GLOBAL REFLEXION ABOUT SLUMS

1. THE COMPLEX AND MOVING REALITY OF SLUMS

The multiplicity of ways to approach slums reflects the complexity of these settlements. There have been many attempts to define slums, using a large range of words and expressions but the definitions are continuously being questioned, highlighting the uniqueness of the slum and its socio-spatial evolving environment.

1.1. What is a slum?

This part discusses the definition of a slum and highlights the main features of these settlements.

a) A plurality of terms referring to poor housing conditions

The term *slum* qualifies in a very imprecise manner a complex and moving reality. Originally meaning "a bleak or destitute place", the word *slum* is generally used to designate an urban residential area marked by substandard housing and often developed **outside the legal or administrative planning frameworks** (Lévy and Lussault, pp 438-439). The phenomenon of *slums*, predominantly significant in metropolises of emerging countries, raises a major development challenge illustrating inequalities and a non-control of the urban growth. Initially derived from the lack of affordable housing near the job areas -or due to an inadequacy of the housing to the practices and constraints of the population with precarious living conditions- the slum is developed by its inhabitants and both the housing and infrastructure are constructed outside the usual market and public service mechanisms. These areas are often highly populated, tight and built by "non-skilled persons" in areas unsuitable for living, implying health, environment and social issues. Frequently illegal, the informal settlements appears to be a stigma of poverty associated with the informal sector. It is also sometimes considered as a form of contemporary vernacular architecture (Petropoulou 2007; Fathy, 1970; Berenstein Jacques, 2001).[2]

Several terms are associated with poor housing conditions; most prevalent are the terms *slum*, *informal settlement* or *squatter settlement*. The differences between these words arise mainly from the nature of settlements to which they refer. The expression *informal settlement* emphasizes the unplanned nature of these settlements, whereas *squatter settlement* refers to the illegal occupation of lands or structures by the inhabitants. The expression *spontaneous settlement* is sometimes used to highlight the initiative of the populations who themselves have built their houses. These terms are increasingly synonymous for slums (e.g. UN-Habitat 2003). In addition, they are not mutually exclusive categories, i.e. an informal settlement could also be a squatter settlement (Patel, 2012).

Informal or clandestine settlement: residential area which does not meet the legal standards of the property, construction or equipment. (Le Tellier and Iraki, 2009)

Squatter settlement: residential area which has developed without legal claims to the land and/or permission from the concerned authorities to build; as a result of their illegal or semi-legal status, infrastructure and services are usually inadequate.[3]

Spontaneous settlement: hutting areas with huts erected in a haphazard manner without proper access, without protected water supply and drainage arrangements and so congested as to allow of little free

---

[2] GERBEAUD, Fanny - L'habitat spontané : une architecture adaptée pour le développement des métropoles ? Le cas de Bangkok (Thaïlande) – Résumé de la thèse : Urbanisme, société, 2012

[3] Defining squatter settlements, Hari Srinivas: http://www.gdrc.org/uem/define-squatter.html

flow of air to get in. Although the term 'spontaneous' suggests no forethought or planning, many such clandestine settlements are the results of 'planned invasions' by the initial occupants, who subdivide the land on a pre-arranged cadaster and provide a basic infrastructure (Gerbeaud, 2012).

Many other appellations are used interchangeably with *slums,* according to the country and often referring to different aspects or characteristics of slums: bidonvilles in former French colonies (e.g. Cameroon), ghettos (e.g. United States), shantytowns, slums or squatter settlements in formerly British colonies (e.g. India), favelas (e.g. Brazil), etc. In India, the slums are often given local names: *jhopad pattis* in Mumbai, *jhuggi jompri* in Delhi, *cheri* in Chennai (Saglio-Yatzimirsky, Landy, 2014, p20.). These terms usually reflect a pejorative content which contributes to stigmatize the areas and the population living in them. The diversity of terminology to name the zones of illegal occupation is significant of the historical and **local processes of stigmatization** (Racine, 1997). Basically, regardless of the term used, three criteria are attached to these areas (Racine *et al*., 1999): their illegality, their unhealthy condition and their specific culture (Saglio-Yatzimirsky, Landy, 2014).

In this report, the word "slum" is used only in reference to squatter settlements where the land is occupied illegally, and not in the broader sense of precarious forms of housing and poor shelters. It does not deal with Indian "unauthorized colonies" nor with the run-down formal dwelling that are numerous in the centres of megalopolises (Saglio-Yatzimirsky, Landy, 2014).

a) <u>Common characteristics of slums</u>

Qualifying definitions, characteristics, quality and examples of squatter settlements vary widely, with the inherent danger of generalization, but an attempt has been made to identify key features which are common to such areas and distinguish them. Indeed, while the size and nature of the slum differ according to the place, the country and the culture, such characteristics of slums pertain to the location of slums, densities and overcrowding, the status of basic infrastructure, the affordability of housing in slums for urban poor, ownership structure, residential mobility and migration patterns of slum dwellers and community building and leadership. The characteristics of slum dwellers pertain to the economic conditions of the households, their migration behaviour and the demographic composition (Patel, 2012).

Visually, the slum is identified as an area of the city with **inadequate housing**, deficient basic requirements, overcrowding and congestion. The lack of durable housing refers to the self-built houses made of scrap materials or recovered materials, such as corrugated iron and plastic. The slum area is also mainly defined by its non-integration in the "formal" city. Indeed, in most cases, the servicing is not assured and the area lacks infrastructures such as piped water, electricity supply and sewage disposal facilities. Some common features are also identified in the location of these areas. The informal settlements grow on land without status, such as banks of rivers and canals, or on vacant because swampy or unhealthy and squatted land. These areas are usually found in the periphery of cities, public parks, or near railroad tracks, rivers, lagoons or city trash dump sites. In most cases, it is about lands which have been classified unsuitable by the planning authorities: the vulnerability of the territory, inclined to climatic hazards or industrial pollution, makes the place unfit for human living. So much less identifiable, informal settlements occupies some gaps in the urban fabric and participates in its densification.

