparative process ahead of the HIII conference in Quito, Ecuador. I2UD contributed to key messages, priorities, and policies in the global report and outcomes of Habitat III, namely the New Urban Agenda. The reports review urbanization trends and issues in the Arab region since the Habitat II conference was held in Istanbul in 1996 and cover development trends, economic development, social equity, climate change and environment, and governance. In terms of informal settlements, the report provides an update on the proliferation of informality in various forms, a review of national upgrading and affordable housing programs, the growth of IDPs and refugees in the informal sector, etc.

[National Urban Policy Arab States Report](#). 2016. Funded by UN Habitat. One of five regional reports assessing the state of national urban policies that contributed to the Global State of National Urban Policies Report. This was an important follow-up from Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda's emphasis on the role of national governments in inclusive and effective urban policies. I2UD produced a regional assessment report of National Urban Policies (NUPs) in Arab States to describe and analyze contextual factors and the evolution of policies in major Arab states. The assessment included five in-depth case studies of NUPs in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Sudan, which reflect the geographical diversity in the area and current policy objectives, opportunities, and challenges in implementation for the region. The case study analysis focused on cross-cutting themes of compact, connected, inclusive, and climate-resilient cities. The final outputs included these case studies, a regional synthesis report, and a table of country profiles concerning national urban policies.

EVOLVING URBAN AGENDA - FROM 1996 TO 2006

The [2016 World Cities Report](#), prepared for the Quito conference, includes a chapter on how the urban agenda evolved between Habitat II in 1996 and Habitat III in 2016. The illustration below summarizes these changes—what persistent urban issues have been and what newer emerging concerns and trends are.

WORLD CITIES REPORT

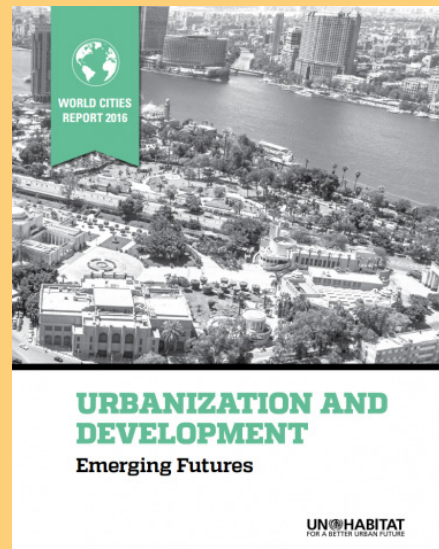
What has changed in the last 20 years?

Persistent urban issues over the past 20 years include: urban growth, changes in family patterns, growing number of urban residents living in slums and informal settlements and the challenge of providing urban services.

Emerging issues: Climate Change and cities, exclusion and rising inequality, urban insecurity and international migration.

Newer trends: urban governance, including decentralization and finance.

New Urban Agenda: promote cities and human settlements that are environmentally sustainable, resilient, social inclusive, safe and violence free and economically productive.



Source: World Cities Report 2016

POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

NAVIGATING INFORMALITY: PERSPECTIVES, POLICIES, AND PITFALLS

In international development, various policies and interventions have been proposed and implemented to address the challenges of informal settlements. Below are summaries of these policies and linkages to the Habitat conferences.



Do Nothing

Historically, some policymakers adopted a passive approach, hoping that slums would disappear naturally as economies grew. This perspective often stemmed from a naive belief that informal settlements were temporary and transient phenomena. This attitude was particularly prevalent in the decades following World War II but gradually shifted as informal settlements' persistent nature became evident.

Relation to Habitat Conferences: Habitat I (1976) played a significant role in shifting this perspective by raising awareness about the challenges posed by informal settlements and advocating for government intervention to improve living conditions. The conference emphasized the need for governments to provide services and reorganize settlements, which contradicted the passive “Do Nothing” approach.



Demolition and Forced Eviction

Another approach, albeit controversial, involved demolition and forced eviction of informal settlements. Many policymakers viewed slums as eyesores or dens of criminality, prompting them to pursue demolition and eviction as part of urban beautification projects or to make way for other development initiatives. Despite being more common in previous decades, forced evictions still occur worldwide, often displacing vulnerable communities and violating their human rights.

Relation to Habitat Conferences: The practice of demolition and forced eviction was common in urban development strategies before Habitat conferences, reflecting a top-down approach that prioritized clearing informal settlements without addressing underlying issues. Habitat I (1976) challenged this approach by highlighting the importance of community initiative and advocating for policies that support informal settlement upgrading instead of clearance. Habitat II and III addressed the negative impacts of demolition and forced eviction on vulnerable communities. They emphasized the need for inclusive and participatory approaches to urban development, discouraging practices that violate human rights. The conferences promoted policies prioritizing tenure security and community-led upgrading over eviction and displacement.



Public Housing

Public housing programs were initiated in some regions to provide alternative accommodation for slum dwellers. However, these initiatives faced criticism for their small scale, unaffordability, poor targeting, and inefficiency. Public housing units were often inadequate in size and quality, failing to meet the needs of the poor populations they aimed to serve.

Relation to Habitat Conferences: While Habitat I (1976) did not directly address public housing, its emphasis on improving living conditions in informal settlements laid the groundwork for policies that provide alternative accommodation through housing programs. Subsequent Habitat conferences recognized the limitations of traditional public housing approaches, particularly in addressing the needs of informal settlement residents.

