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Learning from the Slums for the Development of Emerging Cities

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Part I
Introduction

Chapter 1
Slums and Precarity in Developing Countries

An Interdisciplinary Perspective Towards Innovative Forms of Urban Development

Jean-Claude Bolay, Jérôme Chenal, and Yves Pedrazzini

1.1 Of Slums and Men

Today, urbanisation is a global process that characterises the rapid development of a majority of emerging and developing countries (Cohen 2004), giving rise to important social, spatial and economic changes. In such national contexts, urban issues systematically couple with rural migration phenomena and increasing numbers of poor people living in precarious conditions, engendering informal living situations (housing conditions, employment, etc.), environmental contamination (water, soil, air and waste) and growing insecurity and vulnerability among the disadvantaged. However, informality should not be confused with poverty (Roy 2009; Gransow 2010); we may speak of growing precarity and urban impoverishment only when combined with other factors that result the deterioration of urban life.

The epitome of such trends, observed in all South countries, is the slum, an extreme urban form of social and residential precarity that has become emblematic of urban growth processes, the antithesis of sustainable, balanced urban development.

But slums should not be viewed merely as an icon of the "worst new world" (Davis 2006); they may also be a potential pool of solutions for a better urban future. Given decades of repeated failures and modest local improvements, it is time to rethink the "urban issue" by reconsidering the causes of precarity, their impact on inhabitants and, more generally, on urban form, now and in the future.

As such, slums could be the starting point for more modest but better targeted reflection on the urban future, the cornerstone of urban planning methodologies. Such rigorous analysis should incorporate the physical dimensions of urban development as well as its societal and environmental components. In this respect, the

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concept of precarity and its various social, economic, environmental and urbanistic dimensions can help us better evaluate the impact of the work of urban professionals and that of slum dwellers.

In this book we will try to redefine the nature of this multi-faceted problem, while focusing on the ways and means to qualify and quantify it. We will identify prospective tools that are capable of assessing and prioritizing issues in order to contemplate solutions to ensure acceptable living conditions for the poor of South cities and city-dwellers in general. We will also assess the role of urban actors as protectors and purveyors of public goods. Finally, we will design and propose the context for acting and implementing strategies for innovation, new policies and changes in practices.

With contributions by several authors, the book begins by recapping the various aspects of the urbanization of the world and growing insecurity for an ever-increasing number of people. Based on this, we developed a theoretical framework to show that slums are not on the margins of the contemporary urban process but rather are emblematic of it, especially in the global South. Urbanity, a prime factor of economic growth, is still closely tied to the pauperization of a large portion of the urban population and to the deterioration of their natural and built environment.

Based on a classification of different types of slums, we will then show both the diversity of each situation (through the analyses of 15 case studies that were freely explored by 19 authors and co-authors with different backgrounds) and the invariants that one finds in a cross reading. This comparison of global data, urban theory and case studies will ultimately provide an overall understanding of slums, and as such of urbanization – comprised both of demographic and economic growth *as well as* increasingly marked social disparities and territorial fragmentation – taking place on every continent. In the final analysis, this reflection will help us think differently about the urban now and address the serious issues facing many South and North city-dwellers alike.

1.2 Key Trends in Global Urbanisation

Roughly 2.6 billion people (UN 2011) currently live in urban areas of developing countries. According to United Nations forecasts (UN-Habitat 2003; UNFPA 2007, 2011), this figure could reach four billion within the next 25 years.[1] Today, it is estimated that more than one billion of these poverty-stricken urban dwellers live in slums (Watson 2009; Bolay 2006; Davis 2006; Neuwirth 2005). The world is urbanizing inexorably, and this trend, according to demographers, is essentially taking place in emerging and developing countries, namely in Asia and Africa, and in Latin America to a lesser extent. This phenomenon is coupled with a shift in poverty that,

[1] According to the UN: *World Urbanization Prospects*: *The 2011 Revision*, the urban population could reach 4,231,404 in less developed regions by 2035.

although still mainly a feature of rural populations – who constitute 75 % of the world's poor – is now increasing in urban areas (Ravallion et al. 2007).

