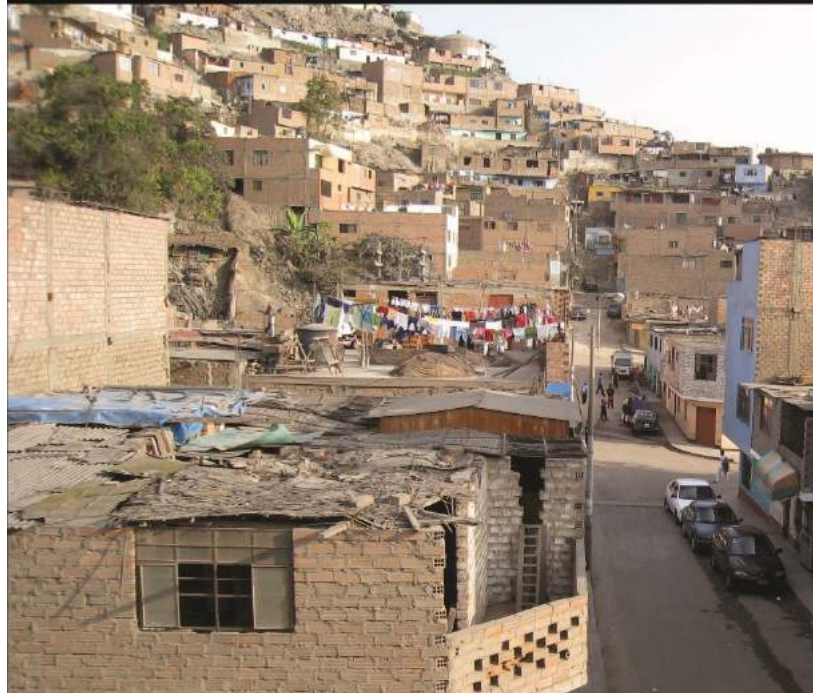
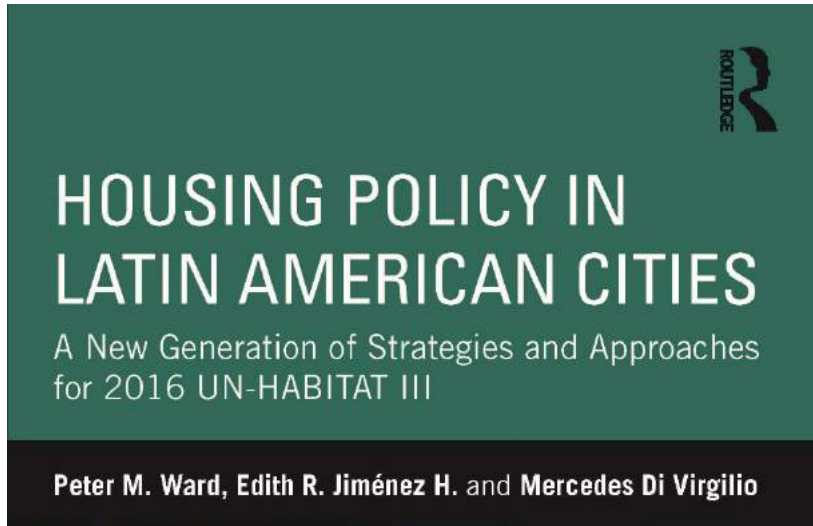



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Políticas de vivienda en ciudades latinoamericanas. Una nueva generación de estrategias y enfoques para 2016 ONU-Hábitat III

*Peter M Ward , Edith R Jiménez , Mercedes Di Virgilio ,
Angélica Camargo*

POLÍTICAS DE VIVIENDA EN
CIUDADES LATINOAMERICANAS
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For a published overview and summary of the spectrum of policies, see Peter M. Ward. 2015 "Housing rehab for consolidated informal settlements: A new policy agenda for 2016 UN-Habitat III", Habitat International, 50, 373-384 (Publications Section of this website)

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Chapter 5.

The Challenges of Consolidation in Precarious Settlements of Caribbean Cities: Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Erika Denisse Grajeda

GENERAL SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In the Dominican Republic, informal settlements are known as marginal or precarious neighbourhoods (*barrios*), and in the case of the capital, the most vulnerable – in terms of infrastructure and construction – are located along the banks of the River Ozama. These precarious settlements form part of the physical growth of the city and belong to the communities that developed with the arrival of new inhabitants starting in the 1960s. The urbanization of the country followed some of the main tendencies in the region (such as a quick process of urbanization concentrated in one or two cities) and was also affected by the economic crisis of the 1980s and changes to the development model of the country (Lozano, 1997). However, the process of urbanization and the development and consolidation of these precarious settlements also has to do with the political, social, and economic changes that were produced as a result of the fall of the dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo (1930-1961), changes that affected the living conditions of most sectors of the population.