The mode of access to land differs depending on the country and on the location. If the land mostly belongs to the public sector, the right to access to the land often has to be required from a person or a group of person which has illegally assumed the right to own the plot. As a result, the **insecurity of land tenure** is a major characteristic of slums and the threat of eviction is the every-day issue of the

population. The constructions are usually financed by the future residents' family or by a credit system integrated in a social network. The self-built plays a key role in the construction, however it is not automatic and sometimes private companies can contribute to build the dwelling. Even if the houses can be built by professionals, the materials used are in a poor quality and made by a nearby small crafty company. The price of the material is quite expensive because it is produced in a small quantity. By definition, this habitat therefore lies outside all the classic circuits of production and is characterized by specific responses to each situation according to the possibilities, opportunities for everyone. It is characteristic of urban poverty and is parallel to the poverty inherent social problems.

The settlement is inhabited by **poor people from outside the city**, generally from the rural areas and have migrated to the city to search for employment. These areas are often characterized by an active **informal economy**; many live from small work or parasitic activities, such as rag-picking, small services, and sale of cigarettes or sex work. Finally, the sense of community and solidarity is extremely developed and a strong attachment to the land from the people is perceived.

Despite the identification of common characteristics in these areas, there is no general agreement regarding the definition of the slum. It has been defined in different ways by town-planners, social workers, administrators, welfare agencies, and sociologists (Rao, 1990).

1.2. The divergences in the official definitions[4]

There have been attempts to find a broad consensus on what is considered a slum, nonetheless several definitions prevail both in theory and practice.

a) The Cities Alliance Definition

One relevant definition is offered by the organization - Cities Alliance, which is comprised of a global coalition of cities, national governments, non-governmental and multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and UN-Habitat. The Cities Alliance definition primarily focuses on the issue of slums as reflected in their mantra "Cities without Slums." In the "Cities without Slums Action Plan," Cities Alliance (1999) provided the following definition of a slum:

"Slums are neglected parts of cities where housing and living conditions are appallingly poor. Slums range from high‑density, squalid central city tenements to spontaneous squatter settlements without legal recognition or rights, sprawling at the edge of cities. Some are more than fifty years old, some are land invasions just underway. Slums have various names, Favelas, Kampungs, Bidonvilles, Tugurios, yet share the same miserable living conditions."

This definition provides a general description of a slum. The definition's main parameters identifying slums are negligence and legal recognition, presumably, by city governments as legitimate and recognized parts of the city. Secondly, there are two parameters that the definition explicitly considers unimportant for defining slums: the location in a city, and the age of a slum (Patel, 2012).

---

[4] PATEL, Amit – Slumulation: an integrated simulation framework to explore spatio-temporal dynamics of slum formation in Ahmedabad, India – 271p. Dissertation submitted to the graduate Faculty of George Mason University, 2012

a) UN-Habitat Definitions

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UNHCP), now referred as UN-Habitat, is the United Nations (UN) agency for human settlements. The UN General Assembly mandated it to promote socially and environmentally sustainable cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. Thus, it may be worthwhile to discuss how the UN-Habitat defines a slum. One of the first UN-Habitat definitions (2002) of a slum is as follows:

"A slum is a contiguous settlement where the inhabitants are characterized as having inadequate housing and basic services. A slum is often not recognized and addressed by the public authorities as an integral or equal part of the city."

This definition emphasizes poor physical conditions of housing stock and a lack of basic services as important elements to identify slum areas. The definition is also explicit about spatial dimension of slums (e.g. "contiguous settlement"). The third element making this definition distinctive is the lack of recognition of these areas as legitimate constituencies (e.g. "not recognized and addressed by the public authority as an integral or equal part of the city"). Over time, this definition has undergone several revisions. The most current definition adapted by the UN-Habitat (2006) is as follows:

"UN-HABITAT defines a slum household as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following:

  i) *Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions.*
  ii) *Sufficient living space which means not more than three people sharing the same room.*
  iii) *Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price.*
  iv) *Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people.*
  v) *Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions."*

This definition is different from the definition discussed above in two important ways. First, it takes a depravity based approach in identifying slums. It recognizes that not all slums are homogeneous and not all slum dwellers suffer from the same degree of deprivation. The degree of deprivation depends on how many of the five elements are lacking within a slum household, which is a significant improvement over a dichotomous slum/non-slum approach of other definitions. For example, this definition can differentiate between the slums that lack only water and the slums that lack both water and sanitation. In contrast, a simple dichotomous approach will treat both these areas as slums without making any distinction based on the degree of deprivation. Secondly, this revised definition relies on a single household's living condition as opposed to that of a neighbourhood. This is an important distinction from the previous definition because it does not rely on a minimum contiguous area or population size to recognize a place as a slum. This definition also has a practicability in determining whether or not a particular area is a slum. For example, it is possible to objectively measure the overcrowding in a house or to determine whether the house has access to basic services or not.

b) Census of India Definition

The definitions suggested by international development agencies are not always universally accepted by their member countries. Many countries have their own slum definitions. Usually, they are developed for the purpose of conducting a census.

Under Section-3 of the *Slum Area Improvement and Clearance Act*, 1956, slums have been defined as "*residential areas where dwellings are in any respect unfit for human habitation by reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangements and designs of such buildings, narrowness or faulty*

arrangement of streets, lack of ventilation, light, sanitation facilities or any combination of these factors which are detrimental to safety, health and morals."[5]

Three types of slums have been defined in Census, namely, Notified, Recognized and Identified:
For the purpose of Census of India, 2011, the slum areas broadly constitute of:

   i) *All notified areas in a town or city notified as 'Slum' by State, Union territories Administration or Local Government under any Act including a 'Slum Act' may be considered as **Notified slums***
   ii) *All areas recognized as 'Slum' by State, Union territories Administration or Local Government, Housing and Slum Boards, which may have not been formally notified as slum under any act may be considered as **Recognized slums***
   iii) *A compact area of at least 300 population or about 60-70 households of poorly built congested tenements, in unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities. Such areas should be identified personally by the Charge Officer and also inspected by an officer nominated by Directorate of Census Operations. This fact must be duly recorded in the charge register. Such areas may be considered as **Identified slums***

This definition relies on the legal recognition of various public authorities to determine the slum status of a specific place. In addition, it emphasizes density and overcrowding as important criteria qualifying an area as a slum (e.g. "compact area", "congested tenements"). It also stresses the poor housing conditions and a lack of basic services (e.g. "poorly built", "inadequate infrastructure"). The definition of Census of India does not recognize a place with 60 or less households as a slum. In this case, illegality is not part of the definition of "slum", where only criteria related to the actual housing and layout of the area are considered. Yet, the designation "squatter settlements" does imply de facto illegal occupation. A distinction has then to be made between the criteria used in the official documents to identify the slums, and the perception of those slums. None of these definitions include a "cultural" criterion – nonetheless, how slums and squatter settlements are perceived by the planning authorities or the legal system is often biased by cultural prejudices (Dupont and Ramanathan, 2007).

