

RT#7 - Informal Settlements

Roundtable organized by BERLOGOS and CAS Studio, about "informal settlements" in different countries, the potentials and lessons to be learned from their communities and the present relation with the "formal city".

INVITED PARTICIPANTS:



Manal El-Shahat is the Director and Founder of Ezbet Project. She is an Assistant Professor and a Senior Researcher in the Department of International Urbanism at the University of Stuttgart; Team manager of the research project "Cohesion needs spaces - integrative housing with immigrants" at the Department Sociology of Architecture and Housing at the University of Stuttgart; Assistant Professor and Faculty member in the Urban Planning and Design Department (UPDD) at Ain Shams University (ASU) (on leave and based in Germany).

Jorge Mario Jauregui is an Architect-Urban Designer of formal and the informal areas. Honored professor at National University Rosario in Argentina, a member of Union of Architecture and Urbanism, Institute of architects of Brazil, a winner of national contests in Rio-de-Janeiro (1994, 1995, 1999, 2011, 2013).



Abel Feleke is an Australian designer (M.Arch) currently based in London. He is the sole recipient of the 10th RIBA Norman Foster Traveling Award and the co-founder of the platform non-space.com. He has researched and worked alongside communities across the globe investigating design and architecture's social responsibilities.

ORGANIZERS:

Paulo Carneiro, architect, post-Master's Degree in "Sustainable Development and Earth Architecture" by CRAterre Institute, co-founder of CAS Studio (Lisbon, Portugal). Recipient of the 2014 merit award from AIA/SF and winner of the 2014 SEED Awards, for the Manica Community Center.



Tatiana Viana de Barros, art historian, interviewer, a participant of International and All-Russian science conferences, editor-in-chief at BERLOGOS magazine, jury member of A' Design Award & Competition and INDUSTART.

Tatiana:

The first question will be about the definition and types of informal settlements: how would you denote informal settlements?

Jorge:

Urbanity, according to the anthropologist Manuel Delgado, implies a lifestyle characterized by mobility, the agitation as the source of social vertebra and by the proliferation of interwoven relations. Society that usually moves and, sometimes, mobilizes itself.

To think about a new urbanity implies to consider that, today's society claims for better social and territorial justice regarding the benefits of living in the city so that everyone could enjoy access to the advantages of "urbanity".

The main characteristic of the contemporary societies is their division, their heterogeneity, and the issue brought up is "how to make of these ontologically diverse societies, affected by economic, political, social, religious and gender conflicts, -which are present both on the level of the State, in culture and in the city-, how, then, make of these societies an "intelligible ensemble" on which it is possible to act on democratic criteria? How to contribute to creating "collective wills" in which the project can achieve its activating role? The "social role" of the architect-urbanist precisely consists in adding coherence to diffuse social demands, giving it the visibility that later permits the action.

New urbanity as a contribution to the activation of social life, implies articulating formal and informal sectors of the city in the most developing countries, intercepting physical, economic and ecological issues, with citizens security conditions and contemporary subject problematic. The question is: what type of social-spatial condensers do we need today? Capable of conjugating a work, and income generation centres, sports, leisure and arts at a human scale, configuring new attractors of conviviality? New urban "agoras" of the 20th century? Interconnecting centralities?

Which are the forms of habitability and urbanity capable of generating social cohesion? Rearticulating the territory? In which manner to interlace, to generate interwoven relations, well-articulated fabrics?

Manal:

Informal settlements are places where people established homes and life spontaneously on land parcels that are not their property. They were able to establish their lives and their quarters without planner and without any plans, and only based on their needs.

This indicates several similarities between such areas and historical districts in old cities, where also no planners worked on their plan or development. Informal settlements grow and get developed across generations and ages to produce layers of history and stories. For me, informal settlement development is featured mainly by two layers of networks that form the history and culture:

- 1) The street and the urban structure network
- 2) The social structure and human being network

It is essential to understand the communities there, their origins, and the reasons based on which they went and developed their lives there. Only then, real community development can be achieved. When we look at the Egyptian context, there are different types of informal settlements:

- 1) Those that developed on agricultural land. People there own the parcels where they build their homes. However, buildings are built illegally and the use of the land changed without permissions.
- 2) Those that originated within historical areas on the interval land and others that became deteriorated (informal) areas.
- 3) Those that were built and established on desert land due to its undefined status of property/ownership. This type is informal and illegal.

