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THE EVOLUTION OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE PLACEMAKER'S TOOLS

A SHORT INTRODUCTION

'In 1876, King Leopold II said that his goal for Africa was to bring civilization to the only part of this globe where it has not penetrated, to pierce the darkness that envelops entire populations … a crusade worthy of this age of progress.'[1]

It is hard today to agree with either the goal or motives set out by Leopold. And yet, the concept of bringing civilization (development?) and promoting progress being a crusade (for some) resonates still with some of the ambitions, if not policies, which underpin the politics of aid under the guise of development.

If we look back to more recent history, we will see that the evolution of ideals for international development have witnessed many brave ambitions to bring development to the needy, to generate wealth, improve well-being, reduce or eliminate poverty, to make government and governance more fair, more accountable and transparent, to save the world from climate change and its people from the evil of despots.

In this introductory chapter, I will map my own selective views of the evolution of ideas not as a historian but as a teacher and development practitioner trying to understand where we were in thinking and doing, where we are now and why and what difference it has made to the tools and methods of practice. Specifically, I will do this through the lens of urban development and, in particular, urban housing and settlement planning, perhaps the largest component of any placemaker's task, given all that it encompasses: design,

construction, land, infrastructure, tenure, financing, management, participation, governance, partnerships and rights. My purpose here is to introduce a number of key themes that we will explore in more detail, progressively, throughout this book.

Urban housing and urban development

In the early 1950s and 1960s, the need for reform in housing and urban settlements was largely driven by the desire to build a new Utopia, free of slums and informal settlements. With the growing demand for affordable housing associated with progressive urbanization, you tooled up, scaled up and built up, as high as you could and as densely as you could, according to standards we thought were suitable for everyone in general but no one in particular. Standardization, it was thought, was the key to mass production. If you could reduce it all to numbers, type plans and building components, then you could make it all cheaper and quicker. Everywhere, in cities of countries in the north and south, the demolition of slums and clearance of informal settlements was the norm. 'The values and living conditions of squatter settlements were obstacles to modernization and had to be obliterated.'[2]

In developing countries and under this regime of 'clearance' in pursuit of modernity, informal settlements were seen as an intrusion into the life of cities and the formality of city planning in its search for the city beautiful. They 'were perceived as a manifestation of poverty not an opportunity for urban productivity'.[3] As such, urban growth and urban housing would be strictly regulated in design and production and administratively rationalized. Housing policy was (and still is?) an instrument of political and social reform in response to public health and public strife, rather than benevolence.

It wasn't long, but long enough, before questions were being raised about the effectiveness and cost of these highly centralized processes of planning and production. In the mid-60s, providing a 30 square metre finished house for every poor family would consume

25–50 per cent of gross national product (GNP) in most countries.[4] Those who could afford to spent 3–6 per cent on all forms of shelter, the poorest countries 0.5 per cent. Standards were too high and so, therefore, were costs to the poor, despite the subsidies. Research suggested that those who needed these houses most could not afford even the most highly subsidized rents, particularly because later governments were required to remove subsidies to meet the demands placed on them by structural adjustment.

It soon became apparent that deficits of adequate shelter grow rather than diminish, not just because not enough houses are produced, or because technologies fail, but because expectations rise as housing becomes available; because we did not allow adequately for the reduction in household size; because we failed to count concealed households that come into being as soon as housing becomes available; because more people live as independent households as income rises; because of the unpredicted increase of migration to cities; because of conflict or natural disaster that displaces thousands, many in cities and into cities.

The watershed in the debate on shelter and settlement came, arguably, in 1976 at the UN-Habitat Conference in Vancouver. There was, for the first time, a formal recognition of the informal sector as a legitimate provider of housing and other services. With a little bit of help in credit provision and a few adjustments to standards, a little less in costly regularization, then the informal sector could provide housing and services in a way more acceptable to city planners, more affordable to families and more fitting to the political ideals of how cities should look and function. The question became not how to eradicate but rather, how to incorporate this informality into formal housing.[5]

The principle that emerged was simple. Don't invest in building houses that people can do in any case for themselves and could do better with a bit of help, but rather invest in the collective good that people can't provide for themselves: in land regularization, infrastructure planning, security of tenure, self-build opportunity and credit provision. These themes came together around 'sites and services' and the many forms they would take: open sites, core housing, roof loan schemes.

