

# Editorial: The social and political basis for citizen action on urban poverty reduction

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The diverse papers in this issue share one concern – the means by which low-income urban dwellers can get their needs addressed. But for most authors, the focus is not on the role of governments or aid agencies and development banks or international NGOs but on the role of the urban poor groups themselves. The main reason for this is that conventional approaches to poverty reduction – state-managed, professionally directed and sometimes funded by international donors – have not met the needs of large sections of the urban population. This can be seen in the very large number of urban dwellers who live in poverty. For instance, there are few cities in low- and middle-income nations that do not have large sections of their population living in informal settlements lacking good quality infrastructure and services. It is also evident in the very large deficit in provision for, for instance, water and sanitation<sup>(1)</sup> and in the high levels of infant and child mortality among urban populations in many nations.<sup>(2)</sup> More than a third of the urban population in low- and middle-income nations live in poor quality, overcrowded and usually insecure housing,<sup>(3)</sup> lacking adequate provision for basic services. Most of this housing is built by urban poor households, outside formal rules and regulations, usually without legal tenure and without financial support from formal organizations. In effect, in most low- and middle-income nations, state policies – whether or not supported by aid agencies and development banks – have had little or no success in addressing this. This is the case even in well-established democracies, where democratic pressures might have been expected to address these issues. It is also the case in cities and nations with rapidly growing economies.<sup>(4)</sup> While the proportion of the urban population living in poverty and lacking basic

services varies considerably from nation to nation, as does the extent of the deficit in services, even in successful middle-income nations, urban poverty is still a serious problem affecting large numbers of individuals and households.<sup>(5)</sup>

Thus, most of these papers are interested in direct attempts by the urban poor to address their needs through collective processes and activities. For some papers, the focus is on citizen

**Acknowledgement: We are grateful to Graham Bowden for his help with the graphics and to Ernesto Jose Lopez for his help in preparing the Book Notes.**

1. UN-HABITAT (2003), *Water and Sanitation in the World's Cities: Local Action for Global Goals*, Earthscan, London.

2. Satterthwaite, David (2007), "In pursuit of a healthy urban environment in low- and middle-income nations", in Peter J Marcotullio and Gordon McGranahan (editors), *Scaling Urban Environmental Challenges: From Local to Global and Back*, Earthscan Publications, London, pages 69–105.

3. This is drawn from an estimate in UN-HABITAT (2008), *State of the World's Cities 2008/9*, UN-HABITAT, Nairobi. It is probably an underestimate – there are no accurate figures on the proportion of urban dwellers living in poor quality housing in most nations. Even though reference is often made to the problem of people living in poverty, the definitions of poverty used for most measurements do not take into account housing conditions or access to services. In addition, in most nations in Africa and Asia, the scale and depth of urban poverty is underestimated as a result of making inadequate allowance for non-food costs, including housing costs, when setting poverty lines. See Satterthwaite, David (2004), "The underestimation of urban poverty in low- and middle-income nations", *Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas Series, Working Paper 14*, IIED, London, 69 pages. Applying the US\$ 1 a day poverty line to urban areas also greatly underestimates both its scale and depth in many nations, because the income needed to avoid deprivation is much higher than this in most of these nations' cities.

4. See, for instance, Solinger, Dorothy J (2006), "The creation of a new underclass in China and its implications", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 18, No 1, April, pages 177–194.

5. See the high proportion of the urban population with below poverty line incomes in many middle-income nations noted in Satterthwaite (2004), see reference 3. Many are from Latin American nations, where poverty lines make more allowance for the costs of housing and other non-food needs than most poverty lines used in Africa and Asia.

organization and action by low-income groups, independent of the state. For others, it is citizen organization and action to make demands on the state; when this is done by urban poor groups, sometimes it is to obtain something (new housing, support for upgrading existing housing with services, tenure of land they occupy), sometimes it is to prevent something (typically, eviction from their homes). Some papers recognize the value of a combination of these approaches – with urban poor organizations using autonomous action to demonstrate to governments and aid agencies what they are capable of. Most papers consider how low-income groups organize to take action and make demands, especially the means to allow them to have influence (which usually involves mass organization and collective political action). There is also an interest in how they mobilize, how they seek to be representative of and accountable to their members – and how they plan and act, and build alliances. In some papers, there is an interest in how the state responds.

## II. URBAN CONTEXTS

Obviously, urban contexts influence what is needed, what citizens can do and how state agencies respond. Urban areas, by concentrating people, provide the physical geography that helps urban poor groups develop collective organizations. These collective organizations may focus on addressing particular local needs. Or they may come together to become movements.<sup>6</sup> But urban concentrations often create land markets that exclude low-income groups from all but the more dangerous and worst-located sites. Getting access to land for housing or getting tenure of land already occupied usually requires collective organization and action. So too does getting access to services. Urban concentration also makes the need for infrastructure more acute (large concentrations of households need water and also generate large volumes of household and human wastes that have to be disposed of). There are also limits on what collective action can do, independent of the state; there is often no water source locally that can be tapped (or where local groundwater is contaminated), and a neighbourhood surrounded by other urban communities has nowhere to dispose of its solid and liquid wastes, or channel storm and surface run-off. Cities need larger systems of trunk

infrastructure for water, sanitation, drainage and roads, which community organizations cannot construct.