As for the people and informal settlements

dwellers, not all of them are poor. In fact, most of those who settled in deteriorated areas as well as those who settled on the desert land are poor and vulnerable communities.

In general, Informal settlements are places where self-organised communities grow. Dwellers of such areas were able to survive for long periods and they live and practice their lives -from my point of view- as sustainable communities. They develop their spaces and build them with very low-tech, low cost materials as well as with less resources. They also recycle and reuse everything they have around them. They are able to create out of garbage their own business. That is one of the main highlights of the development of their settlements.

Abel:

Informal settlements are often categorized by their lack of secure tenure of the land and legal documentation of land rights. They are also characterized by construction techniques and a lack of available services that people would commonly attribute to a functioning city. From my own experiences working alongside communities, I've come to understand that despite the lack of available physical infrastructure within informal settlements what can be found are complex systems of living that rely heavily on communal engagement and interdependency among residents. This communal nature is forged through dense social networks created between individuals and strengthened over time. I feel the tangible representation of these networks can be observed in the way people inhabit the built environment, occupy space and the resulting topologies of building created. These collective actions could be better described as traditions of living, informed interventions that for the most part are sensitively woven into the existing urban fabric. These traditions over time act to affect change, ultimately moulding the physical environment where social interactions take place. So, for me it's really this thought of social infrastructure that I find inspiring, using this as a driving force for design is a motivation I find really powerful.



Photo by Abel Feleke



Photo by Abel Feleke



Photo by Abel Feleke

Paulo:

And what's the relation about informal settlements and rurality? In order to exist informal settlements, urbanity has to be established? So, in spite of being mostly seen as an urban phenomenon there is a strong link with rurality because in some cases there is a migration of communities from the rural areas to cities. I find very interesting this idea that Manal refer about the island formed in the city with people that come from the outside to join a community with the same problems and potential for collaboration and resilience.

In Portugal in the past some communities formed by workers established informal settlements that were also called "islands" because of its isolation aspects due to their social and economic status.

Tatiana:

Are there any common aspects and differences around the world? What is the dynamics of growing of informal settlements?

Abel:

Each of the communities I have worked within are incredibly diverse with their own unique set of opportunities, however there are strands which connect them. Differences within each community are influenced by specific factors such as cultural identity, the traditions of living, the social-political and economic landscapes to name a few. Despite these fluctuations the constant requirement for all informal settlements is interaction, without the maintenance of social bonds the interdependency that exist between residents couldn't be sustained.

Within the production economies of Dharavi Mumbai, this interaction is particularly evident. For example, when looking at the creation of leather goods, the process of production is broken down to sustain each micro-community involved. One group is sustained through selling the meat, another in treating the hides, then comes transportation, while more are sustained in creating the actual goods.

In order to manage this production based economy the social network between various groups must be maintained, these bonds therefore are of real importance in sustaining the communities growth and survival.



Dharavi, Mumbai. Photo by Abel Feleke



Dharavi, Mumbai. Photo by Abel Feleke



Dharavi, Mumbai. Photo by Abel Feleke

Manal:

Yes, there are several common aspects in most of the informal settlements around the world. For example, lack of infrastructure and the lack of the resources as well as services and open spaces. Also, the reasons and origin of these areas, I believe, is also the same in most of the cases which is that these areas are a product of late industrialisation and urbanisation, when people moved from villages and workers on farms wanted to upgrade their lives and move to urban areas to find better jobs and earn more money. Unfortunately, most of these people followed a dream that never happened. Instead of having big open spaces on farms, they established settlements that are characterised by their very narrow spaces and almost no open-space available. The lack of the space here is problematic in terms of quantity and the size of open spaces but also in terms of the quality of the existing (very limited) spaces. Of course, because the land is not available but also it is not of their property. Also, the natural resources in the villages and their original areas were much more than those in cities. The share of the resources in cities are much higher and almost is very limited. Cities inhabitants live in a competition to survive!