Hence, the multiplicity of definitions poses a **challenge to researchers and policymakers** when trying to study slums. In particular, the choice of a specific definition has a direct implication on the estimation of slum population. Using one definition to calculate a city's slum population can lead to an estimate that is quite different when using another definition. As an example, the Census of India (2001) reported 52.4 million people living in slums whereas a report from the Committee on Slum Statistics revised the definition and back-estimated the number of slum dwellers to 75.26 million in 2001 (MHUPA 2010). However, neither of these come close to the UN-Habitat's estimate of 157 million slum dwellers.

The choice of definition is of particular interest for policymakers since the enumeration of slum dwellers has economic and political implications. For example, a greater number of slum dwellers may mean that a national government needs to allocate more resources for welfare programs. From the research point of view, the multiplicity of definitions across agencies makes it difficult to compare slum situations across places. Similarly, when the definitions are frequently changing within an agency, it complicates the process of analysing a slum situation over time.

---

[5] Primary Census Abstract for Slum, 2011, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India New Delhi, 30-09-2013, http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-Documents/Slum-26-09-13.pdf

1.3.   Theories of slums

As a global and complex phenomenon implying a plurality of definitions and of social representations, slums have raised the interest of researchers, anthropologists, economist, sociologist, planners etc. Various approaches on slums have conducted to the elaboration of concepts and theories about slums and the population living in them. However, as pointed out by Anyana Roy in the article *Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning, Journal of the American*, *"the study of cities is today marked by a paradox: much of the urban growth of the 21st century is taking place in the developing world, but many of the theories of how cities function remain rooted in the developed world."* (Roy, 2005)

a)   The slum as a nuisance

Over the twentieth century, slums were mostly represented as a problem of the third-world cities, a product of dysfunctions and policies implemented were primarily the eradication of these precarious habitats. According to AR Desai and S Devadas Pillai, *"slum offends the eyes, nose and conscience but it exists all the same."* (Desai, Pillai, 1990)[6]. Considering the hygiene and physical aspect, slums are the "bad side" of the cities and need to be cleaned. This trend is reflected in the representation of slums by the inhabitants of the city, as in the official documents; evidence of the stigmatization process. According to a government report on slums in Chennai, *"slum problem is not only a problem of shelter; it is a problem of health and hygiene. A number of widespread epidemic diseases emanate from the slums. These slums are not only a nuisance and danger to the slum dwellers but to the rest of the population."*[7] Odette Louiset, in her book entitled *L'oubli des villes de l'Inde*, explains that *"slums are usually presented as socially and politically intolerable growths, even dangerous. They are shown as the antithesis of accomplished urbanity, often apprehended through their desirable extinction."* (Louiset, 2011)

Shlomo Angel claims that the "*informal housing contributes to the failure of land markets in developing cities."* If the view that the informal sector is a limiting factor of economic efficiency is adopted, then the slums must be resolved (Angel, 2000).[8] In the same sense, Pfieiffer and Hall pay particular attention to an urbanization category which they call the cities "informal hyper growth". In the book *Urban Future 21: A Global Agenda for 21st Century Cities*, they explain that this phenomenon is not just restricted to southern cities but, through migration, *"developed world cities are overrun by the developing world"*, making them ungovernable (Pfieiffer and al.).[9] In conclusion, these trends contributed to depict the slum as a *"tangle of pathologies"* (Roy, 2011), requiring actions for their removal.

a)   The slum as an heroic entrepreneurship

In contrast, the slums were also studied through a positive vision, highlighting **the initiative of the residents**. Abrams (1964) illustrates the process of squatting as a "conquest" of city areas for the purpose of shelter, defined both by the law of force and the force of law. Turner (1969) takes a positive outlook and portrays squatter settlements as "*highly successful solutions to housing problems in urban*

---

[6] http://www.chs.ubc.ca/archives/files/HS-308.pdf

[7] Industrial and Economic Planning Division of TCPO, "Slums in Chennai"

[8] BARTOLI Sarah, « " Eliminer les bidonvilles = éliminer la pauvreté ", ou les charmes pervers d'une fausse évidence », *L'Économie politique*, 2011/1 n° 49, p. 44-60.

[9] ROY Ananya, "Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning, Journal of the American*",* 2005, [online] Planning Association, 71:2, 147-158

areas of developing countries."[10] Similarly, *"Koolhaas is taken with the inventiveness of its residents as they survive the travails of the megacity. He sees such experimental responses as generating 'ingenious, critical alternative systems', a type of 'self-organization' creating 'intense emancipatory zones' (Godlewski, 2010: 8–9)."[11]* The informal settlement is perceived as a result of incremental building made from a spatial appropriation process. Indeed, spontaneous houses ensue of the materials, the land and resources available at a given time, without attaching importance to the origin, rules or architectural models. They are continuously adapted until assimilation into the urban fabric, hence the importance of considering the slum in their spatial context and through their evolution over time (Gerbeaud, 2013). Alfredo Billembourg asserts that *"[the people] build their own house because then [they] are in touch very much better with [their] social spatial environment. And that's what makes [slums] so interesting, that they are complex social spatial environments"* (Alfredo Billembourg about Torre David).[12] According to Odette Louiset, *"it is [in the slum] that best showed the crossing of three continuities: Indianness and urbanity are combined to make the city. [These areas] support a workforce needed to run the city "conventional*" (Louiset, 2011).

