Working group synthesis

INFORMAL CITY

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PART 1
DEFINITION AND APPROACH

As an introduction, we need to explain what the "informal city" is. Are we talking about "informal neighborhoods"? about slums? about anarchic or peripherical urban extensions?

To us, the informal city is the totality of an urban and peri-urban territory with living conditions that are below the norm and/or territories which developed outside of the existing regulations applying to urban planning and to the registered housing market.

We're forced to acknowledge the overlap between slums and informal neighborhoods. In some cities, slums can appear in the middle of an urban sector where registered housing also exists. Likewise, some informal neighborhoods can be made of habitations offering great living conditions and meant for a relatively rich population, such as for example villas built without a permit. Lastly, in some cities, poor or rich informal neighborhoods are completely isolated from the legally planned neighborhoods.

Constructions without permits are sometimes made legal afterward, and the informal neighborhoods thus included into urban planning documents become a part, in the mid-term, of the neighborhoods called "formal". Knowing that any construction or intervention happening without a permit on a new or existing building can refer to informality, informal cities can become a reference of quick urban development, to answer demographic growth and the

demand of a right to the city for all. In this perspective, informal housing can be qualified as de facto affordable housing. Generally, public authorities let this parallel model develop to indirectly strengthen the housing offer, without however ensuring their servicing by essential services of quality.

In this context, multiples consequences emanate from informal constructions. At the scale of urban islands or parcels:

land insecurity, network connection difficulties, sanitation issues, no consideration of climate-related hazards, lack of public infrastructure meant to serve the general interest. At neighborhood and city-scale: segregation induced by transportation and equipment. All these factors and consequences amplify the informal city's problems, hence the importance of our analysis and recommendations.

Major issues of informal cities :
Vulnerability sources

Isolation

Land property
Law, legal protection, construction permit

Natural risks
Floods, landslide, climate change

Poverty

Insecurity

Gender
Women
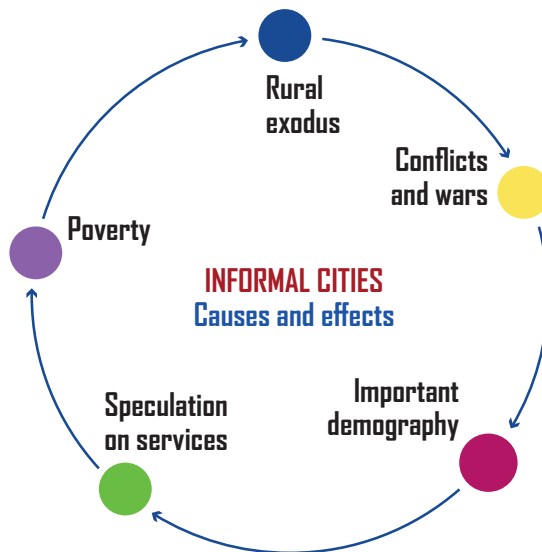Children
Eldery people
Disabled people

Informal cities combine issues related to social, spatial and environmental inequalities: lack of comfortable servicing and of basic services (quality drinking water, sanitation, energy, waste treatment), no land property law and urban precarity; exposition to natural hazards aggravated by climate change; physical and material insecurities; increased vulnerability of the most fragile populations (women, children, elderly people, disabled people) and high unemployment rate accentuating causes of poverty.

These issues have negative impacts:
- Socially: on the quality of education, nutrition and health;
- Environmentally: degradation of living space and biodiversity, air pollution, soil pollution, water pollution. The poverty suffered by the inhabitants living in rural areas pushes them to go to big cities where they hope to find work and services, in search of a "right to the city". Big cities also welcome war and climate refugees.

The vicious circle of the informal city

Rural
exodus

Conflicts
and wars

Poverty

INFORMAL CITIES
Causes and effects

Speculation
on services

Important
demography

The poverty suffered by the inhabitants living in rural areas pushes them to go to big cities where they hope to find work and services, in search of a "right to the city". Big cities also welcome war and climate refugees.

In a context of strong demographic growth in emerging and developing countries, the vulnerable and fragile populations are confronted to a limited availability of the land, to housing crisis and to expensive services in the city. Because of this, an important parallel market ruled by illegal developers emerge, leading to the creation housing outside of urban planning rules and without permit. Self-construction currently represents a neglectable portion of the informal housing market. This market is subject to a real speculation, and informal neighborhoods end up welcoming not only low-income populations, but also populations referred to as middle-class.