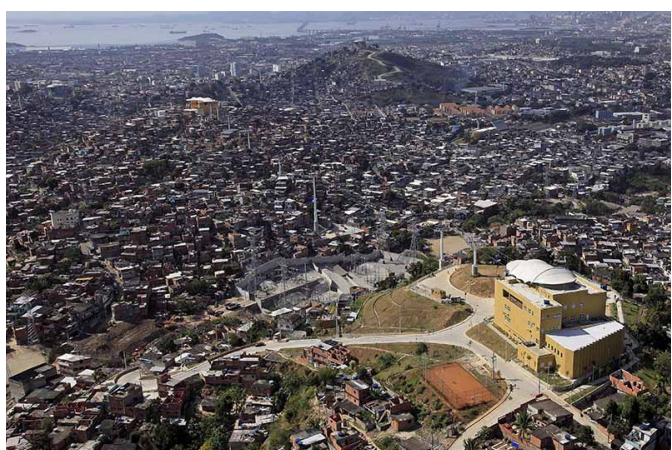
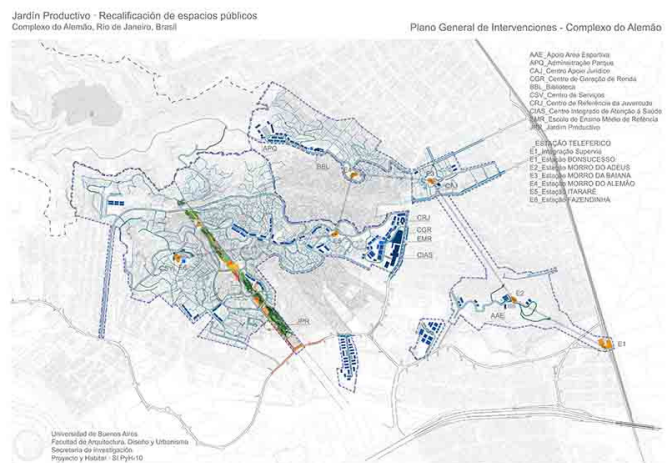
Common features of informal settlements around the world are not only negative ones, they share also other positive aspects and characteristics.

We can sum the negative ones in: lack of infrastructure, poverty, vulnerability of the communities, lack of services in terms of education and health facilities, lack of open spaces, less resources, etc... However, the positive ones are: the strong social structures and ties, in spite of the limited resources, the ability to use the available resources efficiently, and the self-organised and self-managed communities, etc...

Jorge:

The informal areas are clearly productive places that have a strong sense of community that need to be mobilized through the interventions. One important aspect is

to make feasible centres for generation of work and income. This is the problem of informal areas how to generate new conditions for social development while transforming its urban structure. This is a public issue. It is possible for them to build their own houses, but they don't have the technical knowledge to build all the infrastructure system (sewerage, drainage, public lighting, garbage treatment) that will provide them a significant change. Besides it, hiring local workforce is the first step to achieve this social mobilization and improve the sense of community.



"Complexo do Alemão", Rio de Janeiro.
Images and Photo by Jorge Mario Jauregui



"Complexo do Alemão", Rio de Janeiro. Photo by Jorge Mario Jauregui

Manal:

I agree with the other colleagues. The informal areas are a really productive part of our cities. And they have a very strong economic and social structure. Even though the economic base in some of them is a black market or even drug market, which it is due to being neglected and segregated. Yet economic development is mobilized as Jorge said, and yet needed to be more integrated with the whole development stream. This would be the best tool to at least minimize the black or drugs market's problems; by integrating such strong socio-economic structures into the development by participation. This would be leading to strong policy decision-making towards inclusive cities: by empowering the inhabitants of informal settlements and working on their capabilities and know-how in creating life with very little resources, less costs. This would be a potential aspect for the development approaches in these countries.

Paulo:

So, can we affirm that as a common aspect among different informal settlements, there is a community participatory process? Communities do not wait for a public infrastructure (of course, in an ideal case we should have a public infrastructure) and they start creating an infrastructure by themselves. We can talk about the quality of it, but communities have this pragmatic action because they have a strong need and can't wait for government interventions?

Abel:

Yeah, just as Manal was saying, the social infrastructure is extremely dense. Facilitated by constant interactions between living groups and neighbours a sense of com

munity is sustained and even flourishes in some instances. The resilience of communities can't be understated, the strength that communal living contributes towards social wellbeing is also something that warrants greater attention from the architectural and design community as a whole. Learning from Rio, as I'm sure Jorge can relate, the presence of incremental growth also plays an important role in facilitating inter-generational living.