Public Housing – I2UD Digital Library Resources

[The Development and Morphology of Informal Housing](#), Research Paper published with Aga Khan Award for Architecture Seminar Proceedings in 1988. The report strongly critiques public housing programs and suggests that informal development should not be ignored. The report notes that public housing production is too slow to address shortages, hindered by inflation in construction costs and a focus on distant, monotonous projects. Informal housing demonstrates the potential for mobilizing funds and entrepreneurship, but municipalities' reluctance to release land exacerbates issues. It highlights a disconnect between architects' designs and what people build, with informal transformations often rendering projects unrecognizable.

Rehabilitation Strategies for Privatized Housing Estates, 1994 Cairo, Egypt. The research study tested regeneration strategies for older neighborhoods and privatized public housing estates through public/private partnerships between local government and community-based organizations. The **photo gallery** in the I2UD Digital Library includes photo documentation of this area in 1994.



Sites and Services

In the 1970s and 1980s, the World Bank pioneered sites-and-services schemes to provide developable lots equipped with basic facilities to slum dwellers. This approach empowered residents to build their own homes, promoting self-reliance and community ownership. However, initial skepticism surrounded these projects, although recent studies have highlighted their long-term positive impacts.

Relation to Habitat Conferences: Habitat II (1996) acknowledged the potential of sites-and-services schemes in promoting self-reliance and community ownership. The conference highlighted the importance of empowering communities and adopting participatory approaches to urban development.

Sites and Services – I2UD Digital Library Resources

“Report on the Reassessment Phase of Assessing Sustainability in East Wahdat and Jofeh, Amman, Jordan.” This study documented the transformation in Jofeh and East Wahdat, two sites and services projects initiated in 1980 and financed by the World Bank. The study team focused on three topics: how to sustain environmental improvements as communities densify, evaluate the needs of children and youth, and the role that public space can play in maintaining the health and vitality of a community.

[The Impact of Investments in Urban Infrastructure on Municipal Revenues and the Integration of Informal Sector Activities The Abidjan Experience.](#) Between 1990 and 1995, the Unit for Housing and Urban Development (later CUDS) prepared four research reports on the commune district of Adjamé in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). As a collection, these materials present a detailed analysis of urban housing trends in Côte d'Ivoire from the 1990s, covering economic, historical, architectural, financial, and socio-geographical elements. A review and assessment of World Bank-financed upgrading projects in Abidjan that largely followed sites and services upgrading methodology. Other work in this stream looked into innovative community development programs – which were very different from the more traditional sites and services types of projects. This included reviewing neighborhood committees (CDQs) in Abidjan that engaged in various activities such as street cleaning, security services, and small infrastructure improvements, funded through user fees and commercial operations.



Tenure Security

Early tenure security programs focused on providing legal rights to land and houses occupied by the poor, aiming to unlock the financial potential hidden in their informal homes. While tenure security was initially seen as a panacea for poverty alleviation, critiques emerged regarding the messy formalization of customary tenure and its limited impact on addressing broader inequalities. Despite these challenges, tenure security remains a fundamental aspect of many holistic policies and programs addressing informal settlements.

Relation to Habitat Conferences: While Habitat I (1976) did not explicitly address tenure security, its emphasis on territorial planning and management laid the foundation for policies recognizing and formalizing land rights. Subsequent Habitat conferences, particularly Habitat II and III, emphasized the importance of land tenure regularization and legal recognition of informal settlements. They promoted policies that prioritize tenure security as a fundamental aspect of addressing urban poverty and inequality.

Tenure Security – I2UD Digital Library Resources

[Regularizing the Informal Land Development Process](#). The report focused on organizational disconnects between informal housing and formal planning development for urban communities, considering case studies on land development and legal aspects for nine urban municipalities: Navi Mumbai, India; Jakarta, Indonesia; Bangkok, Thailand; Mexico City, Mexico; Caracas, Venezuela; Cairo, Egypt; Amman, Jordan; Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; Conakry, Guinea; Kinshasa, Congo; and Lusaka, Zambia. Case studies discuss three points for each city region: 1) Informal land development processes; 2) Regularization of informal land development; and 3) Legal and institutional frameworks for land regularization. Documents include the 1990 report in full.

[Papers presented at the 4th World Bank Research Symposium in 2007](#). Titling lay at the heart of the discussions. Though participants' views on titling varied, there was a common understanding that titling is not a universal remedy and that different solutions and complementary methods must be examined.

- [Delivery of Security of Tenure, Infrastructure Services and Access to Finance Through Community-Based Approaches](#). The publication discusses land tenure security and the provision of basic infrastructure in informal settlements, drawing from I2UD's work in developing a World Bank upgrading program in Tirana, Albania, and a case study from El Salvador to highlight effective community-based approaches.
- [Beyond Titling, Summing up Urban Land Use and Land Markets](#), World Bank and SIDA 4th Urban Research Symposium 2007. This SIDA publication includes ten summaries of over 50 papers on urban land use presented at the Symposium.

[Land-Related Issues, Dhaka, Bangladesh](#). Urban Sector Strategy Report, for Dhaka and Chittagong, Bangladesh. The 2006 report discussed in detail the urban land market in Bangladesh, defined the different types of land tenure held by urban dwellers, assessed the role of local and district authorities in land management, evaluated land-related impediments on housing and development finance, and highlighted issues related to access to land and services by the urban poor.