Urban centres also mean close physical proximity between citizens and local governments, and this helps explain examples of more participatory and accountable urban governments in some nations.<sup>7</sup> But in most nations, city and municipal governments lack the fiscal and institutional base to meet citizens' needs. In addition, physical proximity is no advantage for urban poor groups when city authorities view them or their settlements as constraints on the city's development and capacity to attract new investment.

Urban concentration can also serve state bodies that repress these organizations or their demands, or manage them in ways that diffuse their influence and effectiveness. Urban areas also concentrate and make visible both absolute poverty and inequality. Inequality becomes particularly visible in cities with sustained economic success but where local governments have proved incapable or unwilling to address the housing and basic service needs of their growing populations. Such cities also serve as a reminder of how rapid economic growth does **not** necessarily deliver benefits for much of their population; indeed, it can contribute considerably to their impoverishment if city governments refuse to make provision for the housing, infrastructure and services of their lower-income population, and as the city's development of infrastructure and sites for new investments leads to numerous evictions. This also serves as a reminder of how much urban poverty reduction depends on changes in the relationships between the urban poor and city or municipal governments. Improved living conditions depend on state action and investment.

6. See Hasan, Arif (2007), "The Urban Resource Centre, Karachi", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 19, No 1, April, pages 275–292 for an example of a centre that supports and services coalition building to fight evictions and other anti-poor measures.

7. Many papers in this journal have recorded such examples – see, for instance, the journal's special issue on participatory governance (Vol 16, No 1, April 2004); also Velasquez, Luz Stella (1998), "Agenda 21: a form of joint environmental management in Manizales, Colombia", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 10, No 2, October, pages 9–36; and López Follegatti, Jose Luis (1999), "Ilo: a city in transformation", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 11, No 2, October, pages 181–202. The next issue of *Environment and Urbanization* (Vol 21, No 1, April 2009) will include interviews with progressive mayors.

There is also the issue of how urban contexts have changed over the last few decades, perhaps especially the dramatic reductions in the proportions of the urban labour force working in formal enterprises and able to be members of trade unions. This obviously means far less scope for trade unions to be the collective organizations through which the urban poor can organize and make demands. It also means no national collective body that represents workers and that can negotiate on wage levels and working conditions. The casualization and informalization of the labour force may help to explain why most organizations of the urban poor are constructed around collective consumption needs rather than around workplace-based demands. Higher and more stable incomes are obviously a priority for all low-income groups, but the means by which collective organization can address this are not evident. The state cannot influence income levels in economies where almost all low-income groups work in the informal economy; it may also have little influence on this even when a significant proportion work in the formal sector. But it can deliver on access to land for housing, land tenure, infrastructure and services.

### III. THE MEANS BY WHICH URBAN POOR GROUPS GET THEIR NEEDS ADDRESSED

Obviously, the form that citizen action takes will be influenced by the form and power of the state. One key question here is what stance by the urban poor will be most effective in getting their needs addressed and avoiding repressive actions by the state? Papers in this issue look at three stances, namely autonomous action, claim making and co-production.

Some papers consider the possibilities for direct community action – i.e. action that is autonomous of the state – and the constraints. Saad Yahya's paper considers the support provided to housing, schools, health centres and other urban facilities in East Africa that have been financed by endowments known as *wakfs*, created by citizens. The paper by Kate Parizeau, Virginia Maclaren and Lay Chanthy shows both the potential and the limitations of community-based collective action by low-income households for managing household waste. It discusses different ways of providing services in low-income communities in Siem Reap (Cambodia) that are not served by

the official municipal waste collecting services. It considers in some detail different models of provision and service standards, seeking to combine good quality services with capital and running costs that very low-income households can afford. Here, as in other case studies, organizing and funding the actual collection of waste is less problematic than organizing (and paying for) the secondary collection through which the collected wastes are taken to the dumpsite.<sup>(8)</sup> Diana Mitlin's paper also describes many examples of autonomous action by organizations of the urban poor, but here the interest is in using these to develop a productive partnership with the state, as discussed in more detail in the next section.

Citizen groups often focus on making demands or claims on the state. The paper by Nicola Banks describes the work of the Basti Basheer Odhikar Surakha Committee (BOSC) that was founded in 2000 to provide the means by which the urban poor could put pressure on city and ward governments – and go beyond the conventional confrontational protests that had previously been the means by which the poor had sought to influence government. BOSC has brought benefits to some informal settlements and has worked well with some ward commissioners; women have also commented on how they appreciated the BOSC committees that have allowed them to participate; but BOSC's impact is limited by the weakness of the ward and city government.