This is one of the main things I admired while working within Rocinha. I think Jorge would agree?



Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro. Photo by Abel Feleke

Jorge:

Well, I agree, the social mobilization is one of the characteristics of the informal settlements. that allow the people who live in the informal conditions the possibility to construct their proper housing. In spite of this, the infrastructure constructed by the owners is always in deficit because they do not have the conditions to construct other quality of infrastructure that implies public illumination system, sewerage, drainage and garbage treatment and all these things.

Abel:

Definitely, I think one of the major issues in informal settlements is the removable of waste and also the treatment of any garbage. Public Health and wellbeing are always major considerations that must be taken care off. It's a reoccurring theme within informal settlements experience due to their spontaneous nature and lack of formal planning. Strategies to reduce and manage waste disposal remain a necessity.

Manal:

Actually, I was thinking during the discussion (smiling) about the solid waste management in general in our countries (being from Egypt). For instance, for the last five years, we have been having a major problem with solid waste management all over Cairo, the capital city. So, the problem is not limited to the informal settlements.

More than that, the dwellers of such areas can better manage the process, even it is not satisfactory for us as outsiders. They -at least- do classify and sort the garbage and create economic sources out of it.

They still, of course, have garbage everywhere; yet, in planned districts, it is not much better. Garbage is everywhere. It is in general a big problem all over the capital city and maybe the solutions start from informal settlements. At least they have a system, and they stick to it. Thus, one of the strengths of informal areas is that communities are self-managed.

They can manage and overcome most of their challenges and problems with less resources.

Such areas could be characterised by being arm and this could be the same for the following years, but they have a high applicability to stay sustainable.

They offer to the market cheap and affordable housing, access to the black and informal market, have strong social network and it can absorb new comers and immigrants from the countryside.



Cairo, Egypt. Photo by Manal El-Shahat

Jorge:

To me, the question is that it's pretty necessary to mobilize a public opinion in relation to the necessity of democratizing urbanity for all the citizens. In this sense it is necessary that architects and urbanists appear in the communication, media, discussing and proposing solutions for the informal settlements. Not in the sense that an architect alone can solve the problem but, in the sense, to show the question and indicate different possibilities.

Manal :

I agree with you that we, as urban planners, practitioners, architects and academics have a crucial role to institutionalize and mobilize the participatory process to get them integrated and achieve inclusive cities. So, I think, yes, we should be on the ground working together hand in hand with these communities in order to have better results.

Abel:

Yes, I agree. Waste management exists as an education as well. Educational initiatives especially in terms of hygiene and teaching people how to best take care of their communities are of real importance.

Paulo:

For example, a common thing that you all talked here is the need of improvement of the infrastructure because of the waste production and management and consequently the health issues created.

So, if we improve infrastructure, create public spaces, safety structures, improve the quality of buildings and services, how can we avoid gentrification and the pressure and speculation in these kinds of areas?

Because from being avoided and discriminated areas, they will consequently start to be attractive places with an active social life and creative environment and community spaces.

Jorge:

Here, in Rio, and in our places, in Latin America, the experience of gentrification is not significative. In the favela, no one wants to leave the place in the sense that people want to live in the same area where they are already because the people have constructed along this time very intricate social laces. In this sense nobody wants to leave, they all want to stay. This is the reason because there is no gentrification, maybe several cases but not characterized as a gentrification process because of people of the middle class, for example, never want to live in the favela.



Library in Maguinhos, Rio de Janeiro. Photo by Jorge Mario Jauregui



Station in Maguinhos, Rio de Janeiro. Photo by Jorge Mario Jauregui

Abel:

A major issue involved with gentrification is the displacement of the original community, these are the people who created the social environment.

I feel that when considering issues that relate to gentrification it's integral that the discussion of land rights exists in parallel. It's often this lack of secure tenure that directly effects informal communities ability to adapt and take advantage of economic changes. So, I think that by moving towards directly challenging policy makers through organized legal representation that greater certainty for people living in informal communities can be obtained. Although each case is specific, I also hope that through legal advocacy informal communities would be better positioned to assert control in shaping their own future, both in terms of the economic and social potentials.