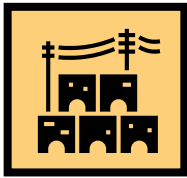
Resettlement and Redevelopment

Some interventions involved resettlement and redevelopment efforts, aiming to clear informal settlements and construct new housing and facilities either on the same site or in different areas. However, criticisms of this approach highlight that people are often relocated to undesirable locations, disrupting social networks and economic opportunities.

Relation to Habitat Conferences: Habitat I (1976) challenged the notion of forced eviction and emphasized the importance of reorganizing settlements instead of displacing residents. Habitat II and III advocated against resettlement and redevelopment strategies that disrupt social networks and economic opportunities. They promoted inclusive and participatory approaches to urban development that prioritize community-led upgrading and empowerment.

Resettlement and Redevelopment – I2UD Digital Library Resources

Qassioin Urban Development Strategy and Improvement Plan. The I2UD team created an urban development strategy and improvement plan for informal settlement in Damascus, Syria, which is home to approx. 200,000 people. Steep slopes, dense settlement patterns, and geotechnical and seismic risks characterize the settlement. While the project advocated for a relocation site for families living in zones with the highest seismic risks, it also promoted inclusive in-situ upgrading and integrated development strategy for broader infrastructure and historic preservation.



In-situ Upgrading

With the recognition of the limitations of top-down approaches, in-situ upgrading has gained prominence, in-situ upgrading has gained prominence. This approach involves empowering communities to improve their living conditions and infrastructure themselves. Led by organizations like UN-Habitat and the World Bank, in-situ upgrading focuses on place-based environmental and social improvements, including land tenure, housing, infrastructure, employment, and health services. This participatory approach aims to foster political and social inclusion while leveraging the well-located nature of informal settlements.

Relation to Habitat Conferences: Habitat II and III highlighted the effectiveness of in-situ upgrading in promoting self-reliance, community ownership, and social inclusion. They advocated for policies prioritizing participatory approaches to urban development and empowering informal settlement residents to drive the improvement process. Habitat III (2016) reinforced the importance of in-situ upgrading in achieving sustainable and inclusive urban development.

In-Situ Upgrading – I2UD Digital Library Resources

Technical assistance projects to support the upgrading of informal communities in South African townships:

- [Township Development Strategy for Emfuleni Municipality](#) In 2009, I2UD worked with a range of local stakeholders in four largely informal townships to develop neighborhood development/upgrading strategies and prioritize investments.
- [Technical Assistance to Ezakheni, Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality](#) In 2010, I2UD developed a participatory upgrading strategy that included an urban design framework and identified key development projects to be considered for funding in the economically distressed township that had seen decades of outmigration and population decline.
- [Technical Assistance to Lesedi Local Municipality](#) In 2011, I2UD developed participatory design frameworks for four communities hampered by the spatial segregation resulting from the urban planning methods implemented during the apartheid period.

Other work with South African Townships:

- [Development of Infrastructure and Initiating of Sustainable Projects in Elim, South Africa](#), 2001 Case study/best practice for community-driven in-situ upgrading. The report emphasizes the importance of community leadership, administration, and maintenance for sustainable development.

[The Unplanned Areas Upgrading and Employment Enhancing Programme in Egypt Needs Assessment and Activity Design Study for four informal settlements in Cairo and Giza](#). The study, funded by the AFD, reviewed policies and institutions that impact the delivery of services in these four informal settlements, including micro-finance services. The study team worked closely with the Giza and Cairo Governorates and community-based organizations to develop practical upgrading strategies to improve the quality of public spaces and services available to residents. A strong focus was on providing credit and business support to micro-enterprises and small businesses. The reports in the I2UD Digital Library offer very detailed assessments of each of the communities and the recommended activity design. As of 2023, the project continued beyond its initial scope with new funding from ADF.

Urban Land Regularization and Informal Development Upgrading in Tirana, Albania. I2UD coordinated a team of experts providing technical assistance in infrastructure planning, land regularization, servicing of informal settlements, institutional development and community-based approaches to urban management and infrastructure provision. The project represented a fundamental departure from traditional urban investment programs, shifting to a demand-driven urban planning and implementation process linked to strategic urban growth objectives and community-based development. Under the project, municipalities with community residents prepared an urban concept plan for the participating neighborhood, highlighted priorities for infrastructure servicing and developed preliminary cost estimates. This information formed the basis for developing a partnership agreement that provides a framework for organizing and coordinating public and private household inputs.



Cities Without Slums

As a broader goal, the concept of creating “cities without slums” has guided large-scale programs aiming to eradicate informal settlements. This ideology encompasses various policy concepts and upgrading programs, striving to make cities inclusive and equitable. The 1999 Cities Alliance Action Plan for Cities Without Slums exemplifies this vision, emphasizing the importance of holistic approaches to urban development.

Relation to Habitat Conferences: Habitat II emphasized the importance of upgrading informal settlements as a pragmatic solution to the urban shelter deficit, laying the groundwork for the vision of “cities without slums.” Habitat III further reinforced this vision by embedding informal settlement upgrading into broader urban development agendas, leading to large-scale programs and initiatives to eradicate informal settlements.