Many of the papers note how little the conventional democratic processes deliver for the urban poor, although democracies generally provide far more scope for urban poor organizations to organize, to make claims and to protest. In part, as Banks points out for Dhaka, this is related to how little local politicians and civil servants within each district and city can deliver – because they lack the power, funding and revenue-raising capacity. In part, it is related to the difficulty that urban poor groups have to hold them to account – as discussions with women in one ward of Dhaka noted: "*Without this vote we have no importance to them. Only during election times do they come and seek our votes...*"<sup>(9)</sup> As discussed in more detail below, clientelism

8. See Anand, P B (1999), "Waste management in Madras revisited", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 11, No 2, October, pages 161–176.

9. See the paper by Nicola Banks in this issue.

and bureaucratic responses limit the extent to which the state delivers appropriate responses.

Of course, one of the limits of conventional democratic structures is the extent to which non-poor groups, including middle- and upper-income groups, know how to organize to get their demands met. The paper by Isa Baud and Navtej Nainan discusses how the increasingly active role of middle-class groups is expanding their political and public space, including developing forms of cooperation with local governments that often excludes “unwanted people.”<sup>(10)</sup>

The fact that urban poor groups have very little “market” power, and often limited possibilities as individuals or households of getting state entitlements, makes collective organization the only means of increasing their power. But in many locations and settlements, it is difficult to get the necessary consensus for collective organizations because of diversity among the urban poor in (among other things) political allegiances and ethnic ties. It is not uncommon for there to be language barriers or religious barriers to collective organization. In India, there are also all the divisions created by caste. Charlotte Lemanski’s paper describes a large-scale housing programme in Cape Town that provided the inhabitants with much improved housing, but within a process over which they had no influence. The diversity among those brought together for the first time in terms of urban experience, language and colour inhibited the development of an organization representing the residents and the developers, and government staff did little to facilitate this; indeed, the developers exploited divisions in the community to allow them to build rapidly. This case study is also a reminder of the difficulties that urban poor groups so often have with professionals.

Another key issue is how the state responds to urban poor organizations and how this affects these organizations.<sup>(11)</sup> The state’s response to citizen demands may be authoritarian, with strong repression of any protest or demonstration (especially where these are deemed to be illegal).<sup>(12)</sup> At its most extreme, the state organizes or supports murder, unlawful arrest and torture for individuals as a means of controlling such organizations. There are often authoritarian responses within democratic states – for instance, in responses to illegal land occupation or in the means by which city development plans are implemented as

large-scale evictions of urban poor settlements clear space for infrastructure or commercial developments. Or the state’s response may be bureaucratic, requiring urban poor organizations to go through conventional bureaucratic channels to make demands and access entitlements – or protest against unfair treatment. The informal nature of the homes, settlements and livelihoods of many of the urban poor often makes it difficult or impossible for them to use such measures – for instance, getting some entitlement may depend on living in a legal settlement or having a legal address or producing documents such as birth certificates, which they do not have. Such bureaucratic responses discriminate against those who do not fit within formal views of entitlements, and proof of such entitlements, and they may also include civil servants’ hostility to the poor.<sup>(13)</sup> Or the state may set limits on who gets entitlements; the paper by Hyun Bang Shin shows the difficulties faced by tenants in Seoul of getting alternative accommodation, as the areas in which they lived were cleared and then redeveloped. Alternatively, the state’s response may be to use clientelism to pre-empt the potential of community organizations or larger collective organizations or social movements, to negotiate changes in public policies. This can be achieved by politicians developing relations with leaders that allow these leaders to “deliver” something to their organization or movement (or simply co-opt community leaders through, for instance, bringing them onto the government

10. This is also an issue discussed in Gautam Bhan’s paper “This is no longer the city I once knew; evictions, the urban poor and the right to the city in millennial Delhi”, to be published in Vol 21, No 1 in April 2009. This describes how the courts and public interest litigation in India often served the interests of the urban poor in the late 1970s and early 1980s, but now serve middle- and upper-income groups and help to criminalize the homes and sources of livelihoods for large sections of the urban poor.

11. Mitlin, Diana (2006), “The role of collective action and urban social movements in reducing chronic urban poverty”, Working paper No 64, Chronic Poverty Research Centre, Manchester University, Manchester.

12. The paper by Wael Salah Fahmi on “Bloggers’ street movement and the right to the city; (re)claiming Cairo’s real and virtual spaces of freedom”, to be published in Vol 21, No 1 in April 2009, discusses the way in which bloggers in Egypt have created a new geography of protest, both virtual (on the web) and physical (through the organization of meetings and street protests).