Beyond the creative inventiveness of the people who self-built their house, the slum is seen as a result of the **incapacity of the state to provide housing** and as an evidence of the system failure. The economist Hernando De Soto suggests that *"informal economy is the people's spontaneous and creative response to the State's incapacity to satisfy the basic needs of the impoverished masses"* (*The other path*, 1989). In *Planet of Slums* (2006), Mike Davis, urban theorist and political activist, discusses the slums as a *"spatial translation of the liberal economy and as a proof of its failure, slum dwellers while representing the contemporary figure of the lumpenproletariat"*. Illich even considers that *"the slum people are challenging Western society implicitly putting in question our conceptions of work, freedom and consumption"*.

b) <u>An informal life?</u>

According to Desai and Pillai, *"reduced to its basic features a slum is nothing but an area of sub-standard housing... and area of darkness, despair and poverty"* (Desai and Pillai). The definitions speak only about the place and the dwellings which the poor occupy and they speak very little about the people who occupy them (Rao, 1990). The slum is also a concentration of *"a population that has been developing and creating its own way of life, a counter-culture, to protect itself from the outside world"* (Lapeyronnie, 2008).[13] According to Oscar Lewis, the slum dwellers develop a distinctive culture – a culture of poverty- as a means of both survival and self-respect (Lewis, Culture of Poverty)
In the official report on slums in Chennai, it is asserted that *"slum is a way of life, a special character which has its own set of norms and values reflected in poor sanitation, health values, health practices, deviant behaviours and social isolation."[14]*

---

[10] http://www.gdrc.org/uem/define-squatter.html

[11] ROY Anyana, 2011, "*Slumdog cities*: rethinking subaltern urbanism" [online], International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, volume 35.2, 223-38, Joint Editors and Blackwell Publishing Ltd,

[12] http://offcite.org/2012/10/19/interview-with-alfredo-brillembourg-about-torre-david-and-the-future-of-the-global-south

[13] SAGLIO-YATZIMIRSKY Marie-Caroline, LANDY Frederic, *Megacity slums, social exclusion, space and Urban Policies in Brazil and India*, Urban Challenges Vol.1, Imperial College press, London 2014 – 445p. (p12).

[14] Industrial and Economic Planning Division of TCPO, "Slums in Chennai" pp URL: 159.http://tcpomud.gov.in/Divisions/IEP/Urban%20Land%20Price%20Scenario%20Chennai/Slums%20in%20Chennai-5.doc

Bayat argues that *"the slum may not be characterized by radical religiosity but it does engender a distinctive type of political agency: 'informal life'. 'Informal life', typified by 'flexibility, pragmatism, negotiation, as well as constant struggle for survival and self-development' is the 'habitus of the dispossessed'"*. (Bayat, 2007).[15]

Ananya Roy questions this relation between the space and people: do the **"slums make the slum dweller or the slum dweller the slums?"**

c) Informality as a planning tool

Understanding the complex phenomena of slums in the cities implies a study on the notion of informality. In this field, Anyana Roy has led an important research work, focusing particularly on the case of India. Her theories and work are the reference on the conception of informality.

In her book "*Urban Informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning, Journal of the American*", Anyana Roy suggests that the informality is not a separate sector from the formality, *"but rather a series of transactions that connect different economies and spaces to one another"* (Roy, 2005). The *"urban informality is not restricted to the bounded space of the slum or deproletarianized/entrepreneurial labor; instead, it is a mode of the production of space that connects the seemingly separated geographies of slum and suburb."* In this sense, Roy's statement differs from the previous approaches of slums, by introducing the **end of the dichotomy between formal and informal**; *"the site of new informality is the rural/urban interface, complex hybridity of rural and urban functions and forms."* (Roy, 2005).

Moreover, she argues that informality can be seen as a planning tool to product space. As example, Delhi's farmhouses, Kolkata's new towns and Mumbai's shopping malls, are no more legal than the metonymic slum. But they are expressions of class power and can therefore command infrastructure, services and legitimacy. Most importantly, they come to be designated as 'formal' by the state while other forms of informality remain criminalized. Weinstein (2008) shows how various shopping centers in Mumbai had been "built illegally…by the city's largest and most notorious mafia organization, on land belonging to the state government's public works department". Or, in the case of Delhi, Ghertner (2008) notes that a vast proportion of city land-use violates some planning or building law, such that much of the construction in the city can be viewed as 'unauthorized'. He poses the vital question of how and why the law has come to designate slums as 'nuisance' and the residents of slums as a 'secondary category of citizens', while legitimizing illegal and informal 'developments that have the "worldclass" look'. As a concept, urban informality therefore cannot be understood in ontological or topological terms. Instead, it is a heuristic device that uncovers the ever-shifting urban relationship between the legal and illegal, legitimate and illegitimate, authorized and unauthorized. Urban informality thus makes possible an understanding of how the slum is produced through the governmental administration of population (Chatterjee, 2004), as well as how the bourgeois city and its edifices of prosperity are produced through the practices of the state. As a matter of fact, these examples show how urban informality is produced by the state itself; "the planning and legal apparatus of the state has the power to determine when to enact this suspension, to determine what is informal and what is not, and to determine which forms of informality will thrive and which will disappear." Thus, "urban informality is a **heuristic device that serves to deconstruct the very basis of state legitimacy** and its various instruments: maps, surveys, property, zoning and, most importantly, the law." (Roy, 2011)

---

[15] ROY Anyana, 2011, *"Slumdog cities: rethinking subaltern urbanism"* [online], International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, volume 35.2, 223-38, Joint Editors and Blackwell Publishing Ltd,

Number of theories have been elaborated on slums and informality, reflecting different approaches. The idea and the definition of the slum determine the policies and the type of interventions toward informal housing.

In conclusion, the slums, as unique socio-spatial complex entities, have raised the interest of researchers from various fields. If common features can be emphasized in the slums over the world, a broad consensus has still not been elaborated regarding the definition of these settlements, and each authority use its own local definition in estimating the slums. Theories on slums illustrate the plurality of approaches and representation, from the rejection, even the disgust, to the fascination and admiration.