Additionally, a majority of the world's 3.6 billion city dwellers still live in small or medium-sized urban agglomerations. In developing countries the urban population represented 46.5 % of the whole population (52.1 % worldwide) in 2011. Of those, 16 % lived in megalopolises of more than 5 million inhabitants, 24 % in metropolises of 1–5 million inhabitants, 9.4 % in agglomerations of 500,000 to 1 million inhabitants, and 50.5 % in cities of less than 500,000 (United Nations, Population Division 2007, 2011). Even though the focus tends to be on metropolises and larger cities (Henderson 2002), the majority of urban issues will require addressing in urban contexts of all kinds, regardless of their size and complexity in terms of space, population and social organization.

The United Nations has defined five key points in the effort for slum-free urban development: access to water, sanitation, security of land tenure (Durand-Lasserve and Royston 2002), sustainable housing and sufficient living space. The UN report on the occasion of the 2005 New York summit stated that the implementation of these points is as yet to be confirmed: while the percentage of people in developing countries with access to drinking water rose from 71 % in 1990 to 87 % in 2010 (WHO 2010), 39 % of the world's population still live without improved sanitation facilities. Nonetheless, the number of slums mushroomed in this same period. The number of poverty-stricken city dwellers was estimated at 662 million in 1990, and 998 million in 2007. According to the UN, this figure will reach 1.4 billion by 2020 (UN-HABITAT 2007), and possibly 2 billion by 2030 (UN-HABITAT 2003). Clearly this definition of urban precarity is unsatisfactory, as it focuses only on the more technical dimensions of the phenomenon without addressing the political, economic and social conditions underlying it. However, it allows us to determine the scale of the phenomenon and the massive investments necessary to cope with it. In short, one may say that urban precarity extends beyond slums and material living conditions. We must continually remind ourselves that slum dwellers must deal with poverty on a daily basis. Thus, urban planning strategies should be designed to act on their behalf.

This is confirmed by DFID (2007), which stressed that the challenges of sustainable and acceptable urbanization from a social and political standpoint are a priority of an unprecedented magnitude in view of what is promoted by the United Nations.

A third of the world's urban population – one billion individuals – live in precarious conditions, while 94 % of slum dwellers live in developing countries. Africa and Asia will be predominantly urban by 2030 (REF); 72 % of urban populations in Africa live in extremely poor conditions. This figure rises to 80 % in the poorest regions of the world. Cities in developing countries will absorb 95 % of the world's urban growth over the next two decades. Today, 560 million city dwellers have no access to sanitation. UN figures regarding this point (UN-HABITAT 2008) show that this demographic expansion varies greatly depending on the world region. In 2010, roughly 32.7 % of the world urban population – 61.7 % of the sub-Saharan population in Africa, 35 % in Southern Asia, 31 % in Southeast Asia, 23 % in Latin America and the Caribbean and 13.3 % in North Africa – lived in slums.

Under these conditions, cities in developing countries distinguish themselves more in their shortcomings and weaknesses than in their ability to respond to the needs of their inhabitants. Local authorities, lacking a global vision and the tools necessary to manage the city, are ill-prepared to confront these challenges. Moreover, they often only address issues relative to emergency land-use planning (e.g. natural disasters, public events, and short-term political interests) in a vote-catching, partisan aim. In such a perspective, financially and fiscally lucrative central business districts, upscale residential areas – in short, that which benefits the wealthier segments of urban society (Paquot et al. 2000, 2006) – are given precedence.