In this configuration, the informal economy supports the production of these neighborhoods in which the services that can be offered are often incomplete and, on top of that, more expensive than official services. This factor is reinforced by the speculation imposed by the private sector, as a result of the local authorities' and the State's shortcomings in this domain.

There is indeed a lack of anticipation and strategic planning capacities from the local and national authorities, who don't take into consideration enough endogenous and exogenous demographic phenomena, nor the needs and objectives of the social and economic insertion of the most vulnerable populations.
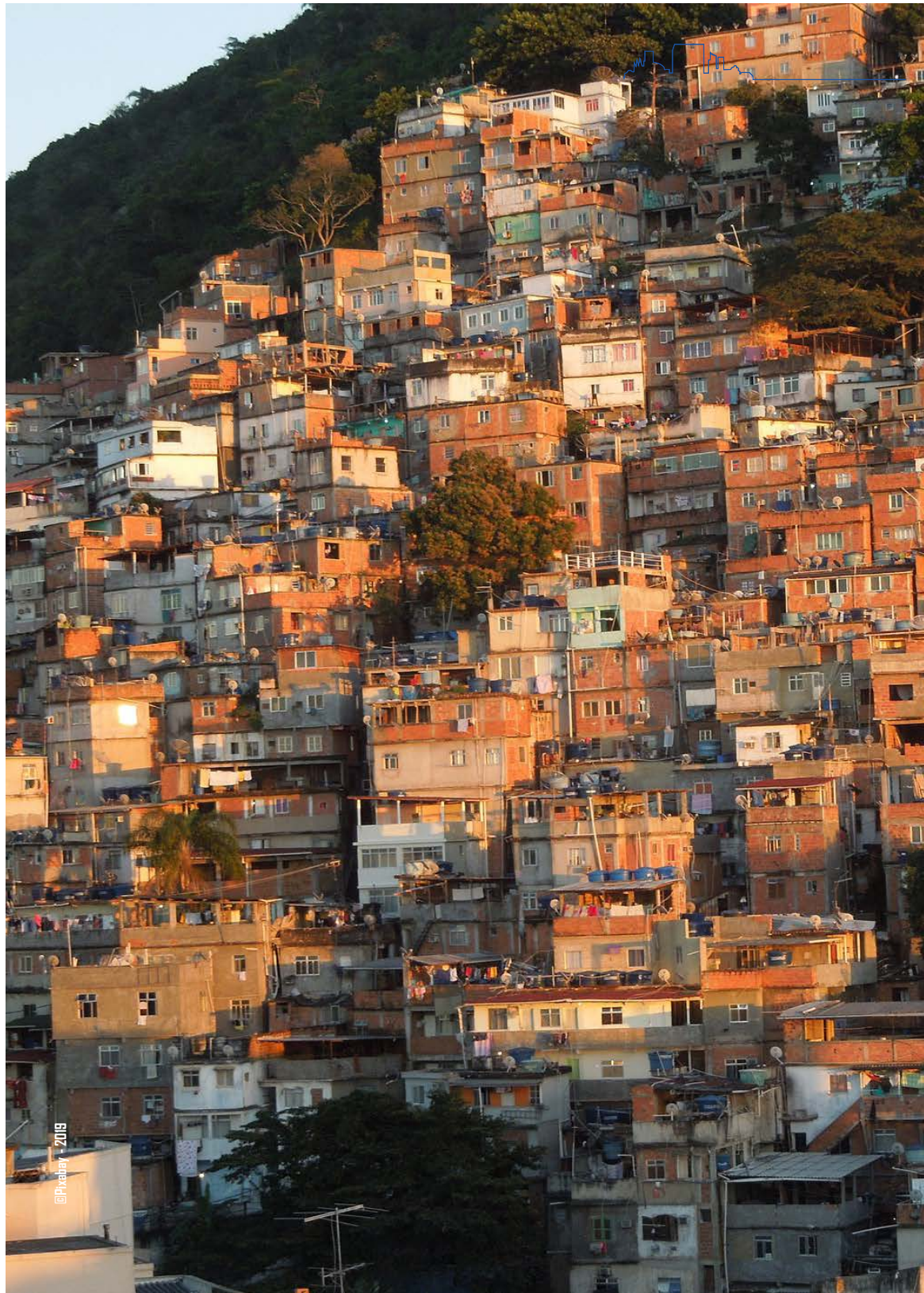
There are also issues of governance shortcomings and mostly of tax revenue shortfalls. Without national and local wealth sources, taxes are the main budget resource to fund public services.