Photo by Abel Feleke



Photo by Abel Feleke

Manal:

Actually, also from my experience in EZBET Project, we are asking ourselves if we, with our interventions, our small or big development projects, might affect negatively on the development process and cause some sort of gentrification. This is one of the aspects that we seriously take into consideration, and we are trying to better understand how we can avoid it. As Jorge said, in the cases of Latin America, people don't want to leave their places, where they grew up and live. They identify themselves with the place. In this sense, identity and the value of the relationship between the person and the place is very important. Our mission in EZBET Project is following the same concept: "Upgrade the urban and social fabric without changing its logic, culture and identity." I believe that we should take care and be attentive of any projects or any interventions, that could be very strange or exported. So, the development should come from the bottom, from people, from below. I do believe that if it starts from below: from the residents themselves, then gentrification will not happen. The value of the place and the ownership to the place must be implemented and secured. So, you said, Paulo, gentrification is a big challenge, a big problem, which we hope to avoid.

Jorge:

In this sense, as I said, it's necessary to mobilize the public opinion. One way can be writing in newspapers and in the social networks about the local experience but in an extended way putting and confronting different approaches to the problem. And it illustrates the citizens as it's necessary to illustrate the middle class, I think.

Paulo:

In this case, every development of the process and each project, as Jorge and Manal were saying, should always incorporate the local communities in the process.

Jorge:

Yes, yes. It's fundamental.

Manal:

Yes.

Abel:

Yes, I feel that interventions within informal settlements should be user generated and informed, it's these communities that will ultimately inhabit the space and intervention serve. To sensitively integrate into an existing social environment, there



Ezbet Abu-Qarn, Cairo, Egypt. Photo by Manal El-Shahat

needs to be a dialogue with the surrounding community and built environment. I feel strongly that architects, alongside residents together with advocacy groups could challenge government policies that may be having detrimental impacts on informal communities in terms of socio-economic empowerment. So as Jorge mentioned, through advocacy and motivating public opinion I feel great results could really be achieved.

Paulo:

So, although informal settlements communities are deeply stigmatized we can learn something about them and their structures? Abel, you were saying about the good aspects of informal economy that we can learn and even about participatory processes, the way of building and creating community spaces and functions...

Abel:

Definitely. From my own understanding, informal settlements have a much stronger social infrastructure. Communities are constantly evolving, and living is co-dependent. People are reliant on one another for survival and due to this there is a strong awareness of others. This can be observed in the way people share people the built environment work amongst one other and participate together in daily life. Some of the major considerations taught are how a person's identity correlates to the surroundings, how a people can coexist with neighbours and with the environment too.

Manal:

I like so much the excerpt you said that they have a solid social infrastructure. Although we began our discussion today with the definition of informal settlements as places that lack infrastructure and that lack open spaces in terms of quantity and volume. Here is to confirm and prove that they do have strong infrastructure, it's just another sort of infrastructure: a social one. The same is that they do have very little small open spaces / streets but with very high quality in terms of architecture, urban structures and the climatic conditions.

Everybody agree.W

Abel:

I think in a city what can often happen is a high degree of a social isolation, from what I have learnt within informal settlements is due to the spontaneous growth there exists a strong degree of interactions between neighbours and surroundings, in turn this acts to inform how the built environment relates to identity. I completely agree with you, Manal.

Tatiana:

We mainly discuss on social, economic features, this is very important. Let's talk about technical features: of what materials informal settlements are usually built, is it worth to apply some new approaches, building techniques in a "formal" architecture, construction?

Jorge:

In Brazil especially all favelas are constructed of bricks. But taking the last question, for me, the problem is not only infrastructural because this is really fundamental, but it is necessary to know how to interrogate these places, people, and physical conditions. For this task, the interdisciplinary work is necessary: architects, urbanists, sociologists, economists, psychologists, and so on, because there is a multiplicity of variables. The project must represent what they have the right to desire but they don't know.



"Complexo do Alemão", Rio de Janeiro. Photo by Jorge Mario Jauregui

This is fundamentally the role of an architect and that's why it's so important this previous conversation. This is a hard question. How to interrogate the place, because it's not only the question of visual condition, there are many other components of the problem that need to be considered.