In view of this, the poor have no choice but to take their destiny into their own hands, beyond legal and regulatory contingencies and without basic amenities (water, electricity, housing, transportation, etc.) This dichotomy between public policy and social practices undermines long-term planning attempts (Pedrazzini et al. 2005) and engenders recurring problems from one continent to another:

- The responsibilities of urban players are poorly-defined and have no true and coherent impact in the field;
- Underprivileged neighbourhoods are largely isolated from the city centre and are largely excluded from public strategies aimed at the provision of infrastructure and services;
- The public authorities' inability to meet the needs of the poor results in increased informal land use, sub-standard housing and the degradation of natural resources (water, air, soil);
- The increase of informal social and economic practices is a current response to poverty, sometimes reaching as far as illegality or even violent criminality.

These contradictions result in the following patterns:

- Standard urban planning models that are ill-adapted to the situations encountered in rapidly-growing cities in developing countries,
- Shortcomings in planning processes, which in turn result in the fragmentation of the urban territory; strong disparities in terms of access to public services and a lack of transparency in the definition of priorities and the beneficiaries,
- Increasing environmental contamination and natural risks that further weaken the urban base for the poor.
- The victims of policy shortcomings held responsible for urban disorder.

1.3 Precarity and Slums: Strategies and Actions

Researchers and cooperation agencies are struggling to find common strategies and actions to upgrade slums. For author Mike Davis (2006), although slums are the most prominent feature of contemporary urbanization, he focuses instead on their consequences, including violence, insecurity, informality and poverty. In his opinion, the latter are the result of the economic power struggles of a globalised world

(Davis 2006, 2004), hence ignoring the great potential of these particular popular urban cultures (Agier 1999; Pedrazzini 2005). Conversely, Alan Gilbert denounces the stigmatizing terminology surrounding the dangerous nature of slums, their populations, crime, poverty, disease, etc. Some authors overlook the heterogeneous nature of precarious neighbourhoods – more accurately expressed with terms such as informal housing, irregular settlements, spontaneous shelter or self-help housing (Gilbert 2009, 2007) – and the many problems present in them. However, mere terminology should not distract us from the extreme living conditions of inhabitants in poor South cities. The question is, which concepts and terminology offers a better understanding of these dynamics (Roy 2011) and can the latter be addressed from both an intellectual and operational viewpoint?

Urban precarity is multi-faceted; it is social, economic and material. Perhaps the most symbolic manifestation of the latter is housing, which is generally self-built from scrap or handmade materials, and often constructed without technical expertise. These makeshift dwellings lack water, electricity and gas supply, as well as sewage systems. By sheer force of numbers, entire neighbourhoods – often in the outskirts of urban centres or areas deemed dangerous or polluted – become notorious slums. Bernard Granotier, who coined the expression "the planet of slums," already observed in 1980 the increasing urbanisation that continues today. In the urban integration process, slums, which are part of the urban context, can be evaluated from a construction and environmental standpoint that is less than desirable in sanitary and legal terms. At the same time, slums are also community-based; they are places of social recognition and identification for rural migrants.

A twofold approach is needed to address the social conditions that create slums, and to improve material, legal and infrastructural conditions for inhabitants with no other option (Pedrazzini et al. 2005).

The trans-planetary slum phenomenon merits further analysis. It is, as Jacques Véron (2008) said, one of the contemporary impacts of the "urbanization of the world," and one of the first signs of the limits of "city" as a model for a modern, more democratic human society. Much more than this, slums are also the sign of urban poverty and, more importantly, social disparities and inequalities at the territorial level. Although not all poor city-dwellers live in slums, they nonetheless embody the material and urban precarity, marginality and vulnerability of a large segment of the urban population, and have an important impact on urban organisation now and for future urbanization prospects.