2. SLUM POLICIES IN INDIA: THE OSCILLATION BETWEEN REJECTION AND RECOGNITION

Policies towards slums are closely interrelated to the representation on slums: policies influence social representation and social representation influences the policies. In India, the actions towards slums have been both comprehensive and exclusive, showing the contradictions faced by the government in addressing slums issue. A review of the different government's approaches on slums will be presented in this part.

1.1. Planning system in India

First of all, broad explanations regarding the organization of the planning system in India is required. Twenty-eight states and seven union territories together form India, and each State has his own government. Thus, decisions regarding planning orientations are taken at different levels, as illustrated in the figure1 below:
- the national level, the central government, represented by the Ministry of urban and rural development, launches a national scheme, which has to be approved by the Planning commission of India[16],
- the state level, under the Directorate of Town and Country planning
- the district level, under the local government
- the city level: metropolitan cities have their own planning agency, like the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) in Chennai
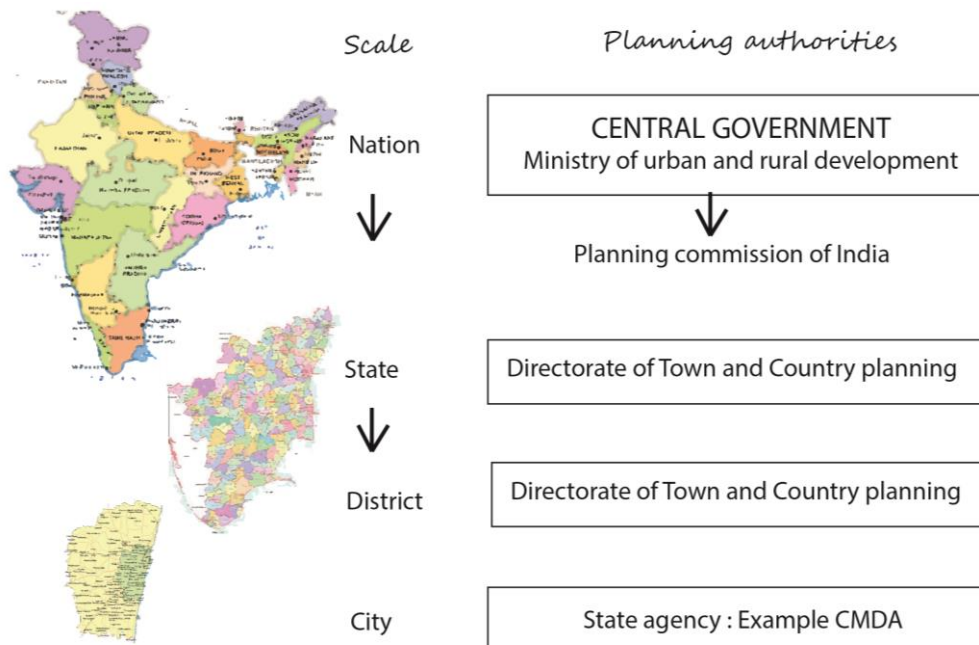

Figure 1: Different scales for planning in India- Source: K.Hochart, 2013

---

[16] The planning commission of India is a central agency, under the Ministry of urban and rural development, set up in 1950. The biggest projects formulated by the planning commission of India, have to be approved by the Ministry of urban and rural development before implementation. The ministry gives the main planning orientations of the country.

The system of planning is elaborated on a five year plan basis. The economy of India is based in part on planning through its five-year plans, which are developed, executed and monitored by the Planning Commission of India. The first five plan has been elaborated in 1951; the twelfth plan is currently underway (2012-2017). In 1975, an important law for planning, the 73rd amendment of Town and Country planning Act, confides the power and the funds to the local bodies. This process of **administrative deconcentration** permitted to the local authorities to implement planning project.

The urbanization policies and the choice in the industrial location are decided at the regional level. At the local level, the land use planning and the control of urban land values is managed, as well as the housing and slum upgrading or the policy in poverty reduction. Finally, the master plan[17] for a city is elaborated at the city level.

2.1. *Evolution of slum policies*

The government's first initiatives to tackle the urban poverty issue were introduced after Independence but the specific schemes were implemented only by the 1970s. This first paragraph enumerates the actions of the government, whereas the second part highlights the limitations of these programmes. As a support for understanding, the Appendix1: policy timeline presents the schemes in a table and can be consulted.

a) Government's initiatives in reducing urban poverty

The National Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, 1956 was a pioneering law that empowered the government to notify slums, including measures for improving the old housing stock under conditions, and demolition if dilapidated buildings under others. This Act was implemented first in Delhi and then extended to other big cities. It introduced a distinction between the notified and non-notified slums; likely to generate a new line of exclusion for the provision of basic services.[18] In 1972, the Central Scheme for Environmental Improvement in Slum Areas was launched. It aimed at providing basic infrastructure in zones officially designated as slums (according to the 1956 Act) and by the same token some guaranteeing protection against eviction for 10 years. The government introduced the poverty issue in the Fifth five-year plan (1974-1979), without specifying distinction between rural and urban poverty. As part of this plan, the National slum development program was implemented in 1977. It included grants from the central government (from the Planning Commission) to the states as well as a loan component, in order to finance physical infrastructure, construction of community centers and primary health centers, social amenities and shelter up gradation.

The Sixth plan (1980-1985) then approached the problem in a more structured manner in three stages:
  a) Identification and measurement
  b) Developing realistic targets
  c) Formulation of specific programmes

This Sixth plan did not directly address urban poverty issues. However, it provided for moving nearly six million urban poor above the poverty line essentially through the provision of additional

---

[17] Master plans are instruments used by urban local governments as forward planning tools by **anticipating urban development** and making provisions for the same in terms of the allocation of land for various uses, the regulation of land development and the provision of infrastructure.

consumption benefits and better and more equitable distribution of health, sanitation, housing, education, drinking water, slum up gradation and environmental programmes. The Seventh plan (1985-90) constituted the first attempt to address urban poverty issues directly. It took explicit note of the growing incidence of poverty in urban areas and overcrowding in relatively unskilled and low paid jobs in the informal sector. Several urban poverty alleviation programmes, were initiated during the latter part of the Seventh plan and continued during the eighth plan (1992-1997) also. The housing schemes, particularly, the policy guidelines of the National Commission on Urbanization in 1988 and the National Housing Policy in 1994 introduced a change in the role of the State: the State should only be a facilitator of housing, not a builder.