Cities Without Slums – I2UD Digital Library Resources

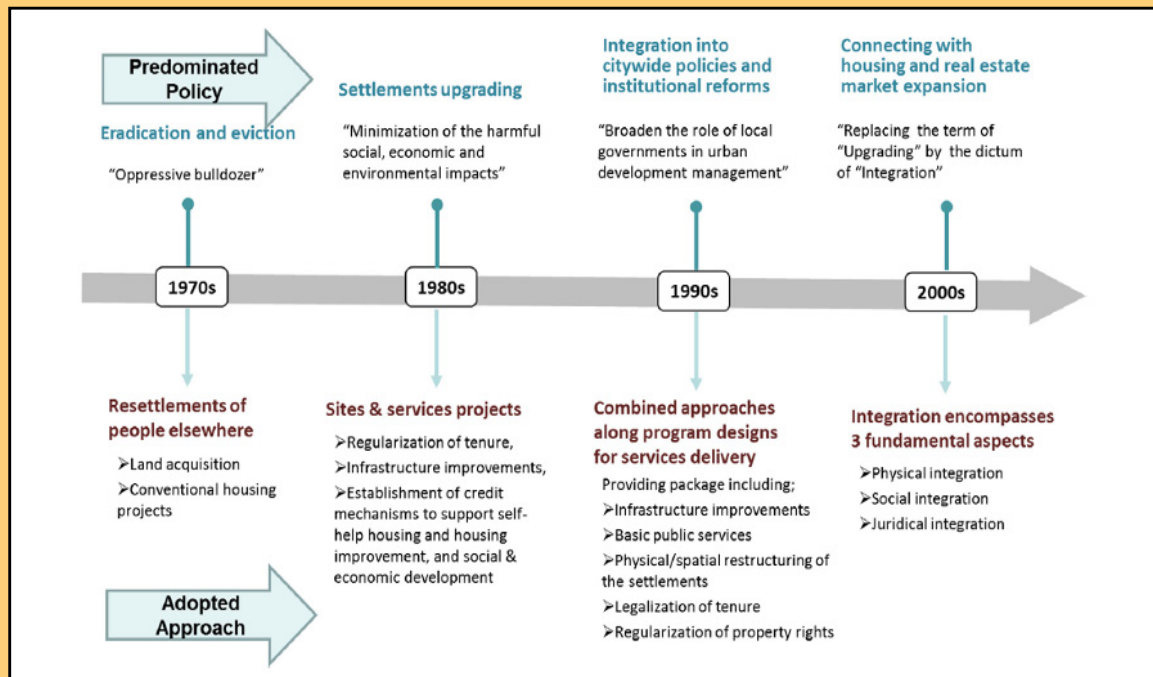
[Local Authority-Driven Interventions to Improve the Lives of Slum Dwellers](#) This 2003 report was part of I2UD's contribution to the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) policy discourse on informal settlements and slum upgrading. Vice President Mona Serageldin was on a task force that addressed Target 11: “By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers”, focusing on slum upgrading and improved urban management. This report provides a very holistic review of local authorities and policies toward slum upgrading, etc. The paper emphasizes the importance of participatory processes in slum policy and upgrading efforts, including participatory urban planning and management, participatory budgeting, and community involvement in decision-making processes. It emphasizes the significance of supportive policy frameworks at national and local levels to facilitate slum upgrading and poverty alleviation efforts. It underscores the expanding scope of partnerships and collaboration among local authorities, NGOs, CBOs, and the private sector in implementing slum upgrading initiatives.

[Inclusive Cities and Access to Land, Housing, and Services in Developing Countries](#) This 2016 landmark report for the World Bank addressed how global disparities in income, wealth, and opportunity have contributed to social exclusion and spatial segregation in cities in the Middle East, North Africa, Latin America, Central America, and Western Asia. The report highlights the need for coordinated efforts to address many exclusionary practices and policies that allow the proliferation of informality worldwide.

THE EVOLUTION OF POLICIES AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

The Habitat conferences and urban agendas adopted by international development agencies influenced the formation of policies and projects at the country level. Figure — from an article by Marwa A. Khalifa in the Ain Shams Engineering Journal (Dec 2015) highlights the evolution of urban projects and policies regarding informal settlements in Egypt starting in the 1970s. The predominate policy shifts reflect a significant move from physical eradication and eviction in the 1970s to integration into urban areas' social, economic, and physical makeup. There is a greater understanding of the economic value of the considerable investment in housing and jobs within informal neighborhoods of cities.

Evolution of Informal Settlements Upgrading Strategies in Egypt



Source: [Evolution of informal settlements upgrading strategies in Egypt: From negligence to participatory development.](#)

CRITIQUES AND UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF SLUM UPGRADING

In addressing informality within urban environments, a contentious debate often centers on a 'crisis of urbanism' versus more heroic and entrepreneurial perspectives. This ideological schism encapsulates divergent theoretical views on informality, presenting it as either a crisis – a problematic, uncontrolled, and unplanned reality that necessitates strict regulation, or as heroic – a celebration of the resilience displayed by marginalized communities in the face of multifaceted marginalization, be it social, economic, political, or geographic.