The longstanding remit of UN-Habitat is to define parameters in order to analyse, assess and quantify the extent and nature of slums. Five key indicators for international benchmarking have thus been identified: access to water; access to sanitation; structural quality of housing; overcrowding and high density; and security of tenure. These indicators clearly highlight the shortcomings of such neighbourhoods relative to the objective quality standards urban planners and experts wish to implement in the fight against prevailing living conditions. We feel it would be useful to add three additional dimensions. The first concerns local amenities (schools, health centres, markets, etc.); the second relates to access to public transport (existing bus lines, trams and other state and/or privately-run transport modes);

the third has to do with the economic power of the informal sector (De Soto 1987). Roy and Alsayyad (2003) think of urban informality as an organizing urban logic that is organized in distinct sectors. During a UN workshop on the latter issue, Mboup (2004) showed the relative significance of the individual identification parameters for slums on a global level: lack of secure tenure = 70 %; lack of sustainable housing = 65 %; lack of sufficient living space = 60 %; lack of improved sanitation = 50 %; lack of clean water = 20 %. Based on the impact of climate change as regards the vulnerability of poor urban-dwellers in Latin America, researchers from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IIED) combined these criteria with several other parameters, including locations most exposed to hazards (flooding or landslides), locations lacking infrastructure to reduce risk and lack of knowledge, capacities and opportunities to take measures to limit impacts (Hardoy and Pandiella 2009).

1.4 Urban Regeneration Policies and Projects: The Impact on Poverty?

The urban population has been increasing across developing countries for decades (Montgomery et al. 2003). The idea that increasing precarity of urban settlements results in the impoverishment of urban populations can be summed up with what Potsdam Institute researchers labelled the "favela syndrome" in the early 2000s (Kropp et al. 2001). Nevertheless, such a diagnosis, informed by numerous material, natural and socioeconomic indicators, does not allow us to identify trends over time, highlight the contradictions between residential practices, social rationales and public policies, or outline lasting solutions that focus on the well-being of urban population.

New avenues of reflection need to be explored in order to go beyond:

- exclusively sectorial, technology-based or territorial approaches in which a "bright future" consisting of standpipes and clean toilets is reinvented in all parts of all third world cities.
- millenarian or global visions that hide the profound contradictions of contemporary societies behind the fallacious political and financial intentions of governments and international organisations, which nonetheless are occasionally genuinely concerned by the plight of the poor.

In light of these worrying developments, local, national and international policies have gradually changed:

- The initial, repressive approach long aimed at eliminating slums and enforcing urban regimenting of the poor – i.e. migrants and other dangerous populations – into manufacturing and productive cohorts.
- For almost 30 years the tendency toward assimilation of the urban masses, for whom an enabling State provides services and counsel, is forcing the poor to

become small businessmen in charge of their own destinies and of present and future urban land development.

Michelon (2010) summarizes these developments, which range from the implementation of urban policies in sub-Saharan Africa targeting "simplified actions in an increasingly complex institutional reference landscape" to the awareness of the need to improve living conditions for slum-dwellers in the 1970s, to more inclusive urban renewal projects in the 1980s. All of this must be read against the backdrop of institutional reforms, the decentralisation of power and structural adjustments. Such trends, which can also be observed in Asia and Latin America, should not overshadow the ongoing process of destruction and expulsion. Between 2000 and 2002, for instance, 6.7 million people around the world were evicted from their homes (Bolay 2011).

Above all slums are the physical symbol of contemporary cities, characterized – in terms of housing and the surrounding environment – by material deficiency, which gives rise to their precarious and insalubrious nature. Slums are both a material and architectural reality, inherent to each collective dwelling, and an urban and ecological environment. Yet, beyond their structural instability, slums are also a breeding ground for social advocacy, economic innovation and urban adaptability, thus becoming an environment to be renewed for its inhabitants, a living space to be improved and an opportunity for greater urban coherency.

Regarding territorial organisation, standard urban planning principles dictate land use, the implementation of infrastructures and the creation of technical services and networks that are essential to community life in order to meet a comprehensive goal set out by the relevant authority. This is then translated physically, upon which individuals may enjoy occupancy. In slums, however, this technocratic and linear rationale is undermined by the social practices of the poor who, faced with neglect by the public authorities, attempt to solve urgent issues using their own means, on a scale relative to how they envisage the problem (i.e. the parcel, the house, the neighbourhood). They do not take into account other levels of urban intervention (i.e. agglomeration, administrative territory, urbanized area, metropolis, rural/urban region, etc.).