The World Bank was quick to move sites and services into its own free market ideals. Their lending for sites and services projects in 1972 was partly in response to stopping the growth of informal settlements (rather than incorporating them) and partly inspired by the opportunity to mould self-help into 'its own neoliberal frameworks which relied on free markets, individualism and payment by users…'[6]

The first World Bank experiment with sites and services in 1972 was in Senegal with 4000 lots in Dakar, the capital, and 1600 plots in Thies. It was the first of a series of projects designed to explore alternative approaches to housing 'which did not rely heavily on the public purse, which mobilized private savings and addressed shelter needs of the city as a whole'.[7]

During the 1970s, World Bank policy had begun to shift away from housing projects and towards urban projects in which housing played a key role. The Bank pursued four linked strategies during the 1970s: urban shelter projects, urban transport, integrated urban projects and regional development projects. These were intended to guide governments toward a '…broader perspective in the urban sector…'[8]

Between 1972 and 1982, the World Bank lent more than two billion dollars to some 36 governments, financing 62 urban projects within the above categories.[9]

By 1990, it had financed 116 projects in 55 countries. The Bank's own review of sites and services projects in 1976 was positive. They were more affordable and, therefore, generally more accessible to the lowest income groups; their impact on improving the socioeconomic conditions of the poor was moving in the right direction; and the repayment of loans did not cause negative impacts on household expenditure on food or other basics.

Criticism of sites and services grew, however, as more projects were completed and more evidence was collated. Architects and planners were worried by their technically rational design emphasis, their use of coefficients of efficiency, as the major determinant of design and planning decisions. These projects lacked art. They were ignorant of context and resentful of culture.

Others argued that these projects required the same level of centralized planning as public housing projects, that they displaced people who depended for work on inner city locations, rather than the periphery where most projects were located, that the cost of their administration was high and that they would polarize classes and present far fewer economic opportunities than in the mixed economies of informal settlements.[10] Families would sell out when they had finished building and would return to their shanties. There were few guarantees that people would repay loans, which made them unattractive to private banks: in this sense, the banks targeted people with steady incomes, which most of the poorest do not have. In short, they would fail to reach those in most need unless governments continued their heavy subsidies for land and infrastructure, which they could not afford to sustain.[11]

In the early 1980s, in response partly to the critique of sites and services, partly to increasing housing deficits despite the effort and partly to better understanding of settlements and housing as a social process, not just a unitary one, there was again a significant shift in policy: upgrading or 'integrated development projects' became the focus of shelter and urban development policy, still combining the building of some houses where necessary (for migrant workers, single parent households) with some serviced sites, but primarily concerned with improving the existing stock – first in formal slums and later in informal or squatter settlements.

Instead of making large transfers of money to building projects, the World Bank directed its funds more toward the reform of policies and institutions: to public administration, to local banks and to providing technical assistance. Its terms of reference for borrowers encouraged programmes to be designed more on the basis of effective user demand and less on preconceived notions of adequate housing.

Upgrading was supported widely by the World Bank and others into (and beyond) the 1980s, so that public authorities could 'restore formal control over land subdivision and house building processes, while seeking to mobilize the energies and resources of low-income groups for either the improvement or creation of shelter'.[12]

Most upgrading programmes entailed the provision of loans for housing improvements, sanitation, electricity, water and drainage, the paving of streets and footpaths, the legalization of tenure rights to land (a policy designed to control the growth of illegal settlements) and the provision for improving facilities such as schools, clinics and community centres. Costs had also been reduced, on average to US$38 per household for infrastructure improvement, compared to the many thousands of dollars per household for conventional housing provision.[13] A large number of projects involved regularizing land in order to establish legal boundaries to property (the basis to issuing titles) and to get services into otherwise inaccessible settlements. And most programmes, out of necessity rather than desire, confronted the interests of demands of local residents.

In the early 1990s, and after the usual plethora of conferences and learned papers, we see the beginnings of another significant shift in shelter and urban development policy. It was in response to a variety of findings. Critique of upgrading suggested that many programmes serve only the most able, physically and politically, or the most enterprising; that programmes were often overly 'synchronized', more fitting to the routines of planning than the *ad hoc* arrangement of informality; that the rate of cost recovery was worse than that of sites and services projects and that they had failed to turn the tide of illegal occupations – indeed, in some cases, had encouraged it. Land regularization and the legal titles to land had also fuelled an informal market in land speculation. This, together with the push to recover costs by the local authorities through property taxes, was increasing rents that were forcing the lowest income groups out.