Starting with the first governments after the dictatorship of Trujillo, but especially after the second invasion of the country by the USA, in 1965, changes were made to the productive and economic system of the country. It went from being mainly based on a model of agro-exports (sugar, coffee and tobacco) to a model of industrialization through import substitution (ISI), which turned the capital city of the Dominican Republic into a pole of attraction for the rural population. Thus the processes of urbanization in the Dominican Republic is directly linked to processes of capitalist development and the concentration of productive activities in a single city, Santo Domingo (Lozano and Duarte, 1992).

The principal currents of migration, especially during the 1960s and 1970s, had the effect of moving over 20 percent of the population from the provinces. Estimates show that during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the urban population grew at a rate of 6 percent a year (Haggerty, 1989). In 1970, the population of Santo Domingo was double what it had been in 1950, and by 1981 the population of the city accounted for 23 percent of the population of the whole country (Lozano and Duarte, 1991). The latest stage of urban development, which started in the early 1980s, was marked by responses to economic crises and changes to the development model of the country, which now focused largely on tourism and export zones, and also encouraged informal economic activity in the country (Lozano, 1997; Safa, 1995). The urban policy of the State, at least in practice, was now focused on so-called urban regeneration and renewal, including modernization projects, especially in infrastructure, as well as the displacement of the population and forcible evictions.

The displacement of the population and rapid urbanization, as well the lack of a concrete development plan for housing needs, exacerbated the housing shortage which in 1990 was estimated to be of over 400,000 dwellings in the metropolitan area of Santo Domingo (Pelling, 2002). The National Housing Institute (Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda, 2009), estimated the total number of houses short to be around 719,000. The dynamics of the housing market and the forcible evictions of people living in central neighborhoods of the city drove the growth of informal settlements or marginal *barrios* on the edges of the city, especially in zones not fit for human habitation like those along to the rivers Isabela and Ozama (Pelling, 2002). Today it is reckoned that there is a threat of displacement in the Distrito Nacional for over 200,000 inhabitants of precarious settlements adjoining the rivers Isabela and Ozama, such as La Zurza, Capotillo, Gualey, Los Guandules, and La Ciénega. It is also estimated that around 75 percent of the housing is self-built, and that between 50 and 70 percent of the population do not have property titles to their lots. International organizations like UN Habitat have noted that not having property titles, hence security of tenure, is the main cause of forcible evictions in the country (UN Habitat, 2007).

GREATER SANTO DOMINGO: THE CITY AND ITS URBANIZATION PROCESSES

The Santo Domingo occupies a large part of the island of Dominican Republic,¹ covering 48,310 square kilometers, with a population of 9,445,281 inhabitants (Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de la República Dominicana, Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda 2012, 2010 estimates) — of whom 3,339,410 live in the metropolitan region, also known as the Ozama region. The population of the metropolitan zone is split between two administrative areas: the Distrito Nacional, that has a population of 965,040, and the province of Santo Domingo, which has approximately 2,374,370 inhabitants (and consists of four municipalities). There are 31 *Provincias*, one *Distrito Nacional* and 155 *Municipios*. In 2004, the country was divided, by presidential decree, into 10 administrative areas, located in three macro-regions: el Cibao, the South-West, and the South-East, the latter including the Metropolitan area of Ozama or Santo Domingo. In its largest designation, made in 2006, the Santo Domingo region covers the Province of Santo Domingo, and the Distrito Nacional.

Province	Area (km ²)	Population					Number of dwellings	
		Total	Sex		Zone		Zone	
			Men	Women	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Distrito Nacional	91.6	965,040	460,903	504,137	965,040	0	288,362	0
Santo Domingo	1,302.20	2,374,370	1,163,957	1,210,413	2,084,651	289,719	580,687	80,896

Table 5.1. Basic population figures, Metropolitan / Ozama region

The metropolitan area holds around 33 percent of the total population of the Dominican Republic, and 40.6 percent of the urban population. Population density is 196 inhabitants per square kilometer, with a third of the population of the country concentrated in the old Distrito Nacional and the Province of Santo Domingo, where the estimated growth rate is 2 percent

¹ The nation has 575 kilometers of coastline and a border of 388 kilometers with the Republic of Haiti, which occupies the other part of this Caribbean island.