For users, the immediate consequences are a low-quality built environment with insufficient infrastructure, amenities and services and polymorphous pollution of the natural environment; for urban planners, they are the impossibility of applying standard models and the need to recreate new forms of land use based on pre-existing constraints. As Watson (2009) stated, "the planning in many parts of the global South has been strongly informed by planning traditions which emerged in other parts of the world in response to urban conditions very particular to an earlier time and context." Robinson (2011) more specifically analyses current urban studies, recalling that the North-American planning model provides a reference regardless of the location. She uses the work of de Boeck and Plissart on Kinshasa (2006) as a counter example to show that anthropological research can lead to wide-ranging theoretical developments on urban production and help in highlighting the role played by inhabitants.

In terms of urban management, this results in two conflicting rationales of design and intervention. This first focuses on the long-term and overall planning process at the spatial and technical level. The second is based on social urgency and site occupancy by users to meet family and specific community needs.

Countless slum upgrading projects have been implemented worldwide (Mukhija 2001), often under the aegis of external development agencies (NGOs and international organisations) or local authorities (sometimes under the pressure of grassroots associations, often with the support of foreign bilateral and/or multilateral donors). Currently, Cities Alliance (Cities without slums),[2] an international coalition of World Bank agencies, the European Union, local and national authorities, NGOs and slum associations (Cities Alliance 2011), is one of the main global initiatives in this area, with more than a hundred projects launched on various continents beginning in the 2000s through two programs: city development strategy and slum upgrading, with investments of tens to several hundred thousand dollars per project. In its 10 years of existence, some 247 projects have been initiated, with an investment of about 112 million dollars.[3] Assessing three major slum upgrading operations successfully conducted by the World Bank in the 1990s, Werlin (1999) notes that, several years after the completion of works,[4] most project goals were not met in terms of material and long-term sustainability, cost overruns, lack of maintenance, delays in land ownership regularization and conflicts among community beneficiaries. Numerous examples confirm this. For example, an MIT website reports on 30 cases ongoing over the past 20 years, analysing the goals, investments, achievements, and strengths and weaknesses of individual projects.[5] Imparato and Ruster (2003) have also assessed five programmes implemented in Latin America (Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and Peru) for the World Bank, with particular attention to slum upgrading and community participation. In the findings of their comparative analysis, they state that: "a slum upgrading program is not a collection of technical actions to be performed independently of each other. It is an integrated and comprehensive intervention aimed at improving the physical characteristics of a neighbourhood and its inhabitants' quality of life." In order to have a significant impact, the tools used must be applied to the urban agglomeration as a whole. Moreover, the destitute do not see themselves as victims of society but rather as active, dynamic, creative partners. Turkstra and Raithelhuber (2004), in their remarks on the GIS (Geographic Information Systems) monitoring of two slums in Nairobi and Addis Ababa, emphasize the need for action plans, not only on a sectoral level but also by working jointly with the various players active in underprivileged neighbourhoods.

All this brings us to a paradigm change, now taken up by the United Nations who, like all advocates of urban rehabilitation, denounce strictly technical and material operations in favour of integrated, multi-dimensional operations that

[2] http://www.citiesalliance.org/ca/

[3] http://www.citiesalliance.org/ca/sites/citiesalliance.org/files/Anual_Reports/AR2010_FullText.pdf. In medium terms, it represents an individual investment of 450,000 US dollars per project.

[4] Calcutta, 428 million US$; Jakarta, 353; Manila, 280.