Importantly, the shift in policy came in response to findings that successful programmes had been small in scale, relative to demand and difficult to keep going. They were difficult to sustain because of all the management and administration they entailed over the long term, unlike the one-off projects of earlier years. They were difficult to sustain and scale up, not because of bad design, but because of poor management. What we got was a 'move toward management reform rather than bricks and mortar'.[14]

Urban Management Programmes (UMP) were, essentially, technical support collaborations between United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) and the World Bank.[15] Their focus was on more effective ways of managing land, money, skills, knowledge and other resources, promoting housing and urban development across a range of sectors and at an urban rather than project scale. All of this fitted well with neoliberal policy – eliminating supply constraints to encourage private sector involvement, formal and informal; withdrawal of the state from direct provision to that of enabler; elimination of subsidies to balance the budgets; capacity building across a range of organizations, government, non-government and community based, and exploring new forms of partnership.

The move, in other words, was even further away from site-specific interventions and toward city-wide, market-wide and inter-sectoral programmes. The focus had become more strategic in deciding interventions and increasingly on sustainability and on poverty. This was reflected in a series of global initiatives and proclamations.

For example Agenda 21, adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, promoted sustainable human settlements. This included tackling social and economic constraints, as well as conservation and management of resources (land, water, etc). Strengthening the role of women, NGOs, the private sector and local authorities, continued as key themes in promoting sustainability.

Then there was the Habitat Agenda, adopted in June 1996 by 170 governments. It had two main objectives: ensuring adequate shelter for all and the sustainable development of the world's urban areas. The talk was of enablement, participation and international cooperation on major social and environmental initiatives in pursuit of sustainability.

In 1999, the World Bank and UN-Habitat founded the Cities Alliance. Their focus was on eradicating urban slums, or at least improving conditions for some one hundred million slum dwellers by 2020.

More recently, there were the Millennium Development Goals agreed in 2000 at the UN and which set out in Goal 7, Target 10 to halve by 2015 the proportion of people without safe drinking water and basic sanitation and Target 11 to achieve by 2020 significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers. And yet, according to UN statistics, as of recently:

- 840 million people globally are malnourished;
- 6 million children under the age of 5 die every year as a result;
- 1.2 billion people live on less than a dollar a day and half the world's people on less than two dollars a day;
- the income of the richest 1 per cent of people in the world is equal to that of the poorest 57 per cent;
- in the developing world, 91 children out of every 1000 die before their fifth birthday;
- 12 million die annually from lack of water: 1.1 billion do not have access to clean water;
- 40 million people are living with Aids;
- more than 113 million children in the developing world have no basic education: 60 per cent of them are girls.

Poverty, in particular in the growing slums of cities everywhere, sits at the centre of our efforts today, across a broad range of urban policies. Nor is it just the poverty of money, measured as it was in the 1960s and '70s with economic indicators, but the poverty of well-being and opportunity as well of livelihoods. McGillivray and Clarke, in their book *Understanding Human Well-being*[16] offer us an excellent review of the evolution of the dominant meaning and measurement of well-being. During the 1950s, the focus was on economic well-being measured in gross domestic product (GDP) and growth. During the 1960s, economic well-being remained the principal focus, although our means of measuring progress shifted to GDP per capita growth. During the 1970s, as we shall see, the policy emphasise was on 'basic needs'. The means of measurement here was GDP per capita and basic goods and services, including food, water and shelter. In the political climate of the 1980s, the emphasis moved back to economic well-being, with GDP per capita

as the principal indicator of progress, but we also witnessed the rise of non-monetary factors – health and literacy, for example. In the 1990s, the focus was firmly on human development capabilities. As we broadened our understanding of the experience of poverty, so new indices and theories were introduced to measure and explain it all.

In 1992/93, the Human Development Index added life expectancy, literacy and a composite of other qualitative indicators. New themes, new policies, new areas of research have emerged and are now central to development work – sustainable livelihoods, the importance of all kinds of assets (tangible and intangible), issues of vulnerability and risk reduction. Housing, for example, is recognized as a social asset, in addition to its market value as commodity. Alternative types of partnerships and organizations are encouraged, in particular for providing credit – the Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA) for example, or the Women's Bank of Sri Lanka – civil society partners who would engage in the governance of housing and social enterprise. Most critically, this focus on poverty, new partnerships and alternative forms of finance '…directly tackles perhaps the three most anti poor phenomena of the modern world: the dominance of finance, the emphasis on consumption, and the prevalence of professionalization'.[17]

The urban poor today are recognized for their resilience and productive capacities, rather than their inadequacies, despite the continued burden of discrimination and disadvantage. As such, disturbing power relations, reducing dependency and exploring interdependency is today as central to the purpose of project planning and delivery and to participatory work as are issues of rights and entitlements. These themes and others we will tackle in more detail, in practice, throughout this book.