(Population Reference Bureau, 2003). The urban population of the Dominican Republic is 67 percent of the total population of the country.

	Population	Area (km ²)	Occupants/km ²
Región Ozama	3,339,410	1,393.80	2,396
Distrito Nacional	965,040	91.6	10,538
Santo Domingo	2,374,370	1,302.20	1,823

Table 5.2. Population, area in square kilometers and population density, Metropolitan / Ozama region

ECONOMY, DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

Starting in the 1990s, economic growth and structural changes were accompanied by changes in the political realm. A report from the World Bank and the Inter American Development Bank (Banco Mundial y Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo, 2006) shows that the Dominican Republic was one of the fastest growing economies in Latin America and the Caribbean in that decade. The report also notes that in the last three decades the average per capita growth rate was 3.4 percent, similar to Chile, the country considered to be the most successful in the region (Fanelli and Guzmán, 2008). During this period, the country experienced an expansion of the service sector, with a new focus on a modernizing of the economy driven by free trade zones (*zonas francas*, ZF), tourism, and remittances. Thus macroeconomic stabilization was accompanied by commercial liberalization (deregulation) and the privatization of state-owned companies in response to changes occurring nationally and internationally such as the economic crisis of the 1980s.

These changes to the structure, institutions, and political economy of the country were focused on labor flexibility, which contributed significantly to increasing the informality of economic activities (Lozano, 1996). Nevertheless, the World Bank (WB) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), have reported that per capita income doubled from 1991 to 2000, rising to US \$2,320 in 2002 and that the poverty index decreased from 33.9 percent in 1992 to

28.6 percent in 1998, while extreme poverty was reduced from 7 percent to 5 percent. It is also important to note that the report with the most recent figures (dated 2004), establishes that 42 out of every 100 Dominicans live in poverty (that is, without enough income to satisfy basic food and non-food necessities) and that 16 out of every 100 were living in extreme poverty (without enough income to obtain the foods providing a minimum intake of calories for one family). Therefore it may be argued that the economic growth from 1997 to 2000 was not exactly “pro-poor” as the most vulnerable sectors did not benefit in the same way as others from general economic growth (20% of the population control half the income).

SANTO DOMINGO AND THE INNERBURBS

To these economic changes may be added an accelerated process of urbanization, which transformed the country into an urban society with over 60 percent of the population living in urban zones, especially in the capital’s metropolitan area. It can be said that the economic and political life of the country is largely concentrated in the capital city, *el Gran Santo Domingo*, as this is where most economic investment as well as economic, human and technological services and resources are concentrated (CONAU, 2007).

As noted earlier, since at least the 1960s there was a massive expansion of the urban fabric, known as the Great Expansion of Santo Domingo, as the population increased from 369,980 inhabitants in 1960, to 668,507 in 1970. This expansion is attributed in part to the high pressure that had built up during the previous years when there was strong control of migration. During the presidency of Joaquín Balaguer (1966-1978) the government’s strategy was to reactivate the economy, particularly through supporting the construction industry and abandoning agrarian activities, which sparked an even larger migration from rural areas to the capital.

During this period the capital city expanded towards the West and the North, widening the limits of the urban area to incorporate the new industrial zone and the airport of Herrera. It was in these zones that the first massive land occupations took place, among them that of Cristo Rey, the case examined in this chapter. It should also be noted that the State developed a housing policy in the Northern zone of the capital, building housing estates for popular sectors in parts of Cristo Rey and adjoining areas. Hoffnung-Garskof (2008) amongst others has explained that the originally

informal *barrios* that arose in what was then the periphery of the city, especially in the North, partly had to do with massive displacements from other “key” parts of the city following the death of Trujillo (see Figure 2).² Hoffnung-Garskof explains that new groups began to settle in areas that were then woodlands and agricultural lands. The inhabitants of these *barrios*, migrants from the interior of the country and surrounding neighborhoods, devoted themselves to *chiripa* (casual or informal work), mostly running small business enterprises and working as domestics.