13. See, for instance, Sabry, Sarah (2005), “The social aid and assistance programme of the government of Egypt: a critical review”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 17, No 2, October, pages 27–42.

payroll).<sup>(14)</sup> See, for instance, the *mastaans* in low-income settlements in Dhaka, who have a role that is somewhere between that of a local strongman and a leader, an intermediary between local government and the population, and a vote mobilizer.<sup>(15)</sup>

In most cities, the state's position is a complex (and often changing) mix of these responses. Local government reforms such as those associated with participatory budgeting have sought to make the relations between the state and citizens (including the urban poor) more transparent and direct. If participatory budgeting allows each district within the city to influence public investments there, so it also acts as an incentive for new neighbourhood associations to emerge and for older ones to broaden their membership base.<sup>(16)</sup>

One aspect of pro-poor political change in urban areas is the space made by politicians (including mayors) or senior civil servants for urban poor groups, and/or the efforts to work directly with them.<sup>(17)</sup> The next issue of *Environment and Urbanization* (Vol 21, No 1, April 2009) includes interviews with mayors who have done this, including interviews with the Mayor of Rosario (Argentina), Roberto Miguel Lifshitz, and various mayors from Colombia. Certainly, decentralization and the return to democracy, or strengthening of local democracy over the last 20 years, have provided space for the election of many innovative mayors in South America, including those committed to working with urban poor groups.<sup>(18)</sup>

#### IV. FROM PROTEST TO CO-PRODUCTION

Some papers in this issue focus on how citizen organizations can work with the state. This includes an interest in the means by which what is termed "co-production" of housing and services by organizations of the poor and the state can deliver immediate benefits and form the basis for a better citizen-local government relationship. Here, there is an interest in the relationships between low-income citizens and the state within "co-production". Obviously, this is influenced by the way low-income citizens organize. How does this interaction change both state the citizen organizations? For instance, can citizen organizations retain independence and autonomy as they work in partnership with the

state, or do they need to become clients for these partnerships to work? And to what extent is this relationship managed through intermediaries who may have little accountability to low-income groups? What role, if any, does international assistance have in supporting co-production?

The first paper in this issue, by Jockin Arputham, illustrates this shift from protest to co-production, as it describes the ways in which citizen groups formed by the urban poor have sought to change government policies over the last 40 years in India. It is based on his own work as a community organizer (and one who has been jailed many times and who had to leave India during the Emergency<sup>(19)</sup>). His work included the building of a coalition of citizen and grassroots organizations within Janata colony in Mumbai (where he lived) to prevent its demolition; this coalition managed to delay the demolition for many years but it was finally overridden. This large settlement, with some 70,000 inhabitants who had a legal right to be there, had the misfortune to come up against the power and political influence of India's nuclear

14. In Argentina, the people who are paid regularly by municipal governments at the end of each month, but who do no work, are termed *noquis*, as there is a tradition of eating *noquis* at the end of the month when money is running out. See Hardoy, Ana, Jorge E Hardoy and Ricardo Schusterman (1991), "Building community organization: the history of a squatter settlement and its own organizations in Buenos Aires", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 3, No 2, October, pages 104–120.

15. See the paper by Nicola Banks in this issue.

16. See Abers, Rebecca (1998), "Learning democratic practice: distributing government resources through popular participation in Porto Alegre, Brazil", in Mike Douglass and John Friedmann (editors), *Cities for Citizens*, John Wiley and Sons, West Sussex, pages 39–65.

17. See reference 7, López Follegatti (1999); also Roy, A, Jockin Arputham and Ahmad Javed (2004), "Community police stations in Mumbai's slums", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 16, No 2, October, pages 135–138; and Burra, Sundar, Sheela Patel and Tom Kerr (2003), "Community-designed, built and managed toilet blocks in Indian cities", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 15, No 2, October, pages 11–32. See also the commitment of the Housing Minister of South Africa, Lindiwe Sisulu, to work with the urban poor both in South Africa and internationally: Sisulu, Lindiwe (2006), "Partnerships between government and slum/shack dwellers' federations", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 18, No 2, October, pages 401–406; also the text for the 2008 Barbara Ward lecture that she gave in July 2008 (e-mail eandu@ied.org for a copy).

18. Campbell, Tim (2003), *The Quiet Revolution: Decentralization and the Rise of Political Participation in Latin American Cities*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, 208 pages.

19. The Emergency was a period between 1975 and 1977 when the Indian government headed by Mrs Gandhi suspended civil rights; see the paper by Jockin Arputham in this issue for more details.

research establishment, which wanted to expand and which had support from the then prime minister.

Jockin's paper also describes the building of federations of slum dwellers, first in Mumbai, then in many other cities, and finally the India-wide National Slum Dwellers Federation. At first, these federations focused on protest and on making demands on the state – especially with regard to preventing evictions and to seeking services. Their strength came from their numbers, their capacity to mobilize mass protests and, in some instances, their capacity to get support from the courts. But under Jockin's leadership, the strategy of the federations changed. There was a recognition that demands on state organizations have limited value if these organizations are incapable of fulfilling them. Also, that even large coalitions or social movements of the urban poor have limited capacity to effect pro-poor change if both bureaucrats and politicians always see them as the opposition, the trouble makers. What the National Slum Dwellers Federation and its partner federation Mahila Milan (savings collectives formed by women pavement and slum dwellers) did was to offer government agencies (especially local government agencies) the knowledge, strengths and capacities of their members. These are mass organizations, with hundreds of thousand of members. This change in tactic by the federations has led to many government-supported programmes being undertaken by these federations and by the Mumbai-based NGO, SPARC, that have been described in previous papers.<sup>(20)</sup> The federations are currently working with the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority to design, build and manage hundreds of community toilets with washing facilities that will serve hundreds of thousands of low-income households. The federations in Mumbai are also working with the police to set up and manage police stations in hundreds of "slums" that work with and are accountable to community organizations.<sup>(21)</sup> There is also an ambitious house-building programme. All these illustrate a scale of action that is far beyond what civil society organizations usually engage in, and far beyond what government agencies would usually support.