The crisis perspective often views informality through a lens of disorder and dysfunction, advocating for top-down interventions and regulatory measures to mitigate its perceived negative impacts on urban development. From this standpoint, informality represents a challenge to established urban planning paradigms, necessitating urgent and decisive action to rectify its perceived shortcomings. However, this perspective risks overlooking the complex socio-economic dynamics that underpin informal settlements, potentially exacerbating underlying issues of inequality and marginalization.

In contrast, the heroic perspective reframes informality as a site of resistance and adaptation, highlighting the resourcefulness and resilience of marginalized communities navigating precarious urban environments. Rather than viewing informality solely as a problem to be solved, proponents of this perspective emphasize the agency and creativity of informal residents in shaping their livelihoods and communities. By reframing informality more positively, this perspective challenges dominant narratives that stigmatize informal settlements and their inhabitants.

Moving beyond theoretical debates, critiques and unintended consequences abound when examining the implementation of policies aimed at addressing informality. These critiques highlight the complexities and nuances inherent in interventions targeting informal settlements, raising questions about who ultimately benefits from such initiatives and the potential for unintended consequences such as gentrification. Often, these interventions fail to adequately serve the poorest of the poor, instead catering to more economically advantaged residents or external interests, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities.

Moreover, upgrading programs tend to focus narrowly on the physical environment of informal settlements, neglecting broader issues related to livelihoods, wages, and political capacity. By prioritizing infrastructural development over holistic socio-economic empowerment, these interventions may fail to address the root causes of informality, perpetuating cycles of marginalization and exclusion. Additionally, many interventions' short-term, project-oriented nature limits their citywide impact and long-term sustainability, raising doubts about their efficacy in effecting meaningful change at scale.

Furthermore, the question arises as to whether these policies foster broader changes in governance practices beyond the confines of informal settlements. While upgrading programs may seek to improve living conditions within informal settlements, their impact on broader governance structures and practices remains uncertain. Without addressing systemic corruption, bureaucracy, and political accountability issues, interventions targeting informality may struggle to catalyze meaningful reform at the municipal or national level. Thus, there is a pressing need to critically evaluate the underlying assumptions and implications of policies addressing informality, ensuring that they align with broader objectives of social justice, equity, and sustainable urban development.

INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS TODAY AND LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

As urbanization accelerates at an unprecedented pace, cities around the globe grapple with the challenges posed by informal settlements. With urban growth outpacing the capacity of formal institutions to accommodate it, informality emerges as a persistent condition shaping the urban landscape for the foreseeable future. Contrary to popular belief, informality is not solely a product of state inaction but reflects the adaptive strategies of communities navigating complex socio-economic realities. While government neglect certainly exacerbates the proliferation of informal settlements, it's essential to recognize that informality is deeply intertwined with broader socio-economic structures and historical processes.

In essence, informality has become an enduring feature of contemporary urban landscapes, shaping the socio-economic dynamics of cities for the foreseeable future.

Given informality's pervasive nature as a dominant urban form, conventional development and analysis models derived primarily from Western or global North perspectives often fail to capture its nuances. This leads to misguided policy interventions. As policymakers grapple with the complexities of informality, there is a pressing need to reassess existing paradigms and embrace more contextually sensitive approaches to urban development. Though often portrayed as abject and lacking, these spaces are, in reality, intensely adaptable and improvisational.

While informal settlements exhibit remarkable resilience and adaptability, avoiding romanticizing these spaces as idyllic havens of creativity and ingenuity is essential. In reality, informal settlements are fraught with challenges and shortcomings, mirroring the flaws inherent in formal institutions. Moreover, as the specter of climate change looms large, informal settlements find themselves at the forefront of its impacts, necessitating urgent action to bolster their resilience and mitigate vulnerabilities.

Looking ahead, the looming specter of climate change further complicates the dynamics of informality. Already at the forefront of environmental risks and vulnerabilities, informal settlements will bear the brunt of increasingly frequent and severe climate-related disasters. Understanding how these communities adapt and endure in the face of such challenges will be critical for shaping resilient and sustainable urban futures.

Given these challenges, I2UD has developed a tool to help cities understand and manage the impacts of climate change. The [AI Climate Platform](#) leverages advanced AI and satellite imagery to support cities in the Global South—especially those with limited local data—by mapping, monitoring, and predicting climate hazards. Developed and piloted in two informal settlements in Honduras, the platform is designed to support communities facing increased risks from climate change, including frequent tropical storms. This innovation is tailored to address the unique challenges of informal settlements, providing essential data and insights to enhance climate resilience.

I2UD PROJECTS: RELEVANCE OF I2UD WORK FOR CURRENT AND FUTURE PRACTITIONERS

Various initiatives under the International Institute for Urban Development (I2UD) have played pivotal roles in navigating the complex landscape of informal settlements and slum upgrading. These projects, spanning decades and diverse geographical contexts, have contributed significantly to the broader goals of improving living conditions and promoting sustainable urban development. Through research, policy assessments, best practices, and the development of upgrading plans, I2UD has endeavored to address the multifaceted challenges of informal settlements worldwide.

In the face of these pressing challenges, I2UD's work on Informal Settlements and Slum Upgrading Projects remains highly relevant for current and future urban development practitioners. We can draw valuable insights and lessons to inform and enhance informal settlement upgrading initiatives by examining their contemporary relevance.

