SELF-MADE CITIES

In search of sustainable solutions for informal settlements in the UNECE region

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What is Informal Settlement?

- A residential area in an urban locality developed with no legal title to land and/or construction/operational permit; non-compliant with urban plans and/or minimum housing and/or infrastructure standards; institutional arrangements.

- Other characteristics: location, size, degree of illegality, demographics, spatial organisation.
Variegated forms of urban housing informality

- Squatter settlements on public/private land
- Settlements for refugees and vulnerable people
- Upgraded squatter settlements
- Illegal suburban subdivision on public/private land
- Squatter flats, dilapidated dwellings, shared flats, primitive first generation industrial houses
The triggers of IS

- Socio-economic and administrative changes
- Rapid urbanisation and migration to major cities
- Civic conflicts
- Poverty and socio-spatial disadvantage
- Inefficiency of traditional government administration (outdated plans, cumbersome procedures; housing shortages and land speculation)
Conventional pathways to IS

- **Legalization** (land tenure status, e.g. Turkey). Problems: technical-financial, political-administrative

- **Regularisation and in situ upgrading** (land and real estate registration and infrastructure provision). Problems: weak sectoral and government integration, physical-technical vs social issues

- **Resettlement and relocation** (social housing, soft loans, e.g. Spain and Portugal). Problems: very costly; unmet expectations.

Most solutions are add-hoc, reactive, small-scale
Rethinking and supporting local practices

- A massive reaction to high cost of formality
- A symptom of outdated public policies; *laissez-faire* policies and their administration
- A ‘hothouse’ of cultural creativity, economic invention and social innovation.
- Exceed what one expects to find in a formal city
- Addressing city-wide or national constraints
Improving IS from inside and out: Good principles and practice patterns

- Treat ISs as you find them; improvise with tools
- IS actions need to be supported by concrete regulations framed by sustainability commitments
- No IS solution without socio-spatial inclusion at the city scale (e.g. Brazil’s City Statute)
- IS actions implemented within a broader context of public policies - housing, transport, economic development, spatial planning; land tenure policy - rather than meeting standards
Good principles and pathways to transformed IS

- **Strengthen community capacity** (resource and knowledge management, negotiation skills, ability to contest adverse actions)

- **Ensure IS process is collaborative and multilevel** (government as a partner among other partners to support development strategies of the IS inhabitants)

- **Exchange of information, developing new methodologies; building capacity and critical reflection exercises**
Thank you!