Abel:

Learning from the built environment from a technical stand point was an experience I found very interesting in Rocinha, through visits to residences to learn more about how construction techniques can facilitate interaction between neighbours.

This sensitive interaction can be observed in the design decisions people make. For example, something as simple as where a window might be placed, involves a very high level of interaction and communication between neighbours to avoid issues related to overlooking so that people didn't feel their privacy as being infringed upon. This kind of engagement between residents exists even though there aren't uniform regulations being imposed.

Despite the lack of regulations, there remains a high degree of social welfare were people look after one another, residents are emotionally invested in their environment and maintain their network in a socially sustainable way.

Jorge:

In the favela there is a permanent process of negotiations, negotiations of localization and conditions of life.

Manal:

I think that, in terms of architecture and urban quality, we label informal settlement by "beautiful informality". I observed during my visit to the villas in Buenos-Aires, how lovely architecture and values characterize these areas. Very little resources, simple materials are the key aspect of successful architecture. One can also say that it's not only beautiful but also sustainable. People are part of the design process, where all designs are based on

their own needs. They also create architecture of quality. It is much better than cities built by the state or outside of the city core. I think that the architectural and urban quality "beautiful informality" is quite high in these areas and it should be studied, organized or regularized rather than going through with the whole development process but also to be reorganised in the context where professionals can learn from.

The other issue I also heard among points you mentioned, Abel and Jorge, is about the regulations. I think people are not following regulations because they are illegal. They follow, however, their unwritten, verbal set of regulations, or the regulations that were developed by situations. Moreover, they have developed their way of communication. Once again, all of that is based on the strong social structure. So, I think, yes, we can learn a lot of lessons in terms of architecture and urbanism and regulations from such areas.



"Beautiful Informality". Ezbet Abu-Qarn, Cairo, Egypt. Photo by Manal El-Shahat

Paulo:

In this sense we can affirm that in spite of being stigmatized, informal settlements have established a social/cultural identity with specific building technologies made with local and easy access materials. They have created their own building culture?

Everybody: Yes.



Bamboo and wooden structure in informal market in Manica, Mozambique. Photo by Paulo Carneiro



Sheet steel roof and walls in informal market, Manica, Mozambique. Photo by Paulo Carneiro



Walls coated with earth in an informal market in Manica, Mozambique. Photo by Paulo Carneiro

Jorge:

Yes, because many of the people who live in the favelas are construction workers in a formal city.

Paulo:

That's really interesting; can you develop that aspect about the building culture Jorge?

Jorge:

Yes, favelas are productive places, this is the most important point, it's not only a dormitory, but productive places. In Rocinha, for example, 6000 professionals arrive at the favela each day: medical "psychologists, dentists" many professionals, so the favela with 100 000 people set up a proper market, even in the mobile conditions. There is an internal market for construction and conditions to work in a proper favela. Many people work out the favela and as a result another part of the formal city arrived to the favela.

So, there is an intensive interchange between the formal and informal. For this reason, it's necessary to formalize the places of connection, places of the interrelation between the formal and informal, animated places, new centralities, new contemporary "agoras", in which the interchange between these 2 realities can produce. The majority of people who live in the favela are workers, so it's a potentiality that needs to be organized, that need to be developed.



The Avenue in Maguinhos, Rio de Janeiro. Drawing by Jorge Mario Jauregui



The Avenue in Maguinhos, Rio de Janeiro. Photos by Jorge Mario Jauregui

Abel:

And this kind of potential I saw in Dharavi as well. While working alongside URBZ, I was involved in organizing street workshops with residents within local neighbourhoods. In order to engage residents with user generated outcomes we invited people to meet us in the streets outside of their homes and participate in proposing changes to their own communities. To initiate this conversation, we presented a block wood scale model of the neighbourhoods. We offered people in the local area an opportunity to visualize and create through the medium of the block wood model to test what changes they would like to see in the neighbourhood. It was interesting to see what the locals felt where important, some iterations involved increasing the public square that homes were centred around, increasing the floor levels and creating focal points for meetings within the community. To enable this dialogue is important in making informed design decisions. It's really important. So, I think there is always intelligent design driving any informal settlements. The presence of the informality itself is intelligence.