[5] http://web.mit.edu/urbanupgrading/upgrading/case-examples/index.html

respond to the housing and environmental concerns of the people, who desire a healthy, safe and stable built environment, and the global urban integration issues of economically- and socially-marginalised populations. As such, inhabitants become key players in urban transformation (UN-HABITAT 2009; Bolay 2006). In an extensive quantitative analysis based on UN data regarding approximately one million slum inhabitants worldwide, Arimah (2010) concludes that the prevalence of slums is directly linked to the macroeconomic environment, and therefore decreases with increased income. This form of urban precarity is obviously highly dependent on the migratory flows that govern South cities and the legal and regulatory framework establishing the conditions of land and property ownership.

A comprehensive overview of what is being done today to rehabilitate slums worldwide (UN-HABITAT 2010; Brockman 2009) can help us pinpoint some of the most symptomatic features that should be contemplated in the future.

To begin, the vast majority of slum upgrading operations fall outside of local and national government budgets. Acting on structural issues on an ad hoc basis is undoubtedly the most dangerous way of doing so, regardless of the seeming quality of the immediate results.

Secondly, when comparing the investments required to successfully run a city both tangibly and intangibly, the funds earmarked for slum upgrading are almost always quite modest and of limited duration. Only a few exceptions, now considered historical examples, offset this trend. Moreover, rarely are these operations then incorporated in the city's typical management practices, with maintenance and monitoring budgets.

The third finding addresses the changes observed in problem-solving. Today, almost all projects involve multiple stakeholders and contemplate multiple issues, including housing, infrastructure, amenities, economic advancement and social involvement. However, this participatory approach is not without flaws: shortcomings often include political pressure, deficient financial mechanisms, red tape and delays in upgrading works.

Finally, over the past decades, project development increasingly incorporates the demands of inhabitants voiced during consultation processes. It also takes into account basic data, such as financial capacity, achievements, costs, the poor populations' social accessibility to the city and amenities.

These changes are fundamental; they do not merely reflect the built environment, but also the various players involved, and inhabitants in particular. They may foster or hinder in-depth understanding of projects, their integration in a more comprehensive vision of urban and regional development and their adoption by city-dwellers in the short and especially long terms, as public goods for which they are responsible.

1.5 From Physical and Social Poverty to Urban Planning

A global overview of issues relative to cities – poverty, precarity, vulnerability, social disparities and territorial inequalities – that reflect major fragmentation spatially and socially speaking combine in what is known as a "slum." A slum, in short, is an urban area that is rarely considered in its own right by urban planning and yet is symptomatic of urban growth, as it mainly emerges in developing countries. Regardless of how the phenomenon is analysed or assessed, the fact remains that this reality is spread both demographically and geographically. This is why we felt it was necessary to consider the long-term perspective, and thus chose four case studies over the last 25 years. This approach reflects how we feel urban research should be done, as well as the links between the observation of reality, the analysis of factors generating social, environmental and material precarity of an ever-growing number of poor urban dwellers and the recommendations given to urban players to promote efficient land-use and urban planning to support the greatest number of people.

Synthesis is only meaningful if we incorporate two key aspects of urban development: first, the knowledge that solving urban issues requires a multi-level approach, starting from the local level, (i.e. the neighbourhood, where inhabitants use survival strategies) to the meso-level of the urban agglomeration (to understand the territorial policies established by local authorities and to analyse their application) and finally to the regional and national levels (to estimate the impact both in terms of human migrations and environmental degradation beyond city limits (Bolay and Rabinovich 2004). Secondly, we must be attentive to multi-stakeholder modes of governance, the social conflicts that prevail in such a context and existing tensions among political decision-makers, inhabitants and sectoral interest groups.

In her reflection on "refocusing urban planning on the Globe's central urban issues," Watson (2009) makes several comments that could be used to explore new avenues for planning based on the poor, inadequately-housed city-dweller majority in the global South. This reminds us that "approaches to planning which have originated in the global North are frequently based on assumptions regarding urban contexts which do not hold elsewhere in the world; secondly that the global demographic transition, whereby Southern cities and their growth dynamics are now the dominant urban reality, requires that planning turns its attention to these kinds of issues; thirdly, that the sharp divide in these cities between an increasingly informalised and marginalised population and techno-managerial and marked-oriented systems of government gives rise to a conflict of rationalities" (Watson 2009).