This did not mean that the National Slum Dwellers Federation and Mahila Milan lost their capacity for independent action, or that they were co-opted by the state – as can be seen in the

current struggles over how the large informal township within Mumbai, Dharavi, will be developed.<sup>(22)</sup> This struggle over Dharavi illustrates how the homes and livelihoods of the urban poor are threatened both by state power and market power. Dharavi contains the homes and livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of low-income groups, yet as Mumbai has expanded, what was once a peripheral location has become a very desirable central location for new commercial and residential developments. The state is prevented from simply bulldozing Dharavi and transferring the land to developers by democratic pressures, even if there are developers, advisors and politicians for whom this would be the preferred solution. But what is at issue is the proportion of Dharavi's residents and enterprises that will be re-housed, and what influence they will have over the form and location of this re-housing.<sup>(23)</sup> Without collective organization, the residents of Dharavi would have little possibility of influencing this.

Diana Mitlin's paper examines how these partnerships between the state and urban poor federations in housing and basic services (co-production) serve as a route to political influence and power for grassroots organizations. Co-production means the agreement by the state that local groups (in this case urban poor federations) can be directly involved in the implementation of state policies. Over the last 15 years, national and citywide federations of slum or shack

20. Appadurai, Arjun (2001), "Deep democracy: urban governmentality and the horizon of politics", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 13, No 2, October, pages 23–43; also Burra, Sundar (2005), "Towards a pro-poor slum upgrading framework in Mumbai, India", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 17, No 1, April, pages 67–88; Patel, Sheela and Celine D'Cruz (1993), "The Mahila Milan crisis credit scheme; from a seed to a tree", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 5, No 1, April, pages 9–17; Patel, Sheela and Kalpana Sharma (1998), "One David and three Goliaths: avoiding anti-poor solutions to Mumbai's transport problems", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 10, No 2, October, pages 149–159; Patel, Sheela, Celine d'Cruz and Sundar Burra (2002), "Beyond evictions in a global city; people-managed resettlement in Mumbai", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 14, No 1, April, pages 159–172; and see reference 17, Burra et al. (2003).

21. See reference 17, Roy et al. (2004).

22. Patel, Sheela and Jockin Arputham (2008), "Plans for Dharavi: negotiating a reconciliation between a state-driven market redevelopment and residents' aspirations", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 20, No 1, April, pages 243–254; also Patel, Sheela and Jockin Arputham (2007), "An offer of partnership or a promise of conflict in Dharavi, Mumbai?", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 19, No 2, October, pages 501–508.

23. See reference 22.

dwellers or homeless people have developed in many nations, in part drawing on and learning from the experiences and organizational models of the Indian federations, in part rooted in their own local traditions (especially savings groups). There are national federations of slum/shack dwellers in at least 14 nations, and city federations, or savings groups that are developing federations, in many more. These have also formed a strong international alliance, so they learn from and support each other. This includes the formation of an umbrella organization, SDI (Slum/Shack Dwellers International), that they manage with the support of local NGOs. This also means that federations that are members of SDI have a collective voice in their relations with international agencies. They have also received financial support from some external funding agencies, where it is the member federations themselves who determine how this funding is used.<sup>(24)</sup>

The federations choose co-production because this gives them an active role in designing, implementing and managing responses to their needs. Their experience is that even when the state responds positively to their demands, these responses rarely serve their needs. Even in instances where the state has allocated considerable resources to urban poverty reduction – for instance, in housing subsidies or in public toilets and washing facilities – what is built by government bodies or the contractors they hire is often inappropriate or of poor quality, unless urban poor organizations have the capacity to shape what is provided and how it designed and managed. The government of South Africa has supported one of the world's largest and most generous subsidy programmes to support low-income households get their own housing, but much of what has been built has been of poor quality and often in inappropriate locations because low-income households have little influence on what is built and where it is located. In this instance, urban poor organizations, including the South African Federation of the Urban Poor, were able to change the way a proportion of the subsidies were allocated, so that federation members, not contractors, designed and built the homes. The quality and management of public toilets in “slum” areas in many Indian cities improved greatly when grassroots organizations were able to influence their location and took over their design, construction and management.<sup>(25)</sup>

Conventional democratic processes also rarely deliver for the urban poor organizations or federations. Indeed, even politicians with progressive social agendas often distrust the federations because they will not align with these politicians' party or mobilize votes for them. Co-production is the means by which the federations show politicians and civil servants their capacity as partners. In effect, it extends participatory democracy by extending to urban poor groups not only the right to influence decisions about priorities and the allocation of resources but also the right to design, implement and manage responses.<sup>(26)</sup> Co-production also allows the development of solutions (house designs, building materials, plot layouts, infrastructure standards) that bridge the gap between what works for the poor and the formal rules and regulations governing land use and building and infrastructure.<sup>(27)</sup>