Santo Domingo Metropolitan Area - Manzana Level View

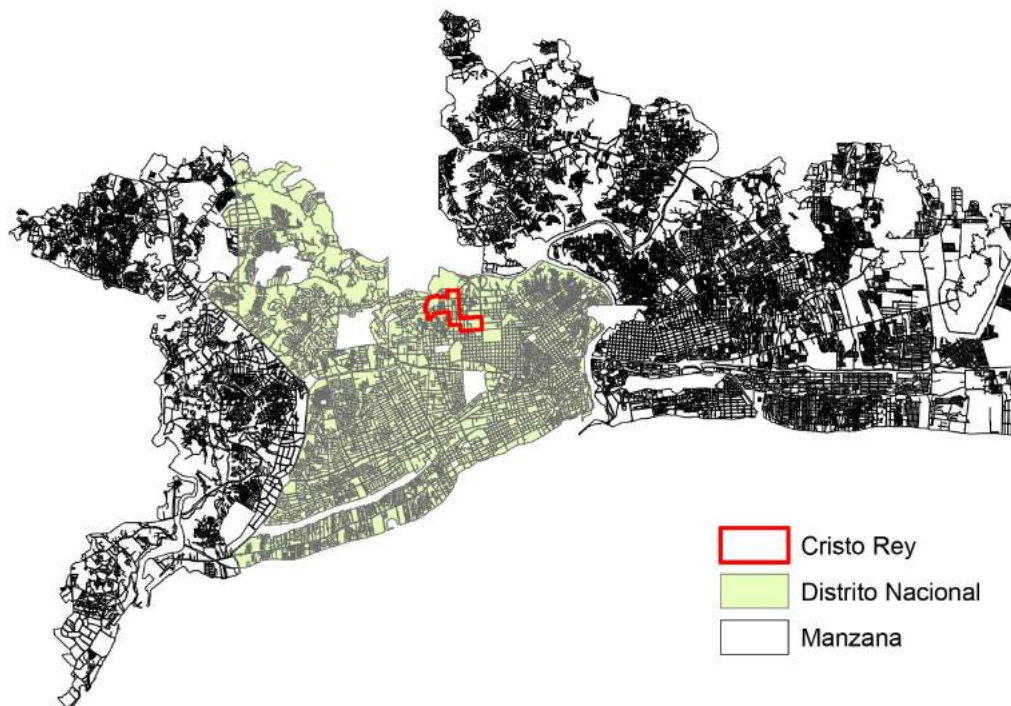


Figure 5.1. Metropolitan Zone and location of case study

² Other studies have focused on informal settlements in other parts of the metropolitan zone, each with its own urbanization process. A report made by a group of Masters and PhD students from the University of Texas at Austin directed by Dr. Bjørn Sletto focused on the informal settlement *Los Platanitos* in the municipality of Santo Domingo Norte. Although *Los Platanitos* is an informal settlement that has consolidated due to the uninterrupted presence and efforts of the residents, it is considered a “ravine” settlement because the dwellings were built precariously on very steep slopes or are in areas subject to flooding. Also, unlike our case study *Cristo Rey*, *Los Platanitos* started to grow in the 1980s. As the report on *Los Platanitos* points out, there have been few empirical studies of the social and environmental conditions of informal settlements and popular *barrios*.

The 2006 report by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank pointed out the accelerated urbanization of poverty, as well as the precarious living conditions in the marginalised urban settlements. These settlements present a great challenge as a large number of people continue to live in areas unfit for human habitation, with pollution and a high risk of flooding. The report notes that when questionnaires were applied in some irregular settlements on the banks of the rivers Ozama and Isabela -- where over 10 percent of the population of Santo Domingo lives -- and in other marginalised *barrios*, roughly half the owners of these dwellings did not have titles to their property. Some, however, did have receipts and proof of purchase for their lots (Tejada Holguín and Lizardo 2004; and Banco Mundial 2001). The authors point out that this situation has a negative effect on property values, restricts access to credit and does not help the inhabitants to capitalize on the investments they have made over the years. However, there have not been any systematic attempts in the Dominican Republic to modernize the land tenure regime for these groups, nor has there been any mass titling/registering of urban lots to provide property rights or to regularize the irregular settlements as there have been in many other Latin American countries. In fact, there have been forcible evictions in el Gran Santo Domingo. For example, it was reckoned at the time of writing that there was a threat of eviction in el Distrito Nacional, to a population of over 200,000 people living in the *barrios* of La Zurza, Capotillo, Simón Bolívar, 24 de Abril, Gualey, Los Guandules and La Ciénega.