From 1950 to 2000, the in-situ up gradation or the rehabilitation are the interventions privileged by the government. These pragmatic and short term approach - improving the living conditions of squatters where they are based rather than relocation or rehousing them – does not, however, guarantee them the rights of occupancy or protect them from demolitions and eviction et the land owning agency comes up with other town-planning projects of "better" utility on occupied lands (Priya, 1993, P.829)[19]

b) Barriers in programmes for slums

In implementing the up gradation schemes, the government has nonetheless encountered different types of barriers, some being institutional, and other financial or operational. As a matter of fact, the activities were based on availability of central government grants with matching state funds, which were not released from time to time. This resulted in inadequate coverage of the population and encouraged a top-down approach at the national level on the basis of feedback from the functionaries directly working at the grassroots level. At times, *ad hoc* interventions were made, driven often by political and administrative, rather than economic, considerations and the actual situation in the field. This has resulted in a multiplicity of programmes with varying components directed to the same target groups and lack of convergence or proper coordination, sequences and linkages among them. There has also not been satisfactory feedback from the field, to initiate corrective mechanisms. In this context, the planning commission set up the Hashim committee, to review and rationalise these centrally sponsored schemes for poverty alleviation programmes and employment generation. In pursuance of these recommendations, the Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana has been launched in 1997 and earlier programmes like Nehru Rozgar Yojana (NRY), Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Program (PMI UPEP) and Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP) have been phased out.[20]

The SJSRY is a centrally sponsored scheme applicable to all urban areas with expenditure to be shared in the ration 75:25 between the Centre and the states/UTs. Two sub themes:
- Urban self-employment programme
- Urban wage employment programme

Shelter upgradation component has been merged with National Slum Development Programme (Ravinder *and al.*, 2001).

Globally, until 2000, the investment in the Government's five year plans for city politics and housing has stayed very limited. Besides, the legislation on protection of the green spaces in urban suburb has been ignored (by the squatter settlements but also by some buildings built with derogation*)*, reflecting the gap between the theory and the reality.

---

[19] SAGLIO-YATZIMIRSKY Marie-Caroline, LANDY Frederic, *Megacity slums, social exclusion, space and Urban Policies in Brazil and India*, Urban Challenges Vol.1, Imperial College press, London 2014 – 445p.
[20] http://www.mrc.gov.in/SJSRY

2.2.   Policy shift: the new strategy for "Slum-Free City Planning"

Under the slum improvement programs, the government was mainly focused on improving the conditions of life in the city's slums, by providing basic infrastructure or by converting kutcha houses (hut made up of wood, mud, straw and dry leaves) into pucca houses (cement house).[21] Recently, since 2000s, under the JnNURM, and today renamed under RAY program, the objectives have tend towards the redevelopment of the whole area, implying rebuilding of tenements or resettling of the residents.

a)   The massive city-modernisation scheme JnNURM

The 2005 Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM) is a massive city-modernisation scheme launched by the Government of India under Ministry of Urban Development. Named after Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, the scheme was officially inaugurated by Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh as a programme meant to improve the quality of life and infrastructure in the cities. It was launched in 2005 for a seven-year period (up to March 2012) to encourage cities to initiate steps for bringing phased improvements in their civic service levels. The government has extended the tenure of the mission for two years, from April 2012 to March 31, 2014. JnNURM targets 65 strategic urban centers with strong economic growth potential. The aim is to create 'economically productive, efficient, equitable and responsive Cities' by a strategy of upgrading the social and economic infrastructure in cities, provision of Basic Services to Urban Poor (BSUP) and wide-ranging urban sector reforms to strengthen municipal governance in accordance with the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. Improvement of road network, storm water drains, bus rapid transit system, water supply, solid waste management, sewage treatment, river and lake improvement, slum improvement and rehabilitation are the projects falling under the scope of JnNURM. The mission supports public private partnerships, and is accompanied by the creation of special economic zones (SEZ, under the Special Economic Zones Act, 2005), which gives the **initiative to the private sector** and aims to create optimal conditions to improve exportation, private investments and creation of jobs.

a)   The RAY program: slum free cities by 2020

The recent housing policy Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) envisions slum free cities by 2020. Rajiv Awas Yojana (2013-22) is a scheme of the Government of India for the benefit of poor in urban areas. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved the launch of the Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS), to be implemented in mission mode during 2013-2022. The scheme aims to make India slum-free by 2022 by providing people with shelter or housing free of cost. It is currently running as a **pilot scheme** and will be launched shortly in mission mode. The government has earmarked Rs. 32,230 crore for the implementation of this scheme during 12th Five Year Plan. One million beneficiaries are proposed to be covered under Rajiv Awas Yojana.

Since the late 1980s, urban and housing policies in India evidence a major shift in the role of the state, from being a provider of housing and amenities to being an enabler, through the promotion of public-private partnerships, the reliance on market mechanisms and the use of land as a resource. The central approach of the new strategy for Slum-Free City Planning, initiated in 2010, is to redress the shortage of urban land, amenities and shelter that lead to the creation of slums. Its plan of action comprises two parts: the upgrading or resettlement of existing slums along with property rights; and actions to prevent the emergence of new slums, including reservation of land and housing for the urban poor. This *"new*

---

[21] According to Census of India, houses have been classified as Pucca, Semi-pucca, and Kutcha according to the types of materials used in the construction of walls and roof of the house (cf PART II, II), 2) d) Housing)

deal for the urban poor" (Mathur, 2009) proposes a more comprehensive approach than the previous strategies, and further advocates strong community involvement, but the way in which it would be implemented, beyond its 'good' intentions, remains to be followed up.

There is a consensus to recognize that, till date, the poorest sections of the population gained very few benefits from the urban strategy implemented since the 1990s. There are however diverging views regarding the more appropriate way to overcome the housing shortage and the slum challenge. A key issue is the role conferred to the market, and the pros and cons of slum upgrading.[22]

b) The right to the city in India?