Many national or city federations of slum or shack dwellers are now working with government organizations on co-production – as a means both to address immediate needs and to secure effective relations with state institutions.<sup>(28)</sup> In many instances, this allows the homes and neighbourhoods that federation members build to shift from being illegal and outside state provision to becoming formal, legal parts of the city. In some nations, it has also encouraged and supported a shift in state policy to “slum” upgrading.<sup>(29)</sup>

24. See the support to SDI provided by the Sigrid Rausing Trust and other funders described in Mitlin, Diana and David Satterthwaite (2007), “Strategies for grassroots control of international aid”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 19, No 2, October, pages 483–500. In addition, in 2007, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation approved US\$ 10 million to support the federations that are members of SDI.

25. See reference 17, Burra, Patel and Kerr (2003).

26. See Diana Mitlin's paper in this issue.

27. For examples of this, see Mitlin, Diana and Anna Muller (2004), “Windhoek, Namibia: towards progressive urban land policies in Southern Africa”, *International Development Planning Review* Vol 26, No 2, pages 167–186; also Manda, Mtafu A Zeleza (2007), “Mchenga – urban poor housing fund in Malawi”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 19, No 2, October, pages 337–359.

28. The paper by Mariano Scheinsohn and Cecilia Cabrera on “Social movement and habitat production in Buenos Aires; when policies are effective”, to be published in Vol 21, No 1, April 2009, discusses two examples of social organizations in Buenos Aires that first developed to protest at state policies but that are now active in working with the state on social housing issues.

29. See Boonyabanha, Somsook (2005), “Baan Mankong; going to scale with 'slum' and squatter upgrading in Thailand”, *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 17, No 1, April, pages 21–46; also see the CODI Update that is described in the Book Notes section of this issue.

## V. LOCATING THE URBAN POOR FEDERATIONS WITHIN DISCUSSIONS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Each of the national or city urban poor federations could be considered as an urban social movement organization. But the way in which the federations interact with the state, including their combination of autonomous organization (to give them strength and demonstrate what can be done), pressure on the state (including protests but seeking constructive partnership), avoidance of alignment with political parties, and engagement with the state on issues of collective consumption **and** citizen rights falls outside conventional categories used in discussing urban social movements.<sup>30</sup> So too does their use of tangible projects as entry points for mobilization, learning and engaging with the state. The transnational network by which they learn from and support each other, and lobby and negotiate collectively with international agencies, could be considered as a new social movement. But new social movements are more oriented to issue and identity politics rather than around international lobbying for collective consumption issues. To date, the discussions on urban social movements have concentrated on more explicitly political strategies to contest power and influence – indeed, the very strategies that the organizations and federations of slum dwellers in India used throughout the 1970s as described in Jockin Arputham's paper. In addition, the urban poor federations are also different from urban social movements that developed with key roles within them for trade unions and particular political parties. They are also unusual because of the central role in their organization played by savings groups, mostly comprised of and managed by women.

## VI. THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

The papers by Richard Stren and by Marike Bontenbal and Paul van Lindert focus on the current and potential role of international assistance in reducing urban poverty. Richard Stren considers this role with regard to the current and potential role of international assistance in urban development. He notes the very low level of support within development assistance

for urban development and how peripheral urban development is to the Millennium Development Goals. Also the difficulties that urban development proponents face when competing for funding with issues that are more popular with voters in high-income nations – alleviating climate change, tackling HIV/AIDs, preventing famines, stopping child labour and violence against women. It should be obvious that urban development is important in addressing all these concerns. Pragmatic and feasible possible local responses that can bring significant benefits to low-income groups, such as upgrading, have difficulty competing for the high moral ground with issues such as rights, personal liberties and environmental crises. Stren's paper ends with a discussion of where urban assistance can be useful. This includes support for southern institutions (for instance, local authority associations) and their capacity to learn from each other; also support for local research (noting the importance for urban innovation in Latin America of a long tradition of high quality local research). There is also a need for a strong focus on pro-poor policies, including the need for external assistance agencies to learn how to be transparent and accountable to local stakeholders, supporting local development and local processes of political and economic change. The failure of development assistance to learn how to support and engage with urban poor groups and local governments helps explain why the scale and depth of urban deprivation has grown so rapidly. This capacity to engage with local institutions and citizens is also discussed in the paper by Marike Bontenbal and Paul van Lindert, as they describe the role of North–South city-to-city cooperation in two partnerships between cities in Nicaragua and Peru and sister cities in the Netherlands.