When we began to consider innerburb sites to survey, several other *barrios* in the zone were considered, these being La Zurza, Capotillo, Simón Bolívar, 24 de Abril, Gualey, Los Guandules and La Ciénega. However, several of these settlements had already been included in other research projects and have a large number of community and *barrio* organizations due to the relatively high level of precariousness they experience. Once we had selected Cristo Rey we found that it was not possible to obtain maps on the scale of street blocks from the National Department of Statistics, ONE (la Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas), so we created general maps using GIS. These gave us an idea of the number of street blocks (*manzanas*) and of dwellings in

the *barrio*. Using this information we randomly selected lots to be surveyed (one in every seven). However, some parts of the *barrio* were excluded for safety reasons³

CASE STUDY – THE *BARRIO* OF CRISTO REY

The *barrio* of Cristo Rey is an example of the urban development and consolidation of precarious communities mentioned above. The history of the *barrio* and the origins of Cristo Rey are illustrative of the urbanization process of the capital as its origins date back to when there were massive evictions from adjoining *barrios* (for example, from La Zurza) and it was close to important national industries such as a cement works (Hoffnung-Garskof, 2008). Most of the inhabitants of Cristo Rey purchased their lots from those who had acquired them through invasions or illegal sales. Of particular importance to the expansion of the *barrio* was the eviction of a group of families who lived near the General Andrews airport in 1963, where a municipal park now known as Olympic Stadium had been planned. The residents of areas adjoining the airport were migrants from rural areas, and they had the support of private organizations, especially religious organizations, in getting basic services installed in the *barrio*, such as mains water, road surfacing, electricity, schools and clinics. It should be mentioned that there is a public cemetery in the *barrio* of Cristo Rey, and one of the bloodiest prisons of Trujillo's time, La Cuarenta, is also there. Also in the 1960s, houses started to be built for people working in national industries, especially the cement works, along with housing for government employees. There is therefore a mixture of popular inhabitants in the settlement, deriving from its informal origins and from public housing policy.

Today Cristo Rey has a population of over 58,000 inhabitants, and it has 15,500 dwellings. Over 38 percent of the population in the *barrio* are poor according to national estimates.⁴ These

³ The application of the questionnaires followed two weeks after the census survey had been conducted, and my key respondent – who was born and raised in Cristo Rey and works as a census worker – advised us to leave out some parts of the settlement where the census workers had had problems getting access.

⁴ It should be noted that the poverty rate in Cristo Rey (38.9%)— according to official figures from la Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas (ONE)— is above the figure for el Distrito Nacional (where 19.7% of households are considered poor). The official rate takes into account the quality of the dwelling, human

figures show that Cristo Rey is a relatively large settlement with a considerable population compared to other settlements in the LAHN study. As already mentioned, the outskirts of the city at the time (the ‘innerburbs’), especially in the northern zone of el Distrito Nacional, contain informal settlements that go back at least to the 1960s. It has been estimated that approximately 500,000 people in Santo Domingo live in the 16 precarious *barrios* located close to the rivers Ozama and Isabela. In general, those informal settlements closest to the rivers have the highest rates of poverty and overcrowding.



Figures 5.2 and 5.3. General information from the Cristo Rey barrio, manzana level view (left) and Sectors of Cristo Rey, manzana level view. Source: Google Earth (right).

Dwellings, households and life in Cristo Rey

As mentioned above, the origins of Cristo Rey are closely linked to big displacements from adjoining *barrios* and to its location close to important industries such as the cement works. In the 1960s, houses began to be built in this *barrio* for workers employed in these industries, and especially in the cement industry. Cristo Rey is also known by some of its inhabitants as Barrio

capital, access to basic services and infrastructure, etc. In the Atlas of the Poverty in the Dominican Republic, the national planning office, *la Oficina Nacional de Planificación* (ONAPLAN, 2005), classifies Cristo Rey as a precarious settlement on the same level as notoriously marginal *barrios* like Gualey, Capotillo, La Zurza, La Ciénaga, and Guachupita. The Atlas also shows a clear pattern with respect to the concentration of poverty in the northern zone (especially in Circunscripción 3), near the rivers Ozama and Isabela.

Proletario due to the fact that some of its pioneer inhabitants were employed by important industries such as the cement industry. Another distinguishing feature of Cristo Rey is that the center of the city is very accessible as there is a great variety of public transportation available in the sector, such as buses (*guaguas*), shared taxis, motorbike taxis (*motoconchos*), and a subway station.