As a consequence, and in a concern of pragmatism and realism, it would be wise to plan alternatives based on a partnership with the private sector in order to slow down the speculation on services. The goal is to look for innovating solutions that formally involve the private sector in the making of the cities. This approach can offer opportunities to sustainably develop cities and territories. In a system where the action is indeed free yet regulated, we will be able to ensure the freedom of social innovation and the reinforcement of the bounds between the diverse actors and the population, who will enjoy more rights and more action-taking capacity upon their future, by joining forces with the private and cooperative sectors.

The recommendations suggested on the following pages rely on a partnership-based approach putting at the heart of the process both citizen and actor participation, and the responsibility of financials backers in terms of human, cultural and environmental values.

Maggie Cazal,
Urbanistes Sans Frontières

PART 2
RECOMMENDATIONS
AND EXAMPLES

Recommendation 1

Ensure a right to exist and legal protection.

Relying on legal tools

Implement reliable census tools to collect and analyze socio-economic data in order to identify services' beneficiaries and to formalize the processes and the budgets based on the actual needs and objectives.

Guarantee everyone a right to the land and the city, while relying on a legal basis strengthened by land property and co-ownership.

TOOL

Secured and simplified property titles: a legal tool

Defended by the high national council of French notaries (*Conseil supérieur du notariat*) and voted by the parliamentary assembly of Francophony (*Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie*) in July 2013, the secure and simplified property title is supposed to compensate the absence of land register in territories where lot ownership remains unknown.

This title, even though not equivalent to classic property titles, allows the lot users to secure their usage rights. It gets delivered quickly and at low cost.

www.notaires.fr/en

Recommendation 2

Guarantee participative governance.

Inhabitants: key actors

Get socio-economic actors to reinforce actions of social mediation and of legal support.
Support inhabitants thanks to social and urban project managers , qualify and quantify the needs.

Facilitate participative processes

Arrange the administrative organization of land registration and of land regularization.
Provide debate and exchange spaces to define objectives and design programs for future installations as well as for the urban equipment needed.
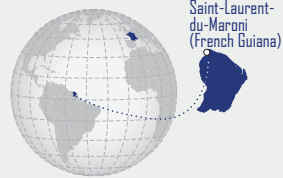
PROJECT

Urban transition of a French city in Amazonia

Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni (French Guiana)

In 2016 the international workshop of Saint-Laurent Maroni took place, organized by Ateliers de Cergy to develop a vision of what the Amazonian city will look like by 2060. Local and international professionals worked in cross-disciplinary teams to propose a vision and projects for the city of Saint-Laurent on the short, mid and long terms. (Saint-Laurent-du-Maroni - FRENCH GUIANA)

www.ateliers.org/en/

Recommendation 3

Take action on urban landscape.

Restructuration and planning

Restructure informal neighborhoods while maintaining part of their urban and social networks, by means of creating public spaces and opening the neighborhood to the circulation ways (highways, roads, streets, avenues, etc) of the neighborhoods considered "formal".

Renewal instead of sprawl

Adapt the shape of new constructions and their material to the local climate and study density as part of a strategy to renew urban spaces to avoid urban sprawl.

Create city grids and structure spaces

Introduce green paths and green spaces in informal neighborhoods to limit heat pockets and to provide a structured gridded map of the built spaces and of the other spaces, built or not.

PROJECT

Sustainable informal neighborhoods?

Sabra El Horch, informal neighborhood in the Beyrouth's suburb, 2014.
TThe population density in Sabra is 5 times higher than in Beyrouth. This project, led with ALBA University, won the 1st prize of the USF (*Urbanistes Sans Frontières* - urbanists without borders)'s sustainable development prize, thanks to its green restructuration strategy, in line with the concept and rules of the USF competition: opening a main street in the direction of the main winds; create connections with the streets of formal neighborhoods; development of open public spaces; re-accommodation of the site population in adapted habitations.
(Beirut - LEBANON)

Beirut

www.usf-f.org/?lang=en

Recommendation 4

Ensure eco-friendly service innovation.