The extensive library of resources offered by I2UD serves as a rich repository of knowledge and best practices, offering practical guidance for navigating the complexities of informal settlements. From research reports to case studies, these resources provide a wealth of information to inform policy-making and intervention strategies. Moreover, the integration of photography archives documenting decades of informal settlement and slum upgrading initiatives offers a visual narrative of these communities' lived experiences and transformations, fostering a deeper understanding of their dynamics and challenges.

By leveraging the insights gleaned from I2UD's work, practitioners can develop more contextually grounded and effective interventions tailored to informal settlements' unique needs and circumstances. As we confront the realities of rapid urbanization and climate change, the relevance of I2UD's work becomes increasingly pronounced, serving as a beacon of guidance for building more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities for all.

ANNEX 1 CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF I2UD RESOURCES FOR INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Below is a complete list of I2UD projects, publications, and research related to informal settlements and slum upgrading.

Year	Title	Project Type	Funder/ Sponsor	Countries	Overview	So What?
1988	The Development and Morphology of Informal Housing	Research and Landmark Reports	Aga Khan Award for Architecture	Egypt; Tanzania; Tunisia; Syria; Yemen	The development of informal settlements and the conditions that created them globally from the 50's to the late 80's and discussion of the morphology of 'slum' housing structures.	Historical context for the rise in informal settlements and description of the diverse housing typologies that makeup informal settlements
1989	Environmental Health Factors in Housing	Research and Landmark Reports	World Health Organization; Ford Foundation	United States	Study on the relationship between public health and housing typologies in informal settlements.	Early study focused on developing design guidelines for planners to minimize public health issues in informal settlements.
1989-1991	Financing Infrastructure Upgrading Programs	Program and Policy Assessment/ Reviews	Unit for Housing and Urbanization at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design (1989)	United States	Two reports investigate the costs of infrastructure upgrading projects. One profiles the costs and financing of several projects, and the second discusses cost recovery mechanisms for upgrading programs.	Analysis of how much infrastructure upgrading programs cost and how they can be financed with some cost recovery mechanisms.
1990-1992	Sustainable Improvement Strategies for Lower Income Urban Communities	Program and Policy Assessment/ Reviews	USAID Office of Housing and Urban Projects (1991)	Egypt; Pakistan; Jordan	In-depth analysis and evaluation of several upgrading programs in Jordan, Egypt, and Pakistan.	This is a very in-depth review of several projects. It includes public health analysis in Pakistan and analysis of communal spaces and gender/youth use of spaces.

Year	Title	Project Type	Funder/ Sponsor	Countries	Overview	So What?
1990-1995	The Abidjan Experience	Program and Policy Assessment/Reviews	Ford Foundation; UNICEF	Egypt; Tunisia; Côte d'Ivoire; Poland;	In-depth analysis and evaluation of several upgrading programs in Abidjan, analysis of urban growth and housing trends in Abidjan, case studies on community-based and participatory development through the lens of informal settlement upgrading and detailed analysis of community-based initiatives in Abidjan in the late 80s.	This paper provides detailed context and analysis of Abidjan's development and housing patterns, with a focus on assessing an early instance of community-based initiatives by the local government.
1990	Regularizing the Informal Land Development Process	Best Practices and Case Studies	USAID Office of Housing and Urban Programs	Côte d'Ivoire; Egypt; Guinea; Democratic Republic of the Congo; Zambia; India; Indonesia; Thailand; Jordan; Mexico; Venezuela	Report highlighting regional case studies and major challenges to be faced in institutionalizing regularization of informal land development.	Highlights the regional context, issues and challenges for Latin America, Asia, MENA, and Sub-Saharan Africa on informal land development
1993	Design Studio 1993: Rabat's Urban Fringe	Best Practices and Case Studies	The Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University;	Morocco	This is a report from a design studio focused on reviewing growth in Rabat's peripheral areas and upgrading programs in those areas.	This report highlights the specificities of an upgrading program for the city's periphery and includes a detailed analysis of densities and housing patterns.
1993	The Use of Land and Infrastructure in the Self-Improvement Strategies of Urban Lower Income Families	Research and Landmark Reports	USAID Family and Development Program; USAID Office of Housing and Urban Programs	Côte d'Ivoire; Democratic Rep. of the Congo; Egypt; Kenya; Morocco; Tunisia; Pakistan; Indonesia; Jordan; Ecuador; Mexico; United States	This report analyzes the complexities of housing and how it is utilized in informal settlements and advocates for a more nuanced perspective from policymakers and partnerships with local NGOs and community groups.	Emphasizes the importance of looking at housing in informal settlements beyond the lens of a basic commodity to develop successful upgrading and improvement programs.