Lot Acquisition and Tenure	
Years family has lived on lot (mean)	36.7
Original owner age (mean)	65.3
Lot Acquisition year (mean)	1973
Lot Acquisition year (mode)	1965
Percent of owners according to year of arrival on lot	
More than 30 years (before 1979)	73.5
Between 20-29 years, 1980-1989	13.7
Between 10-19 years, 1990-1999	7.8
Last 10 years, 2000 - 2010	4.9

Table 5.3. General information from the housing survey in Cristo Rey

Table 5.3 shows that the majority of those interviewed have been living on their lot for over 30 years, and the average age of those interviewed is 68. Although 75 percent of those interviewed say they obtained their property from a previous owner, 10 percent said they acquired it by other means, for example through their employment or a loan from the bank. Of those interviewed, only the latter report having property titles, while the rest only have receipts to show. Those who reported acquiring the property from the previous owner, however, stated that the “previous owner” never actually lived on the property. Also, while many respondents did not know the

current size of their lots, others — particularly those that acquired their home through their employment — reported that their homes were, on average, 124 square meters (see Table 5.4).⁵

Average persons per lot	4.9
Percentage of lots with 2 or more dwellings	29.4
Number of rooms per dwelling	2.2
Percent extended families	42.2
Average age of the owner of the lot	68
Average years living in the colonia	36.7
Lot Size (average)	124 m2
Lot Size (mode)	72 m2

Table 5.4. General information from the survey of housing in Cristo Rey

Our survey also managed to capture certain basic figures for the “pioneers” who started the *colonia*. It was reported, for example, that 73 percent of them already lived in the capital, but in a different settlement. We also found that the average number of people who originally arrived on their lot was 5.2, which indicates that in most cases they were nuclear families. Today the average per lot is 4.9, in part because some of the adult children have moved elsewhere. However, one should note that nearly a third of the lots (29%) have two or more dwellings (Table 5.4). In many cases these additional households consist of adult children with their own

⁵ There is a great difference between the reported average size of the lot and what we found on the ground. As noted above, this has to do with the fact that the majority of those interviewed did not know the exact measurements for their lots, especially those who had not obtained their property through their employment. It appears that the lots with a property title are larger, while those that are a product of subdivision and informal acquisition (or are located in alleys or far from main avenues) are smaller (except in the case of the “leaders”, who had taken part in the invasion of the land and the subdivision of the lots, whose lots were larger).

families (with or without a spouse, and not sharing expenses or eating with the other households on the lot). In some cases, the additional property was rented out to tenants.

With respect to household composition, our survey revealed that over half of households continue to be nuclear families (53.9%), although a significant proportion are extended and composite families (42.2%).⁶ We find also that there is a considerable percentage of widows and widowers (40%, mostly widows) and retirees (22.9%). Our figures show that the needs of the elderly and widows should be studied in depth as the Dominican Republic, like other nations of the Caribbean, have high rates of female heads of household (between 20 and 35% of households).

The characteristics of the dwellings in the popular settlements of the Distrito Nacional are noteworthy as it is estimated that in Santo Domingo, between 30 and 40 percent of inhabitants live in self-built homes (GEO Santo Domingo, 2007). These houses are built gradually, often using materials such as zinc sheeting (for roofs), wood, and in the most precarious cases, cardboard (see Photos 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). Our survey shows that a significant portion (71%) of the dwellings sampled in Cristo Rey have only one floor, and a roof of zinc sheeting. International organizations like Habitat International point out that the construction materials used in a dwelling are one of the characteristics for defining vulnerability in terms of the physical protection provided by the dwelling. The outer walls as well as the roofs are the structural elements that have the greatest impact on the insecurity of dwellings in the Dominican Republic,

⁶ Extended families refers to families with a mother and a father or either one of them, with or without children and other relatives, while composite families consist of nuclear families (father or mother or both, with or without children) with or without other members who are not necessarily related to the nuclear family. The figure therefore includes both extended and composite families. In Cristo Rey, for example, these may be families consisting of a single member, of a couple and their sons or daughters, or the current spouse with children of his or her own (and these families may also include children from previous relationships); or in some cases, a friend or acquaintance who forms part of the household for a limited time.

given the risks of cyclones and hurricanes, as well as floods (although this has more to do with the territorial location of the property than the state of its structure).

Also, in Cristo Rey 32 percent of the dwellings show signs of overcrowding (moderate and extreme); a figure that is close to the total proportion of people in the Dominican Republic who live in overcrowded conditions (33%). It is to be noted that the same official figures indicate that conditions of overcrowding are less frequently found among female headed households, compared to households headed by a male.⁷ As in other cases studied in the LAHN Project, when there is more than one dwelling on the lot, the rate of overcrowding is greater in the second house. In Cristo Rey the characteristics of the first house in comparison with the second were as follows (second house data in parenthesis): extended families 42.2 percent (7.1%); persons per household 3.8 (3.6); number of bedrooms 2.6 (1.7); and rate of overcrowding 1.5 persons per bedroom (2.4). That is, the second house – whether it belongs to a relative (son or daughter) or a tenant – is smaller; occupied by a nuclear family (or less often a single person 11% compared to 4% in house number one); with fewer bedrooms, and as a result, a much higher rate of overcrowding.