In the light of the above, the question about the right to the city in the Indian context is worth to be raised. While speaking of the right to the city - a relatively recent European concept - it is important to keep in mind that the traditional society in India was based on the cast system, implying a **significant social segregation**. If the cast system has been abolished in theory, few practices remain still today, particularly in the absence of social interactions between rich and poor. The spatial segregation, exists as well in the Indian cities, but is much less perceptible.

On the other hand, NGOs and civil societies claim the Right to the city to defend the rights of the slum dwellers. The right to the city is an idea and a slogan that was first proposed by Henri Lefebvre in his 1968 book *Le Droit à la ville*. Lefebvre summaries the ideas as a "demand [for] a transformed and renewed access to urban life". A number of popular movements, such as the shack dwellers' movement Abahlali base Mjondolo in South Africa, the Right to the City Alliance in the United States of America, Recht auf Stadt a network of squatters, tennants and artists in Hamburg, and various movements in Asia and Latin America, have incorporated the idea of the right to the city into their struggles. The Right to the city concept has been applied to the Indian context. Researchers in planning, social or other fields have discussed the Right to the City in Indian conditions (Urban Policies and the Right to the City in India, UNESCO, 2011).

Hence, the conflict between **two contradictory notions** -an illegal but traditional way of planning and the recent idea of Right to the city- leads to a confusion in the practices. "As Carbonnier analyses, a repealed law can continue to exist in society. The old law retains its social effectiveness, not having been withdrawn (1979)."[23] Both the traditional exclusive system towards the poor and the universal theoretical idea of a social mix city accessible for all are effective in the facts.

In conclusion, the initiatives from the government in addressing the problem of slums since 1950s stayed very limited, and mostly focused on the improvements of living conditions of the dwellers. The notable shift in the policy is due to the liberalization laws of 1990s, introducing the intervention of the private sector in the projects. According to Véronique Dupont, *"the public interventions in slums treatment give an impression of confusion in the main objective and an absence of a precise long term vision". "Slums have oscillated between illegality and rejection on one hand, and tolerance and recognition on the other."* Additionally, the frequent changes of government at the head of the states

---

[22]Chance2sustain,
http://www.chance2sustain.eu/fileadmin/Website/Dokumente/Dokumente/Publications/Publications_Sept_2012/ Chance2Sustain_-_Policy_Brief_No_6_-_Urban_Policies_and_the_Right_to_the_City.pdf
[23] SAGLIO-YATZIMIRSKY Marie-Caroline, LANDY Frederic, *Megacity slums, social exclusion, space and Urban Policies in Brazil and India*, Urban Challenges Vol.1, Imperial College press, London 2014 – 445p.

has resulted in a lack of continuity or consistency in the policies that were implemented (Dupont, 2014).[24]

3. METHODOLOGY: ANALYSIS OF A RESETTLEMENT PROJECT THROUGH DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Under the JnNURM, the slum development projects have largely consisted in the construction of resettlement colonies in the outskirts of the cities. In Chennai, a few research works have noted a poor policy which has led to a failure of the rehabilitation schemes. The government's only response to slums has been indirect. Rather than recognising them and improving residents' access to services, the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board - the government authority responsible for the slum development- has built large-scale resettlement colonies in the periphery of the city on land it already owns (in Semmenchery, Kannagi Nagar, and now in Perumbakkam). More than 75 per cent of spending for the urban poor under the JnNURM has gone towards building these colonies. Unrecognised slums, since they have no land rights, are regularly evicted, and eligible families (those with the required paperwork) are housed in the resettlement colonies.

3.1. Research question: understanding the reasons of the failure

News reports indicate that nearly 20 per cent of allotted homes in Kannagi Nagar are vacant and 50 per cent of the original beneficiaries are no longer living in them (Raman, Narayan, *transparent Chennai*, 2013).[25]

Research questions:
The large scale resettlement projects implemented in the outskirts of Chennai are not successful. This study examines the reasons of the failures, by putting into perspective the different viewpoints of local stakeholders on the project.

Hypothesis:
The mismatch in the representations on slums of the various stakeholders is an obstacle to an effective and sustainable action towards slums.

Objectives of the study:
1. To gather and analyse the representation on slums of the stakeholders;
2. To understand the formation, the socio-spatial organisation and the way of life in a slum area;
3. To compare the way of life and the every-day issues of people living in slum with the ones of people which have been relocated in a resettlement colony.

Thus, the project would provide some keys for understanding the failures in the large-scale resettlement projects, at the inhabitant's level. As the results of a policy are to be valuated differentially, i.e from the perspective of a government actor or a slum dweller, the different stakeholders were interviewed about the Kannagi Nagar resettlement project.

---

[24] SAGLIO-YATZIMIRSKY Marie-Caroline, LANDY Frederic, *Megacity slums, social exclusion, space and Urban Policies in Brazil and India*, Urban Challenges Vol.1, Imperial College press, London 2014 – 445p. (p206)
[25] RAMAN Nithya V., NARAYAN Priti, "*India's invisible population*", The Hindu, published the 19/10/13: http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/indias-invisible-population/article5248725.ece, visited the 09/03/14

a) Choice of the case study: the representative character of the slum

For the purpose of studying these aspects, two sites had been chosen: a "natural" slum, Attur Nagar, and a resettlement colony, Kannagi Nagar.

The slum studied, named Attur Nagar, is located along the Adyar River, in Saidapet, southern part of Chennai. The following criteria were used to choose the slum: easy accessibility, availability of quantitative data, size of the slum, whether the slum is an objectionable slum under scheme from the government, and one that shows representative character of the other slums along the river banks. Moreover, the location near the river was a significant criteria in the choice of the area, as it would be interesting to study the relationships between living spaces and the river. Besides, this area is directly impacted by the Metrorail project, as the metro ways are currently being built along the Saidapet Bridge. This work has led to a number of evictions of some of the houses located near the bridge, with the relocation of the people in the resettlement site of Kannagi Nagar.

a) A need for a qualitative approach

Most of the studies have tried to project a statistical picture of the slum areas, keeping a safe distance from the phenomenon of slum-living. However, in the recent past, some sociologists have tried to look at slums as areas where human beings live an organized life. Among the very few of such studies, two interesting ones are Wiebe's 'Social Life in an Indian Slum', and Jocano's 'Slum as a way of life". Compared to earlier studies which were satisfied with merely enumerating the size of the slum, i.e, number of inhabitants, their income, their duration of stay, occupation, religion, number of taps, lavatories per thousand inhabitants, etc., these studies are more fruitful. The approach is observational, i.e, observe the tenor and pace of slum life, the lines of cooperation and forms of interaction. The study attempted keeping a balance between the two, the objective and subjective approaches. (Rao, 1990)

Since the slums are mostly defined in terms of quantitative data, there is a need for a spatial, social, cultural, economic understanding of the slum. Besides, only very few studies have analysed the consequences of a scheme **in a comparative and qualitative way**, and the question of the representation hasn't been raised so far. In addition, the **absence of feedback from the Kannagi Nagar** scheme adds a dimension practical of this research project.