Year	Title	Project Type	Funder/ Sponsor	Countries	Overview	So What?
1995	Community-Based Urbanization and Favelas Rehabilitation Processes	Best Practices and Case Studies	Center for Urban Development Studies at the Harvard Graduate School of Design	Brazil	Case study highlighting a participatory upgrading program.	Key highlights: emphasizes the partnership of the municipality with existing community organizations, a focus on job creation and innovative loan mechanisms, etc.
1995	Community-Based Credit for Housing, Infrastructure, and Microenterprises	Program and Policy Assessment/ Reviews	USAID Regional Housing and Urban Development Office	Ecuador	Assessment of Ecuador's housing policies, focusing on introducing microfinance initiatives to support low-income housing.	Focuses on how to incorporate microfinance community-based initiatives.
1994-1998	Urban Land Regularization and Informal Development Upgrading	Development of Upgrading Plans	World Bank and USAID	Albania	An upgrading project with informal communities in Tirana, Albania, focused on bringing together municipalities and communities to develop strategic plans for infrastructure planning, land regularization, and servicing of informal settlements.	The project represented a fundamental departure from traditional urban investment programs, shifting to a demand-driven urban planning and implementation process linked to strategic urban growth objectives and community-based development.
1999-2000	Housing Microfinance Initiatives	Best Practices and Case Studies	Center for Urban Development Studies at the Harvard Graduate School of Design; USAID Microenterprise Best Practices; Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), Bethesda, Maryland	South Africa; Bangladesh; India; Philippines; Guatemala	An analysis of microfinance programs for housing with regional case studies.	Best practices of microfinance initiatives for low-income housing.

Year	Title	Project Type	Funder/ Sponsor	Countries	Overview	So What?
1999	Workshops on Strategic Planning and Management of Municipal Infrastructure Programs	Program and Policy Assessment/ Reviews	World Bank Urban Infrastructure Project; Development Bank of South Africa; Department of Constitutional Development of RSA; Unit for Housing and Urbanization of the Harvard University Graduate School of Design	South Africa	An assessment of South Africa's Municipal Infrastructure Programs (MIPs).	Assessed the government program that aimed to provide basic services to some of the poorest communities in the country.
2001	Development of Infrastructure and Initiating of Sustainable Projects in Elim, South Africa	Best Practices and Case Studies	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UN-Habitat);	South Africa	Best practice of upgrading program for an informal settlement in South Africa.	Includes upgrading of sewage systems, streets and storm water systems and the electrical reticulation system.
2003	Local Authority-Driven Interventions to Improve the Lives of Slum Dwellers	Best Practices and Case Studies	UN-Habitat Millennium Development Goals Task Force 8 on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers	China; Greece	Assessment of 50 best practices of local authority initiatives to improve conditions in informal settlements.	Partnerships, participatory processes, and collaboration among local stakeholders were key features of the best practices

Year	Title	Project Type	Funder/ Sponsor	Countries	Overview	So What?
2004	Slum Improvement Strategies and Social Inclusion	Best Practices and Case Studies	11th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, June 2004, São Paulo, Brazil	Brazil	Presentations at the URBIS 2004 conference focusing on inclusive and participatory upgrading initiatives.	Profiles several programs that have inclusive outcomes and participatory processes.
2006-2008	Qassioun Urban Development Strategy and Improvement Plan	Development of Upgrading Plans	European Union Syria Municipal Administration Modernization (MAM) Programme	Syria	Upgrading plan for Qassioun informal settlement, Damascus, Syria.	The development plan addresses historic preservation, land tenure issues, and seismic/landslide risks .
2006	Land-Related Issues, Dhaka, Bangladesh	Program and Policy Assessment/ Reviews	World Bank	Bangladesh	Land tenure policy assessment in informal settlements in Bangladesh.	Discusses urban land markets, land tenure issues in informal settlements, local government land management, issues in accessing land and services.
2007	Delivery of Security of Tenure, Infrastructure Services and Access to Finance Through Community-Based Approaches	Best Practices and Case Studies	4th World Bank Urban Research Symposium, May 2007, Washington, DC, USA	Albania; El Salvador	This paper discusses tenure security and the provision of basic infrastructure in informal settlements, drawing from I2UD's work in Tirana, Albania, and a case study from El Salvador highlighting community-based approaches.	Encourages community participation and cooperation among local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and bilateral and multilateral organizations.
2009	Township Development Strategy for Emfuleni Municipality	Development of Upgrading Plans	Emfuleni Local Municipality	South Africa	Informal settlement upgrading strategy for an informal settlement in South Africa.	Includes: township development strategy, urban design frameworks and selected priority projects.

Year	Title	Project Type	Funder/ Sponsor	Countries	Overview	So What?
2010	Technical Assistance to Ezakheni, Ladysmith/Emnambithi Local Municipality	Development of Upgrading Plans	South African Government Neighborhood Development Partnership Grant (NDPG)	South Africa	Informal settlement upgrading strategy for an informal settlement in South Africa.	Includes: road networks and strategic corridors, accommodating future growth and employment opportunities.
2012-2016	The Unplanned Areas Upgrading and Employment Enhancing Programme in Egypt	Development of Upgrading Plans	Agence Française du Développement (AFD); Social Fund for Development (SFD)	Egypt	Spatial analysis and assessment of infrastructure, public services and environmental conditions in four informal settlements in Cairo.	Needs assessment and situation analysis provide the basis for the design of investment packages for upgrading and propose catalyst projects.
2014-2016	Inclusive Cities and Access to Land, Housing, and Services in Developing Countries	Research and Landmark Reports	World Bank	Egypt; Morocco; Tunisia; Thailand; Syria; Brazil; Chile; Colombia; Mexico; Venezuela	Landmark report for the World Bank outlining the importance inclusive processes in urban development programs and projects - with land tenure and informal settlement upgrading highlighted throughout.	Provides examples of successful inclusionary policies, programs, and initiatives by public agencies and NGOs with a particular focus on cities in Latin America and the Middle East.