The discussions above, on the limitations of the state with regard to its relations with urban poor citizens, can also be applied to international

30. See D'Cruz, Celine and David Satterthwaite (2005), "Building homes, changing official approaches: the work of urban poor federations and their contributions to meeting the Millennium Development Goals in urban areas", *Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas Series, Working Paper 16*, IIED, London, 80 pages; also Walton, John (1998), "Urban conflict and social movements in poor countries: theory and evidence of collective action", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Vol 22, Issue 3, pages 460–481; and Pickvance, Chris (2003), "From urban social movements to urban movements: a review and introduction to a symposium on urban movements", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* Vol 27, No 1, pages 102–109.

agencies. Of course, official development assistance agencies were not set up to support citizen groups. They were set up in an era when it was assumed that development assistance should be channelled through “recipient” governments. If it is now accepted that representative organizations of the urban poor have importance in addressing urban poverty, the official development assistance agencies have structures that make it difficult to respond to this. And “recipient governments” do not want funding to go direct to urban poor organizations.

Among official development assistance agencies and non-government international funding agencies, there is usually a lack of accountability to the poor (indeed, most have no relations at all with urban poor organizations). Where they have programmes funding “urban poverty reduction”, there is rarely any role for urban poor organizations in their design and implementation and little or no transparency in the allocation of resources. The urban poor face bureaucratic and often clientelist barriers in accessing resources from these agencies that are often similar to those they face when accessing government resources. Access to funding is also so often mediated by professionals who inhibit rather than support urban poor groups’ decisions.

However, there are some interesting precedents of how international funding has supported organizations and federations of the urban poor directly. Many of these examples are from international NGOs, although often with part of their funding drawn from official development assistance agencies. But there are also examples from international foundations and some official bilateral agencies. Most international funding agencies that seek to support urban poor groups have struggled to reconcile the kinds of funding that best match the needs and priorities of the federations with conventional funding conditions and requirements. However, there is considerable progress in developing the means by which international funding can strengthen and support federations of the urban poor while also being accountable to the funders.<sup>(31)</sup>

## VII. CLIMATE CHANGE AND CITIES

Three papers in this issue are on climate change and cities – and complement the many papers

published on this topic in previous issues.<sup>(32)</sup> The first, by Sheridan Bartlett, discusses the particular and disproportionate impacts of climate change on urban children in poverty, including the potential impacts on children’s health, learning and psychosocial well-being. It also considers the implications for adaptation in low- and middle-income nations, including those for family coping strategies. The second, by Debra Roberts, is about institutionalizing climate change within local government in Durban, South Africa. Durban is unusual among cities worldwide in having a locally rooted climate change adaptation strategy. The paper highlights the need for climate change issues to be rooted in local realities that centre on avoiding or limiting impacts from, for instance, heat waves, heavy rainfall and storm surges, and sea-level rise, and also the ecological changes and water supply constraints brought about by climate change. The paper also notes how little attention international agencies have paid to adaptation, as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) has been prioritized. This paper also stresses the importance of building local knowledge and capacity about climate change risks and adaptive responses. Without this, decision makers will continue seeing environmental issues as constraints on development rather than as essential underpinnings of and contributors to development. The third paper, by David Satterthwaite, explains how the contribution of cities to global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions is often overstated. Many sources suggest that cities are responsible for 75–80 per cent of all such emissions, but the scientific basis for this figure is in doubt, and drawing on statistics from the IPCC’s Fourth Assessment

31. See the development of Urban Poor Funds in many nations – Mitlin, Diana (2008), “Urban Poor Funds; development by the people for the people”, Poverty Reduction in Urban Areas Series, Working Paper 18, IIED, London.

32. The two issues of *Environment and Urbanization* on ecological urbanization published in 2006 (Vol 18, No 1 and 2) have several papers discussing aspects of climate change mitigation. Vol 19, No 1 (April 2007) had nine papers, mostly on adaptation, and Vol 20, No 1 (April 2008) had four papers. Several more are planned for Vol 21, No 1 (April 2009), including a paper by David Dodman on “Blaming cities for climate change? An analysis of urban greenhouse gas emissions inventories”. The first paper in the journal on climate change was published in 1992, namely a discussion of the allocation of responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions by Neela Mukherjee (Vol 4, No 1, April).

suggests a much lower figure. It is likely that, worldwide, less than half of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions are generated within city boundaries. The paper also describes how, if greenhouse gas emissions from the production of goods and electricity (from fossil fuel power stations) are assigned to the location of the person or institution that consumed them (rather than where they were produced), cities would account for a higher proportion of total emissions. But it would be misleading to attribute this to "cities" in general, since these emissions would be heavily concentrated in cities in high-income nations.