Include renewable energies

Bring renewable energies to informal neighborhoods to make them energetically self-sufficient, in order to preserve the natural resources and decrease the inhabitants' expenses.

Fight against floods and water pollution

Handle sanitation and rainwater in an environmental-friendly way to fight floods and to fight the pollution of water tables.

Waste treatment and recycling

Organize an innovating management of the waste recycling sector (selective sorting, waste reclamation, circular economy) to fight the degradation of the environment and to create green and sustainable jobs in the neighborhoods where the unemployment rate is usually very high.

PROJECT

Experimentation in Pikine

This 8.5-hectare site presents various challenges, from the redevelopment of a precarious neighborhood to the restructuration of a school in a situation of vulnerability caused by wintering and floods, to the inclusion and valorization of underused private or religious estate and land. On this site which was collectively chosen by local authorities and local actors, USF leads an innovating pilot project for a rigorous

Pikine

experimentation of the implementation of the SDG's targets, identified and crafted with the elected leaders and with the inhabitants. (North and West Pikine - SENEGAL)

www.usf-f.org

Recommendation 5

Create human wealth and cultural values.

Include the most vulnerable populations

Promote the initiatives that aim for the socio-economic inclusion of the most vulnerable populations, such as women, elderly people, disabled people, children and young people in insertion.

Turn education and professional integration into priorities

Facilitate access to education and support education, especially through extracurricular activities in disadvantaged and precarious neighborhoods.
Give priority to the development of activities that generate a revenue and support the professional integration and entrepreneurship of women and young people.

Respect cultures and traditions

Adapt personal development solutions to get out of poverty by changing the population's beliefs, while respecting their culture and traditions.

PROJECT

Support extracurricular education and women entrepreneurship in informal neighborhoods

Casablanca

The Lydec foundation, a subsidiary of SUEZ group active in the field of neighborhood cohesion, is a public service operator that deals with water and electricity distribution, with the collection of used water and rainwater and with public lighting of the Great Casablanca area. Beyond its core mission, the Lydec foundation intends to strengthen the partnerships it has with community organizations. Through these partnerships and through the support to projects with strong social impact, Lydec wants to multiply its effort to educate and raise awareness, and wants to advocate in favor of the environment, of young people and of women entrepreneurship. (Casablanca - MOROCCO)

www.fondationlydec.ma

Recommendation 6

Anticipate urban extensions.

Anticipation to help ameliorate planning

Plan the availability of lots for urban extension in the peripheries. The goal is to keep land available in case of an anarchic development of the urban sprawl.

Take action on land property to regulate urban extension

The land kept available to regulate urban extension must respect at least 3 criteria:
- Prohibit entirely constructions located on land exposed to natural hazards (topography, nature of the soils, etc.) or located in green corridors or in direct contact with natural sites (forest areas, riverbanks, rivers, coasts, etc.), at the risk of these constructions being sanctioned to be destroyed
- Respect the legal limitations applying to the pieces of land identified for the networks and services
- Promote green spaces that satisfy quality of life's requirements, based on the location and topography of the sites.
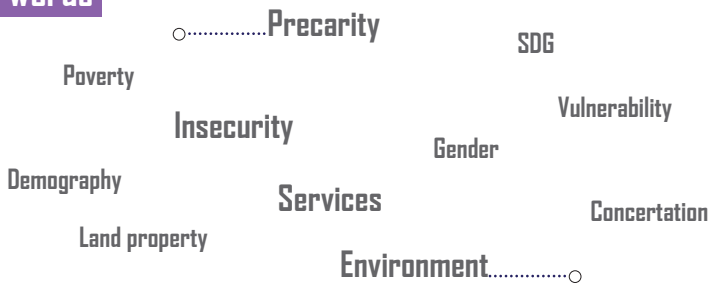
This recommendation doesn't target strict planification nor urban planning. It leaves room and leeway for quick constructions, to answer the demographic and urban explosion while limiting the damages done on nature and facilitating the connection to basic networks and services.

CONCLUSION

Memo

Informal neighborhoods aren't a fatality. But it is often easier for decision makers and more profitable for urban planners and developers to create a new city rather than to restructure precarious neighborhoods. Because of this, the most vulnerable populations often find themselves excluded and forced to survive in illegal and isolated neighborhoods or in the least favorable parts of 'formal' neighborhoods.