For now, however, if we track back to the early days at the top of our diagram (Figure 1.1), we can see how each phase in our short history coincides with the evolution of ideals and policies that were devised in pursuit of development. It also coincides with significant shifts in the tools and methods of placemaking.
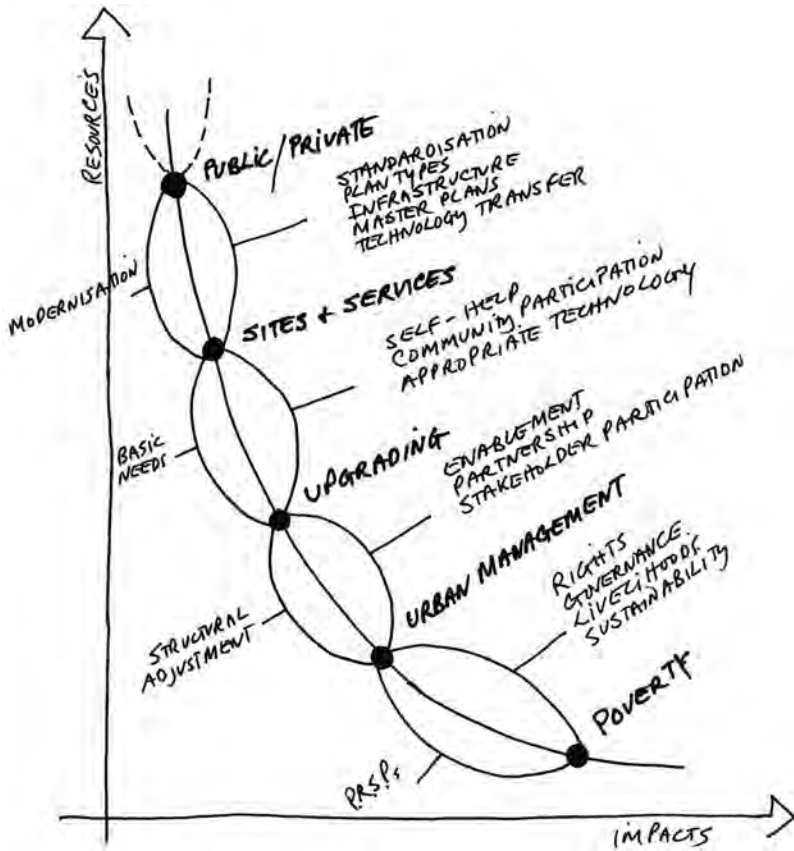
Figure 1.1   *The evolution of development and the placemaker's tools*
Source: Nabeel Hamdi

International development, aid and the placemaker's tools

The phase of centralized planning and the public provision of everything including sites and services paralleled, more or less, the 1950s era of modernization. When the ideals of modernization

were exported to the developing world they were done so on a simple assumption. If you want to be developed and 'modern' (like us), then do as we do, conform to how we do it in technology and style, use the standards and goals we set ourselves, adopt our vision of a better world and, in time, with a bit of luck and a lot of help (from us) you will achieve modernity!

With modernization came an equivalent set of tools and practices that embodied its ideals and values. There was, of course, the master plan exported everywhere by planners, many trained in the universities of Europe and the USA. The plans were usually explicit about who fits where and how, instruments of control and management – Brazilia, Chandigar, Houseman's Paris, Lutchyn's New Delhi – all models to follow in search of progress and modernity. For housing design, there was the definitive 'type plan' – a distillation of user surveys of likes and dislikes, designed as they were to find the generic solution rather than meet specific needs. Then there was the focus on infrastructure design and all the tools and techniques that came with the planning of sites and services comprehensively laid out in Caminos and Goethert's *Urbanization Primer*.[18] To make it all work technologies were transferred across the world, as was the know-how and expertise of system building and prefabrication, so that it could all be mass produced. It all 'offered [planners] a cleaner slate than any that had gone before. It offered architects the chance to design their way out of the mess (as they saw it) of the organically evolved city.'[19] It enabled both professions to grow and dominate the landscape and the vernacular over people.