### VIII. FEEDBACK

The influence of social determinants on health in urban areas has not been given the attention it deserves by governments and international agencies. Nor has the key role that local governments should have in responding to this. The paper by Tord Kjellstrom and Susan Mercado discusses the importance of changing this. Urbanization can and should be beneficial to health. In general, nations with high life expectancies and low infant mortality rates are those where city governments address the key social determinants of health. Better housing and living conditions, access to safe water and good sanitation, efficient waste management systems, safer working environments and neighbourhoods, food security and access to services such as education, health, welfare, public transportation and child care are examples of social determinants of health that can be addressed through good urban governance.<sup>33</sup> The paper by Adil Mustafa Ahmad on post-Jonglei planning in southern Sudan discusses the political and environmental issues associated with the decision by the Sudanese and Egyptian governments to resume work on the Jonglei Canal project, which had been abandoned for 24 years. This project's main benefits will be increased Nile water flows into Egypt, but it may also bring serious negative side-effects for locals and for the local, and perhaps regional, environment. This paper argues against the implementation of the project until it is justified by reliable scientific evidence. It also argues for regional development in southern Sudan that recognizes the wetlands as a valuable resource and protects the ecosystem.

### BOX 1

#### *Environment and Urbanization highlights*

Over 20 years: 650 papers and articles published.

In 2007, 3,115 institutions or individuals were subscribers. This included 1,224 institutions that receive the journal within a larger package of Sage journals.

Downloads of complete papers from *Environment and Urbanization*: a total of 188, 172 in 2007. For January to March 2008, downloads of papers were averaging around 17,000 a month. *Environment and Urbanization* must be approaching its first million downloads of papers if you add together all article downloads from the Sage site (<http://eau.sagepub.com/> (which has had more than 400,000 downloads since the journal moved there in 2006), from the former journal website with Ingenta, and from *Environment and Urbanization's* sample paper page ([www.iied.org/human/eandu/sample\\_pubs.html](http://www.iied.org/human/eandu/sample_pubs.html)). In May 2008, the most heavily downloaded papers had had more than 2,000 downloads in the previous 12 months.

*Environment and Urbanization's* 2007 Impact Factor was 0.731. The Impact Factor is a way of measuring how often an "average" article in a journal is cited in a particular year. The 2007 figures are calculated by dividing the number of citations from recent articles by the total number of articles published in 2005 and 2006. This gives it among the world's highest Impact Factors for urban journals that cover low- and middle-income nations.

Geographic origin of authors: Europe 32 per cent; Latin America and the Caribbean 19 per cent; Asia 19 per cent; Africa 18 per cent; North America 11 per cent; Australia 1 per cent. Where a paper has more than one author, it is allocated to the geographic origin of the first author.

Geographic distribution of subscribers: North America 27 per cent; Europe 22 per cent; Asia 21 per cent; Africa 16 per cent; South America 11 per cent; Middle East 2 per cent; Australia 1 per cent.

33. The World Health Organization's Centre for Health Development in Kobe has a particular interest in the social determinants of health and in healthy urban development; for more details, see <http://www.who.or.jp/>.

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### TRIBUTE TO JANE BICKNELL AND OTHERS ON ENVIRONMENT AND URBANIZATION'S 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

When Jorge E. Hardoy suggested that we start a new journal, *Environment and Urbanization*, based on the success of *Medio Ambiente y Urbanization* produced by IIED–America Latina, we never imagined that it would end up with 300 pages per issue (we had planned for 100). Or that it would become one of the world's most cited and downloaded international urban journals (see Box 1 on page 316). Many people have contributed greatly to this success but perhaps none more so than Jane Bicknell, the Managing Editor. She has copy-edited everything that has been printed in the journal since we started in 1989: 40 issues, some 10,000 pages, around 650 papers and around 1000 book notes and reviews. She has also helped review papers and written book notes. She has improved editorials. Oddly enough, this note is the only piece in the journal that she has not edited, as this is being slipped into the 40th issue surreptitiously. Jane has never missed a deadline in 20 years. She has worked directly with most authors – to get queries answered, references checked – and it is a tribute to her that *Environment and Urbanization* is regarded as one of the best edited of the professional journals and also one that is among the easiest to read – even though most of our authors have English as a second, third or fourth language. She has always been a delight to work with. *Environment and Urbanization* is very lucky to have had Jane working with us and we hope that she will stay with us for many more years.

*Environment and Urbanization* also owes a great debt to many other people – especially past and current members of the editorial board and advisory board. Of course, we also owe a great debt also to our authors. Also to the wide network of referees who have done so much to keep the standards high, especially through careful suggestions to authors whose papers are accepted on how these might be improved. Since 2006, we have enjoyed a very good working relationship with Sage Publications whose staff have been a delight to work with and who have done much to increase the journal's circulation and readership. Perhaps it is unfair to mention some names but I will mention a few. Sheridan Bartlett is well known to readers of the journal for several papers and for guest editing the special issue on 'Children and Youth' in October 2002. But she has done far more than this behind the scenes as a referee and as an editor who has helped hundreds of authors to express themselves more clearly. Diana Mitlin is also well known to readers through the papers she has published but she has also helped guest edit many issues, including this one. Cecilia Tacoli and Gordon McGranahan have also contributed a lot; both have refereed many papers and have been guest editors of two or more issues (including, in Gordon's case, with Graham Haughton for the two issues on 'Ecological urbanization'). Finally, David Westendorff deserves acknowledgement because he has arranged for a selection of papers from the journal to be translated into Chinese and to be made freely available on the web.