Photos 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3. Characteristics of dwellings in Cristo Rey, paths and passages

⁷ It should be observed that the term overcrowding is inconsistently used and may refer to a measure of persons per square Meter, per room, or per bedroom. The latter is the definition most commonly used and the one adopted by the LAHN (see other chapters).

In almost 12 percent of the cases studied part of the dwelling is used for economic purposes, including the preparation and sale of food, the sale of clothes and shoes, or as a car repair workshop. Similar to the figures for other cities reported in this book, approximately 40 percent of respondents say they have serious problems with their dwelling (physical problems of construction, including materials that are not very durable, such as zinc sheeting or wooden planks, and also concrete roofs with cracks), but few are aware of problems with their installations (4%) or with the design of the building (9%).⁸

In spite of the fact that these properties are largely self-built, the values of the properties are substantial (US \$40,700 median and \$49,400 trimmed average). The price per square meter is US \$753 – one of the highest in all the cities included in the LAHN Project. However, lack of financing for purchasing a house at its exchange value on the one hand, and its use value on the other, diminish the incentives for selling the property (in fact, very few “For Sale” signs were observed).

Given the long tradition of migrating to the US and Europe, we expected a considerable number of families to receive remittances from abroad. Indeed, 42 percent of the families surveyed have or had relatives living abroad (in most cases either in the USA. or Europe, particularly Spain), and of these 60.4 percent reported that they had received remittances – generally in sums of around US \$100-150. However, only 10.7 percent of these families used the remittances to make improvements to the house.

As previously noted, most of the dwellings in Cristo Rey do not have property titles. Although there have been forced evictions in the sector and in adjoining *barrios*, most of the families surveyed in Cristo Rey do not consider this a threat, especially since they have lived in the *barrio* for decades without interruption. Even when the inhabitants do have property titles (when their homes were provided by the State to workers in national industries), they have not made wills or other formal arrangements for passing on the property. As in other countries of the region, when

⁸ This does not mean that there were no serious problems with installations such as electric wiring (see the case of Guadalajara for a more detailed explanation).

a person dies without having made a will (intestate succession), the so-called forced heirs or legally recognized inheritors are predetermined through the laws of succession in the country.

TOWARDS A NEW GENERATION OF HOUSING POLICIES FOR CONSOLIDATED SETTLEMENTS IN SANTO DOMINGO

There is no doubt that one of the great challenges facing Latin American countries is urban poverty and the lack of secure housing tenure. The State may adopt the position of a promoter of housing by creating a judicial and legal framework that adapts itself to (and reflects) the actions of society and the new housing needs of the country. This would imply a progressive development of agencies — the creation of a series of organisations for planning and administration — in order to facilitate access to the different housing services that the Dominican people require.

Nevertheless, as we have seen from the case of Cristo Rey, the Dominican situation requires a series of housing and urban policies that is different to those for cities mentioned elsewhere in this book. For example, as in many cities of the Caribbean, a significant number of households are headed by women, which implies adopting a gender perspective on the question of housing. Apart from having female heads, many of the pioneer households that have been in this settlement for decades are made up of people of advanced age. The findings of the survey indicate that on average the owners of these properties are 68 years old, a number that is significantly higher than in the other cities included in this book (in some cases the average age may be up to 10 years less). This means that the question of inheritance will have greater relevance and importance in these communities (which makes the housing problem even more complicated as dwellings lack property titles and making wills is uncommon). It is also necessary to take into account the particular needs of these older inhabitants, for example in terms of mobility and access to different parts of the house.

A third point to be noted with regard to the Dominican case is the lack of property titles. Although other cities in this book, like Buenos Aires and Montevideo, have high indices for unregularized property, Santo Domingo is different due to its particular history and the continual threat of displacement. Even so, in consolidated settlements like Cristo Rey that were founded in

the 1960s, this threat does not seem to exist (at least for those interviewed). All the same, lack of titles and the history of forced evictions in the capital city make for a climate of insecurity that may impede the consolidation of the dwellings, and also investments in improving them. This appears to affect the probability of improvements being made (only 22.8% were planning to make improvements – half as many as we saw in Lima, Santiago, Monterrey and Guadalajara). This might however have to do with the advanced age of the inhabitants, which affects the opportunities they have for extending their dwellings and their interest in doing so.