Photo by Abel Feleke

Manal:

I like the idea very much you mentioned, Jorge, about initiating an interchange or interrelation place between formal and informal. This can be a clear key aspect for development. Bringing all together to the same place and show them how they can benefit from one another. In our project EZBET, we moved from one area



Photo by Abel Feleke



Street in Ezbet Abu-Qarn, Cairo, Egypt. Photo by Manal El-Shahat



Street intervention Ezbet Abu-Qarn, Cairo, Egypt. Photo by Manal El-Shahat

to the other and in the new area, people are highly productive: they have a special economy working with agriculture and animals. They produce many things that the formal sector benefit from. The only problem here is that this is not well-seen, maybe because of the lack of marketing. Truly, it is much needed to integrate them into society; and that this informal sector meets the formal one and share part of one big productive city. So, such a platform for interchange and interaction

highly add to the development process. I agree with you.

Abel:

I agree with Manal. I think one of the responsibilities of the architects in designing anything is considering and designing for social wellbeing.

Manal:

Maybe I'd like to go back to the term you mentioned, Paulo, "culture of building". I think this is an important term that should also be taught in the future in universities in seminars. It would be a great research project to make, a catalogue / or Atlas of the building culture (in terms of architecture and urban designs) of these areas from examples all over the world. A catalogue should be created to document the methods and tools they are using in building their communities which is also part of their culture; and even the culture or the vocabulary of architecture, urban vocabulary in such areas which initiated by people themselves.

So, once again it is their culture, it is being imbedded in their identity.

Abel:

I agree, open dialogue is incredibly important. Because we have areas of people who have lived together for a long time, and some of the plans you see, some of the master plans to reengineer entire informal communities risk endangering the history that exists. There are traditions of living, which people carry with them, and inform the growth of the neighbourhood. I think the idea of user-generated design alongside local residents is extremely important to inform proposed design interventions. To ask, people "what" they feel is important? The reasons why they would propose a certain change? Engaging the local residents with the specific issues which relate to them; from neighbourhood, street, housing clusters and home. Talking with people within the neighbourhoods is fundamental. The people have to be a part of the design process.

Paulo:

Would you like to add something, Jorge?

Jorge:

Only that is necessary to do the project now!

Manal: (laughing)

Abel:

I agree, one of the interesting things informality teaches is the communal understanding of living, reliant on co-dependency and interaction. Informal settlements tend to be more than one community, an intricate network of multiple interdependent communities within a shared urban fabric. Because of this co-dependency, it should be understood that proposed interventions may not only effect people in the immediate location but could also have a ripple effect on surrounding areas in the process. In places where living is so intertwined, I feel that design's power exists is as a communicative process.

Paulo:

I visited and worked in an informal settlement in Turkey (Ben-U-Sen in Diyarbakir) in the border with Iraq and it was amazing to see -it was like a village- all painted with different colours (blue, yellow, pink), and people from outside of this settlement were scared because of the difference the colours created, although the community was just expressing spontaneously their own culture, their own sense of beauty.

Nowadays we can see several projects around the World in informal settlements with art, graffiti, made with the communities and they express this sense of beauty very connected with a specific place and culture.



Women drying food in the roof, Ben-U-Sen in Diyarbakir, Turkey. Photo by Paulo Carneiro

I remember that Jorge wrote about the idea of democratic beauty. Nowadays, in opposition most of our "formal cities" are usually very grey (steel and glass). I like really much this idea of using colour to achieve a democratic beauty.

Jorge, do you want to add something or develop a bit?

Jorge:

I think there should be the right to beauty because people once said to me: "Jorge, Mangueira is very ugly" - expressing decides of beauty which is present in the Carnival; here that is the explosion of colours produced in the favela. So, the use of colour as a sign of happiness is a cultural question very important to consider in the projects. In Rio, many of the favelas are divided by the colours of the schools of samba, for example. And this cultural component that is belonging. The right to beauty is a very-very important question like together with the right to infrastructure, housing, etc...



Houses with different colors, Ben-U-Sen in Diyarbakir, Turkey. Photo by Paulo Carneiro



Houses with different colors, Ben-U-Sen in Diyarbakir, Turkey. Photo by Paulo Carneiro

8TH DECEMBER 2017



Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro. Photos by Jorge Mario Jauregui