In emerging countries, the proliferation of constructions without permit and the growth of an informal economy make informal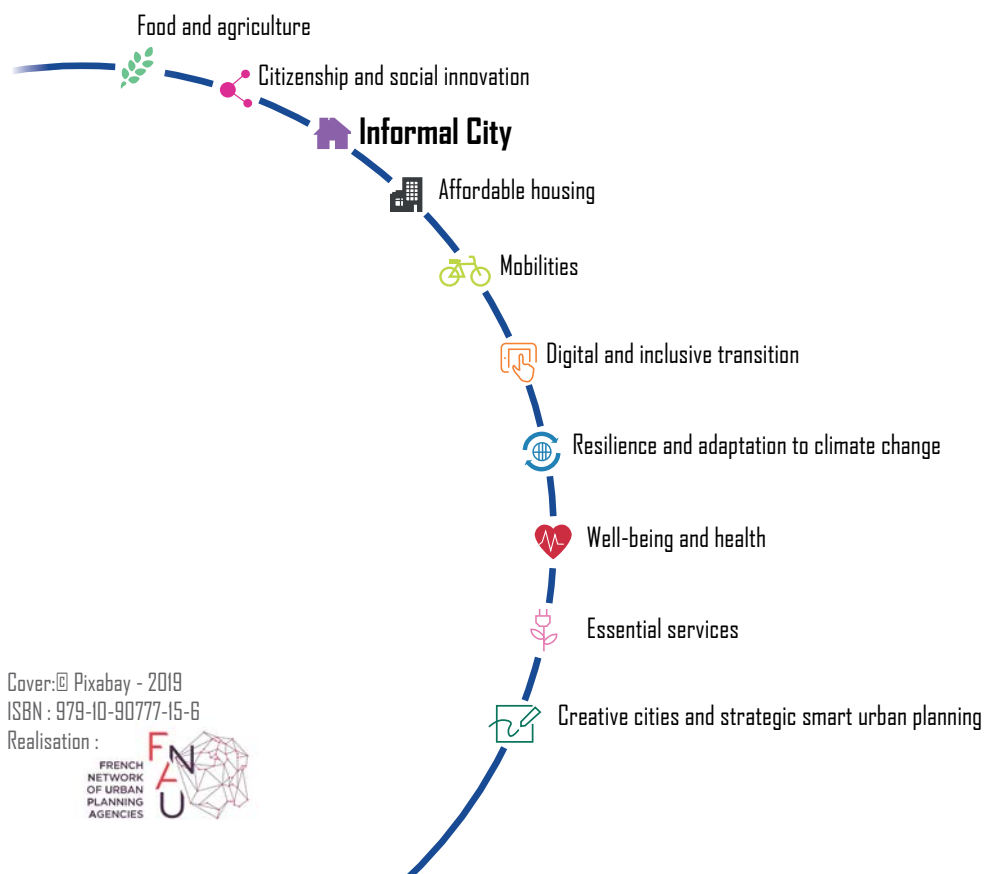 systems the ones that prevail in the management and government of the cities and territories. The informal city thus becomes a legitimate one, despite being illegal.

SDG 11, "Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable", as well as the New Urban Agenda inciting to "leave no one behind", invite us to collectively take our responsibilities as actors of the urban sector, in order to put human beings at the heart of our objectives, to create innovating solutions that protect the environment, and to develop the economic activities in an inclusive and ecological system.

P F V T

Started in 2011, the **French partnership for cities and territories (PFVT –
Partenariat Français pour la Ville et les Territoires)** is a platform meant
for the exchange and valorization of the French urban actor's expertise at the
international level. It is a multi-actor partnership headed by Hubert Julien-
Laferrière, Member of Parliament, supported by the Ministry of Europe and of
foreign affairs, the Ministry of territorial cohesion, the Ministry of the ecologic
and fair transition, and the Ministry of culture. It brings together close to 200
organizations representing the diversity of the French expertise, contributing
to the construction of a shared French vision based on a capitalization of
exchanges and of innovative and sustainable experiences.

Food and agriculture

Citizenship and social innovation

Informal City

Affordable housing

Mobilities

Digital and inclusive transition

Resilience and adaptation to climate change

Well-being and health

Essential services

Creative cities and strategic smart urban planning