3.2. *Data collection methods: the gap between theory and reality of the ground*

At the time of the field study, a gap between the initial methods and the reality of the ground appeared to me.

a) The theoretical idea: use of participatory tools

As the research focuses on the quality of life for the slum dwellers and the impact of their relocation, giving a voice to the inhabitants and involving them in the project was a key point. Thus, for the data collection, my will was to use different kind of participative tools, with a different approach, more open than the closed questionnaire. Few projects led in slums with use of PRA (participatory rural appraisal) reporting convincing results. The PRA method includes a workshop with a combination of different tools as the social mapping, the focus group discussions… which empower the inhabitants and contribute to make them active of their development. Using this kind of approaches was also for me a way of proving that it is possible to led projects WITH the people, as a partnership, and no longer FOR

or TO the "*beneficiaries*", as they are commonly named. They are the best able to analyse their own need.

However, after my first field visit, I immediately realised that these methods wouldn't be that easy to implement. First of all, it seemed difficult to involve the residents in a project which will not have a direct impact on their every-day life. The study of slums is a sensitive work that requires a lot of diplomacy. Moreover, they also express their weariness in answering to these surveys without seeing any improvements. "*Everybody comes and ask us lot of questions, but we see no improvement in our living conditions*", Anthony, resident in Attur Nagar, Chennai (March, 2014). The second difficulty in implementing these participatory methods is the cultural gap and the language issue. I have been trying to implement a group discussion with broad questions in order to arouse a debate, but most of the time I faced a lack of understanding from my translator colleague firstly, and from the people also. The wish was to establish a relationship of trust with the people and to conduct informal discussions to understand their way of life and their needs. However, this proved impossible because I could not make a regular field work.

Research work has to be maintained over time, it is part of the long-term whereas inhabitants reason in the short-term and expect immediate results. I faced a cultural and temporal gap between my work and their way of living.

a) The adjustment in the practice: use of questionnaire and discussions

For this type of enquiry, although there are many techniques formulated by sociologists, we have made use of three techniques of investigation, namely direct observation, questionnaire, and focused group discussion, based on twenty broader questions. In order to compare the visions, the officials from TNSCB were interviewed with the same set of questions, by the mean of a semi-directive interview (cf Appendix 2: questionnaires).

The focus group discussions were used to understand the main issues of the people, according to their status. Thus, four categories of people were selected:
- Men
- Women
- Youths
- Elders

The questionnaires were aimed at three categories of people:
- The residents in Attur Nagar who hadn't been in Kannagi Nagar,
- The residents in Attur Nagar, who have been relocated but are back from the resettlement site of Kannagi Nagar,
- the residents of Kannagi Nagar,

Since it is not possible to determine visually if a resident of Attur Nagar is back from Kannagi Nagar or not, only two categories were retained and 20 families each category – residents of Attur Nagar and residents of Kannagi Nagar- were interviewed with the questionnaire (cf Appendix 2).

b) The limitation

As a foreign national and women, several difficulties were confronted with at the time of field investigation. The main obstacle faced for data collection was the language problem. Since the language spoken by the inhabitants is the Tamil, I couldn't communicate with them by myself and had to be accompanied by a colleague Tamil speaker. I encountered difficulties in finding human resources which

could escort and translate on the field, and felt very dependant to the others for the survey work. Finally, some English speaking inhabitants helped me in conducting the survey for few days. Furthermore, the help from a group of student made possible this study.

In analysing the data collected, few elements regarding the methods and the context have to be noted and taken in account. First of all, the information provided by the colleague translator has sometimes differed from the reality, the way of introducing me and my work was also not matching with my vision of the project. As an example, some colleagues introduced me as an "*american student, working for the government*". Since the information was biased from the start, it might has given a certain orientation in the answers of the residents. Besides, this practice of lying in order to get more information from them, or to simplify the discussion, didn't correspond to the philosophy of the study. Even if this false information might not has a significant consequence, it still contributes to consider people as uneducated and not worth to educate.

Moreover, the information provided by the people them self could be biased. The difference of opinions among the people from the same area is a first significant observation: there is no homogeneity in the answers and the opinion of the inhabitants can easily change through time. Besides, the culture is a major element to consider in this kind of qualitative surveys. Relying on the traditional Indian culture and the Hindu philosophy, I could notice that the people are less attached to the material and physical objects than we are in Europe, even if this trend is evolving fast. This is an important information to keep in mind while analysing the answer from the inhabitants. What is considered as a problem for my view might not be a problem for them. In the opposite, by thinking that I am working for the government, the people may also tend to exaggerate their issues in order to be provided some improvements.

Besides, as the slum dwellers are really involved in the voting process and also subject to politic changes, it is possible that the context of election period in which the survey was conducted has turned the people more on the defensive side and may not have felt comfortable to share their real impressions on the situation. Another point which is important to raise is the fact that my presence may have modified their activities, and for this reason the direct observation is not always reliable.

Finally, the issues in translation of data between Tamil, English and French may have contributed to the alterations in the initial information. In the structure of the sentences, some information can't be perceived in another language: some subtleties might disappear in the process of translation.

To conclude, the methods initially planned has changed facing the reality of the ground and according to the means and time available. A number of limitation has been identified. Nonetheless, what can first be perceived as a lack of reliability of the data or as an absence of coherence in the multiplicity of information has to be analysed in the study context, to understand it in order to include it in the results.