



Cities in an Age of Insecurity

Inclusiveness Strategies: Why They Are Important and How They Can be Carried Out

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My task today is to focus on inclusiveness in cities in relation to growing insecurity.

Insecurity has many dimensions

- From a city perspective, it likely means threats from crime, terrorism, other violence and possibly natural catastrophe
- From a community or an individual perspective, it likely means **all** of these and, especially if you are poor, it means also vulnerability to displacement, forced eviction, hunger, disease and overall lack of physical well-being. This is particularly true for the one billion people currently living in slums and un-serviced, sprawling informal settlements surrounding many major cities.

As inequality rises in a city, generally speaking a sense of insecurity rises as well. It is somewhat trite to say that today – echoing Dickens -- that the stories of cities are often the “Tale of Two Cities.” This is true in both the Global South and Global North. There are the rich and the poor, the legal and the illicit, the formal and the informal, the included and the excluded. In this set of “dualisms” it is the second half that suffers most from insecurity in a city -- the poor, the illicit, the informal, the excluded – for they are usually outside the benefits, opportunities and protections that they can offer.

Too often, this second part of the equation is seen as the threat to the larger city. But such dualisms, as usefully succinct as they might be, are also overly simplistic. To use another dualism, a “we they” approach runs counter to everyone’s interests and certainly counter to greater security. Inclusiveness on the other hand, while not a panacea, can help to lessen insecurity at both a city and individual level.

At IHC Global, we advance practical solutions to equitable urban development. Inclusiveness is at the heart of this. Inclusiveness in cities has a spatial, economic and social component. Each of which is equally important. Inclusiveness also has an important psychological component – the sense of belonging or not belonging, the sense of having or not having roots in the city, the sense of being at home or not. It is to that level of inclusiveness that the economic, social and spatial must lead in order to impact security.

Context:

We live in an urban world. And a rapidly urbanizing one.

Rapid urbanization is manifested often the proliferation of informal settlements and the increasing concentration of urban poverty. Globally, approximately one billion people live in slums and informal settlements – that is approximately a quarter of the urban population. Looked at another way, in the ballpark of 3 X the entire population of the United States.

Informal settlements and slums are growing more rapidly than other areas. In some areas of sub-Saharan Africa, it is not uncommon for more people to live in informal settlements than to live in the formal city, “outside” the protection and the reach of the city.

According to the United Nations, a slum is defined by lacking one of five things: Access to potable water, access to sanitary facilities, secure tenure, sufficient living space, durable shelter. Informal settlements where people lack these are growing at a more rapid rate than the rest of the population with an increasing concentration of poverty and vulnerability. Once there, it is hard to pull yourself out. And it is all the more difficult and all the more dangerous if you are a girl or a woman.

These are truly deplorable conditions. Not conducive to good health or productivity or a sense of belonging to the larger fabric of the city and its society. It is a no-brainer to think that such living conditions are not tenable let alone right and just.

Urbanization has been historically associated with economic development. It still can be. And this is the promise to be realized. Equitable growth. But because of a convergence of the effects of globalization and the acceleration of growth, this is not always the case. Instead we can see an emerging pattern of increasing inequality and informality.

One billion. Hard to imagine. But each is also an individual and in thinking about this subject it is important also not to lose sight of humanity. Kibera article – voice of an individual.

Global Goal 11 and Habitat III

The 193 countries signing on to Agenda 2030 to eradicate poverty embraced 17 Global Goals, one of which was focused on cities. That Goal – Goal 11 --- calls on cities to be inclusive, safe, sustainable and resilient. At IHC Global, we were an active advocate for Goal 11 and our coalition of private sector, civil society and individuals around the world subscribe to the idea that none of these conditions can be realized unless a city is inclusive.

Informal settlements at the fringes of a city – not formally recognized nor benefiting from any service delivery – manifest spatial, economic and social exclusion.

However, some approaches to greater inclusiveness are simple and have been shown to work:

- Provision of city services
- Regularization of tenure
- Physical integration into the city – ref Medellin, the apartheid city
- Participation and democratic practices
- Valuing of the people – cf. Medellin provides an excellent example of how this occurred through the bridging of the physical divide through transportation and accessibility, making it easier to get to jobs and work, investing in infrastructure and services, siting cultural and other valuable assets in formerly marginalized communities and actively engaging all stakeholders including the residents, private sector and civil society.

These increase security of the residents of these communities. And they increase the security of those who live and work in other parts of the city.

For true inclusiveness to occur, with that important element of “belonging,” it can begin by developing a shared vision of what the city can become, informed by people’s participation and engagement, followed by city-level planning for equitable growth and investment with opportunities to help realize that vision. Citizen engagement is key as is a share in the economic benefits that equitable growth brings.

Having global attention on urban issues in this lead up to Habitat III and the central issue of inclusiveness central to the New Urban Agenda will be helpful to our urban future. We should all be concerned about these deep divisions that are now found throughout our world for they undermine security for us all.