The two phases of sites and services and upgrading coincided with that phase in development referred to as 'Basic Needs'. Attention in development policy shifted to ensuring minimum provisions to meet the basic needs of developing countries and their poor, decided in consultation with those whose needs were most urgent. Water, food, sanitation, shelter were explicitly targeted, as we have already seen.

For the practice of placemaking and the tools of placemakers, there were equivalent significant differences. Self-help, working with families and communities on building or improving, was a

key vehicle for the design and implementation of programmes. Community participation (the one referred to as tyranny rather than transformation) became a common theme to most placemaking. With it we witnessed an industry of guidebooks and self-help manuals on how to build or improve or adapt, how to install water, sewage lines or make bricks or roof tiles. We favoured structure plans in place of master plans – more open, more inclusive of difference and change, easier to adapt. And instead of technology transfer, which favoured suppliers rather than users, we moved on to 'appropriate technologies', those which were more readily available and sustainable locally.

Upgrading and the urban management programmes corresponded with Structural Adjustment, promoted principally through the International Monetary Fund (IMF). With the debt crisis of the mid 1980s, with shrinking public expenditure as a result and with banks drawing in their outstanding loans, governments were required to reduce subsidies and balance their books as a condition of bank lending. Food, education, health and social spending were mostly targeted. The results in many cases were socially regressive. In Mexico, the percentage of births attended by medics fell from 94 in 1983 to 45 in 1988. In Ghana, there was an 80 per cent decrease in spending on health. In Egypt, there were bread riots when subsidies on bread were removed. 'In Sri Lanka, childhood mortality rose substantially when food subsidies were withdrawn.'[20]

During a similar period, new themes and terms entered the jargon of Development Practice: enablement, partnerships, development cooperation. The sceptics recalled, with reason, the days when cooperation was used as an instrument of world hegemony, an instrument of nations in charge to engineer change in their own interests. 'This struggle for world hegemony was and continues to be at the core of what is lovingly referred to as development cooperation',[21] a process in which 'the poor (and their governments) had to be willing to cooperate' if they were to reap the benefits of globalization and the good life. The results: most who participated became co-opted into systems of production and trade, agreed internationally and reflected in such policies as structural adjustment. 'In practice, the highest toll (of structural adjustment programmes)

fell on the poorest social group, not on governments or other elites. Women, responsible for day-to-day survival and for the children, shouldered the greatest burden.'[22]

The language of participation also shifted from community to stakeholder, encouraging all who had a stake in projects and programmes to cooperate in the delivery and management of housing, utilities and services, all of which demanded new skills and routines and a new repertoire of tools: negotiation skills, for example, and conflict resolution, the stakeholder analysis and risk assessment. Planning For Real – a pack of tools and techniques with which to engage with communities, sort out problems and prioritize needs – came into currency. It was first used in Glasgow experimentally in 1977 and more widely from the start of the 1980s. Then there was Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA), introduced in the early 1980s, which gained widespread popularity during the 1990s. A whole raft of tools was developed at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) under its rubric including mapping, transect walking, diagramming and more. Many of these tools and techniques were progressively incorporated into Community Action Planning, an action science-based approach to design and planning, which was pioneered in Sri Lanka in 1984 with the National Housing Development Authority, which in the early days included a team of researchers, including me, from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).[23]

It started with government adopting a 'support based policy' to urban housing and settlement improvement, rather than providing public housing as it had done previously. Enablement took on the mantra of political enablement, creating political space for new ideals and opening opportunities for communities to engage directly with government in deciding how best to proceed and in managing upgrading programmes. Land regularization or 'blocking-out' was done with communities and community contracts were issued for the construction of infrastructure. A continuous and adaptive process was set in motion, avoiding the one-off project approach.

The focus throughout, in what became known as the Million Houses Programme, was on community development, on the social agenda integral to the upgrading process. Later Community Development Councils (CDCs) were formalized as partners in the

process. They would work with the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA) to identify and supervise construction work. At government level, the Housing and Community Development Committee was established to oversee the process. Housing loan packages were developed, tailored to the needs of individual families, as well as numerous guidelines for their disbursement and management. A Housing Information Service offered families and communities a range of practical tools on budgeting, construction and on organizing and managing contracts. Standards for upgrading projects under the Million Houses Programme were adjusted to suit needs and budgets and specific building codes were developed that would be affordable, appropriate and easy to upgrade.