Regardless of its demographic or territorial characteristics, its history or socio-political specificities, urban environments can only be understood in a diachronic perspective that sheds light on the different dimensions shaping its present and future, in the long term and relative to other cities.

Many cities lack financial resources to invest in the infrastructure, facilities, networks and housing needed to solve urban integration problems (Freire 2006). However, this is by no means the only obstacle facing sustainable urban development.

According to Hasan et al. (2005), effectively promoting alternatives by mobilising stakeholders at the national and, more importantly, the local level is a key priority. Instead of being "the problem," the poor should be seen as active members in a partnership in the fight against poverty. However, their skills and potential are often not recognised, and thus can rarely be drawn on. Local authorities play a crucial role in strategies to upgrade urban living conditions and, to a greater or lesser extent, establish land use and allocation policies for the poor. Moreover, these same authorities may also choose whether to demolish or rehabilitate a slum, and may or may not participate in decisions regarding poor areas in cooperation grassroots associations. Local and international NGOs, which assist these communities and help them negotiate with urban authorities, are also important actors. Although negotiation strategies are varied and numerous, local authorities often have trouble implementing them, as the latter are short of material and human resources. Moreover, these options may interfere with the interests of influential economic stakeholders, who often lack the genuine political will to improve slum dwellers' living conditions and occasionally succumb to corruption. From this perspective, urban planning is a multidisciplinary field that uses a variety of disciplines and specializations to address urban issues in a comprehensive manner (Fischler 2011).

Urban development must be considered at once intramurally, as part of a strategy to define a framework that includes general guidelines and priority actions to facilitate urban organization (Josse and Vauquelin 2010), and in connection with the regional and national context.

Although the debate on urban planning in the global South began long ago (Balbo 1993; Choguill 1994), it should be fuelled today by current, up-to-date observations of poorly-adapted models, an increase in precarious housing, the urbanization of poverty and informality as a mode of urban socio-economic integration (Roy 2005). Everything points to the fact that planning practices in global South countries have not reaped the benefits potentially expected from the many skills and experts who were brought together to set things right. Thus, the need to rethink the issue rather than adopt misguided solutions that, in any case, will not yield the long-awaited results. It is crucial to assess actual circumstances, not only on an urban and architectural level, but also from a social, economic and institutional viewpoint. It is clearly necessary to define what we mean by urban planning, social participation, participatory approaches, poverty (Baker and Schuler 2004) and all the other terms we use without conceptual references, especially when talking about slums.

Thus should we focus on what the most pressing issues for cities in the global South – namely the poor and slums – to design comprehensive urban development plans geared both at improving living standards (employment, health and education, to name but a few) and rehabilitating the residential environment (housing, infrastructure, local amenities and other aspects of the built environment). However, the disparate rationales of the various players (public authorities, economic stakeholders, inhabitants, community associations, etc.) are at times antagonistic and often conflicting. Additionally, we must breathe new life into design, urban planning, and construction methods, developing plans that are tailored to the needs of the players

involved based on the resources available – plans that are realistic but do not lack ambition, leaving ample room for creativity when such projects are actually implemented in the field. Finally, we must bear in mind that these issues – though concentrated in global South cities whose contexts of strong demographic growth and insufficient financial resources are unique – but may also be applied to North cities, which face increasingly similar challenges (economic competition, poverty, social exclusion, territorial fragmentation and climate change) (Garau 2009). Urban development must be understood from a historical perspective, and planning must be adapted to local and regional contexts to foster greater rationality, efficiency and coherency. What we know as "slum" must change in order to become another part of the urban world from which scientists, politicians and humanity as a whole could learn a great deal.

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Part II
Spatial Typology of Slums: Confronting the Dogmatic and the Obvious