ANNEX 2 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

UN-HABITAT REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

1. [UN-Habitat: Slum Upgrading](#)
 - [Habitat III Issue Paper - Informal Settlements - 2015](#)
 - UN-Habitat. (2016). "[Slum Almanac 2015/2016: Tracking Improvement in the Lives of Slum Dwellers.](#)" United Nations Human Settlements Programme.
 - UN-Habitat. (2020). "[World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization.](#)" United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

JOURNALS AND ACADEMIC ARTICLES

1. Chiodelli, Francesco. (2016). [International Housing Policy for the Urban Poor and the Informal City in the Global South: A Non-diachronic Review.](#) *Journal of International Development*. 28. n/a-n/a. 10.1002/jid.3204.
2. Khalifa, M. A. (2015). [Evolution of Informal Settlements Upgrading Strategies in Egypt: From Negligence to Participatory Development.](#) *Ain Shams Engineering Journal*, 6, 1151-1159.
3. Patel, Amit & Killemssetty, Namesh. (2020). [A Systematic Review of Slum Policies in The Global South: What Could We Learn From Successes and Failures of the Past?](#) Conference: 2020 World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty At: Washington DC
4. Dovey, Kim & King, Ross. (2011). [Forms of Informality: Morphology and Visibility of Informal Settlements.](#) *Built Environment*. 37. 10.2148/benv.37.1.11.
5. Gilbert, Alan. (2007). [The Return of the Slum: Does Language Matter?](#) *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 31. 697-713. 10.1111/j.1468-2427.2007.00754.x.
6. Roy, A. (2005). [Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning.](#) *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2), 147-158.
7. Cobbinah, Patrick & Finn, Brandon. (2022). [Planning and Climate Change in African Cities: Informal Urbanization and 'Just' Urban Transformations.](#) *Journal of Planning Literature*. 38. 10.1177/08854122221128762.
8. Roy, Ananya. (2009). [Why India Cannot Plan Its Cities: Informality, Insurgence and the Idiom of Urbanization.](#) *Planning Theory*. 8. 76-87. 10.1177/1473095208099299.
9. Khan, S. S., Te Lintelo, D., & Macgregor, H. (2023). [Framing 'slums': global policy discourses and urban inequalities.](#) *Environment and Urbanization*, 35(1), 74-90.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND INFORMATION HUBS

1. [Cities Alliance: Global Programme on Informality](#)
 - Including the 2022 Report - [An International Review of Slum Upgrading Practices: Lessons Learned and Remaining Challenges of PProjects and Programs](#)
2. [International Institute for Environmental Development: Informal settlements \(slums\)](#)
 - [Environment and Urbanization Journal](#)
3. [Global Land Tool Network \(GLTN\)](#)
4. [Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing \(WIEGO\)](#)
5. [Slum Dwellers International \(SDI\)](#)
6. [African Centre for Cities](#)
 - [City Scapes Magazine](#)
7. [Catalytic Communities](#) : Rio de Janeiro based NGO and Think Tank working with Favelas in Brazil
8. [Mega Cities Project: Urbanization and Informality](#)
9. [Lincoln Institute of Land Policy](#)
10. [The Land Portal](#)
11. [LANDac](#)

The following questions cover a range of topics and complexities, offering a glimpse into the multifaceted nature of informal settlements. These sample questions can be adapted for different audience's needs or perspectives. They are intended to spark thoughtful discussions on various aspects of urban informality, from definitions and causes to policy approaches and global comparisons.

1. How would you define an informal settlement? Do you agree with the UN-Habitat definition? What are important characteristics from social, economic, and environmental perspectives? Compare and discuss.
2. Discuss the causes of informality. Where are informal settlements typically located and why?
3. Discuss the various policy approaches ranging from 'do-nothing' to Public Housing, Sites and Services, Tenure Security, Resettlement and Redevelopment, In-situ Upgrading, and Cities Without Slums. Drawing on the I2UD Digital Library resources and examples noted in this section, choose an approach and discuss the pros and cons.
4. How do informal settlements, which are often seen as temporary, evolve into long-term, densely populated neighborhoods over time? (1) What improvements can be made to enhance the quality of life for residents in these communities? (2) Suggest a strategy for transitioning from 'informal' to 'formal' settlements. (3) Consider that some residents may prefer to stay in their informal communities rather than relocate. Why might they choose to stay, and how can these reasons be incorporated into future planning and design?
5. Take a look at the I2UD [Informal Settlements Photo Gallery](#) and identify interesting features in the images of informal settlements from around the world. What do they have in common and what differences exist? Discuss what you see. What are the positive things you see in these communities? What are the negative things? How would you improve the living conditions?
6. How does informality challenge established urban planning norms? What are alternatives? For example: Propose a technological solution or propose a policy solution.
7. What human rights issues are related to informal housing? How is housing related to (a) a living wage (b) employment? What fundamental needs—such as daycare, transportation, schools, etc — are essential to supporting these connections and why?
8. What are the push (factors that encourage people to leave their home/community) and pull (factors that attract people to settle in a new community) elements that lead people to migrate? How do these factors contribute to the decision of individuals or families to move to urban areas? Are there specific events or trends that have exacerbated the growth of informal settlements in recent years?

Have these questions been useful in your classroom discussions? We would like to know!

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