All of these initiatives overlap into the current phases of urban management and the targeting of effort directly on poverty reduction, as an objective in its own right. Poverty and the effective management of urban and global resources coincides today with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility, a loan fund managed by the IMF.

In its 2001 report on conditionality, the IMF signalled four key changes: stronger national ownership involving borrowers more centrally in programme formulations; fewer conditions attached to aid; more programmes tailored to the specific needs of borrowers; more clarity in the exact terms of compliance.[24] Throughout, the private sector or market enablement would continue to play a key role despite the new language of partnerships and governance. 'A 2006 study of 20 countries receiving World Bank and IMF loans found privatisation was a condition of 18 – an increase on previous years.'[25] The emphasis throughout, in any case, is on aid effectiveness and better coordination of effort.

Two themes are current in this respect. The first is aid alignment and the second aid harmonization.[26] These themes were first debated in 2002 in Monterey at the UN Summit on Financing for Development where donors agreed to increase both the volume and effectiveness of aid; then in 2003 in Rome at the High Level Forum on Harmonization and more recently in Paris in March 2005 in what is known as the Paris Declaration. In Paris, the Tanzanian Minister of Finance said, 'If implemented [the Paris Declaration]

will … reduce bureaucratic hurdles, the cost of aid delivery, irrational conditionality, endless meetings, and the misuse of high level talents in recipient countries through aid related meetings, visits and missions.'[27]

Aid alignment to natural priorities also ensures that each country has the strategic and financial capacity to implement its plans. It is about strengthening capacity, making the flow of aid more productive, untying aid where it is still tied. Aid Harmonization calls for donors to coordinate their activities and eliminate duplication, including the coordination of missions and of research and sharing findings – which invokes again the need for cooperation.

> *In 1990, the UN declared that successful Development requires more effective and more efficient international cooperation. 28 ineffective high level conferences later, in 2003, the Ad Hoc Open Ended Working Group on Integrated and Co-ordinated Implementation and Follow-up to the Outcome of the Major UN Conferences and Summits in Economic and Social Fields – was established. (Its members presumably do without business cards.)*[28]

For Development Practice, another layer of themes and ambitions was added to the already dense vocabulary: rights, entitlement, governance, civil society, sustainability, livelihoods, and vulnerability. The British Department for International Development introduced the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework – open to interpretation but an effective tool with which to understand poverty and vulnerability. Increasing urban risks, induced by high densities and the settlement of marginal land in cities, and by conflict and national disaster, today places the emphasis on tools which can effectively manage and reduce risk – on mitigation, preparation and adaptation.

In summary and as we track the evolution of Development and the placemaker's tools we recognize, despite the linear form of the diagram, that each phase is inclusive of others, that the field is layered and networked. As we move, however, from the top of the diagram down, a number of themes emerge that position and give context to practice and to our more detailed discussions throughout this book:

- We note the changing role of the expert, from lead agent to catalyst, from disciplinary work to interdisciplinary work, from producing plans to cultivating opportunity
- We see more participation – away from sweat equity toward empowerment and power-sharing, toward partnership
- The development field is progressively dematerialized from shelter, water at the top, to rights, governance, livelihoods
- We find more integration of disciplines and less sector specific work
- There is more focus on insiders' priorities, notwithstanding the risk, which still prevails, of co-option
- There is more result-based management where gains need to be quantified and progress measured – making aid more efficient, with the use of logical framework analysis
- We see a shift from practical to more strategic work in the desire to tackle root causes of poverty and to scale up programmes
- The Humanitarian Agenda of Rights and Vulnerability is today at the centre of our search for solutions in housing, work and in the management of resources
- We move from a position of providing for the poor to enabling the poor to provide for themselves, recognizing their productive capacities, reducing dependency, building resilience to the shocks and stresses of daily life
- We see a significant shift to urban, in view of the unprecedented growth of urban population and the strain this places on people, on resources and on the environment. 'Cities in the developing world will account for 95 percent of urban expansion over the next two decades and by 2030, four billion people will live in cities – 1.4 billion in slums.'[29]

Where then in all of this is the place of placemaking? What role now for architects, planners and all the other placemakers, experts and non-experts? How do we engage today's agendas in placemaking and, conversely, how does place mediate the demands of these agendas that today make up the business of human development?