The fourth point, which also has to do with the question of a lack of titles and the insecurity of tenure, is the size of the lots and the high incidence of more than one dwelling on the lot, which makes population density and overcrowding worse. This could improve, for example, with an extension to the house, especially building upwards and adding a first or second floor. This would also make subdivision (and succession) easier among offspring, as well as provide the possibility of renting out part of the dwelling, which is important for households who would benefit economically from the rents. Assuming it is possible to build an extension, it is also important to consider the types of materials and construction suitable for a country prone to tropical storms, flooding and mudslides. The fifth point has to do with the importance of remittances in the Dominican context, as opposed to other cities in the LAHN Project (except perhaps Monterrey due its proximity to the US border). Even in the case of Monterrey, remittances do not appear to be an important source of income for improving the property as they are mostly used for daily subsistence and to cover other expenses.

The sixth and final point has to do with violence and the social insecurity lived by people in Cristo Rey and in other cities of Latin America and the Caribbean. The inhabitants of this *barrio* pointed to the growth of violence linked to poverty, drug addiction, drug trafficking and gangs (which they call *tigueraje*; this can mean “thugs” but also refers to being streetwise). This not only affects the perception of insecurity in the *barrio*, but also the use of public spaces in the community and social isolation. In Cristo Rey many homes have bars over their windows for protection, which also tends to reduce the circulation of air and the amount of natural light in the house. As can be seen in other chapters, anxiety and concern around issues of security and violence are widespread both in the community and in the home.

Following this brief discussion of the particularities of the Dominican context, we can make housing policy recommendations for the settlements that are now located in the innerburbs of the capital city. These proposals are linked to the outlines of policies and interventions pointed out in Chapter 2 (at the three levels of intervention: macro, meso and micro) for the consideration of individual households, community based organizations, and local governments.

THE MACRO LEVEL: COMMUNITY

Improvement of safety for citizens

Although most of the inhabitants did not identify major problems with their dwellings, they did say public safety was a major problem in their community. Public safety in the Caribbean, as in many countries of Latin America, has become a concern as violence in its different manifestations has increased in the region. Whether sexual, physical, gender-based, perpetrated against children or perpetrated by the police, violence is a recurring subject among the inhabitants of Cristo Rey. This is particularly the case with domestic violence, juvenile delinquency and drug addiction. Those interviewed complained about the violence created by the proliferation of drug markets, the availability of weapons in the *barrios*, and the high levels of (youth) unemployment, especially among males of working age. This trend was highlighted by a national survey of Dominican households (la encuesta Nacional de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples) in 2005, that reflected the perception of heads of household who considered delinquency to be the second most important problem faced by the country (48% of those interviewed), the first being unemployment (52%). This indicates that measures should be considered for ensuring the safety of inhabitants, as well as fostering cooperation between residents, community-based organizations and local governments. A series of mobilizations have already taken place to draw the attention of local authorities (although those interviewed have doubts about government intervention in their settlements).

Rehabilitation of public and community infrastructure

Here we can suggest that schools should be revamped, but also markets, plazas (i.e. town squares), baseball fields, as well as main avenues and streets in the *barrios*. The local government can also promote community recycling programs to address the large number of

toxic substances that often saturate *barrios* of the capital city. Although it is already being said that urban sustainability is a necessary condition for the planning of future settlements, improving and rehabilitating the consolidated precarious settlements that already exist should also be a priority since they too would benefit from sustainable policies as in the development of green areas.

Regularization of property titles

Insecurity of tenure and the lack of property titles is another priority area. As mentioned above, it is estimated that approximately 75 percent of Dominican Republic households do not have a property title, a figure that rises to 89.2 percent in the context of Cristo Rey. However, a broad-scale titling program would require doubling the number of people working for housing related agencies such as the *Jurisdicción Inmobiliaria* as well as the national office for cadastral information (*Dirección Nacional de Mensuras Catastrales*). These agencies need to be equipped with suitable technology and human capital to facilitate the titling process and other related administrative procedures.

International organizations like the United Nations point out that insecurity of tenure not only makes households more vulnerable to forced evictions, but also complicates the legal transfer of property rights by succession and inheritance. In these cases the State can intervene through regularization policies which have been successfully carried out in other countries of the region (where the settlements were built on state property). Juridical certainty will also help the residents invest more in their dwellings and use more permanent and durable materials, which in turn will raise property values. This again will also help those who wish to add a first or a second floor to the building.

THE MESO LEVEL: HOUSE-STREET

As mentioned above, many of the streets in Cristo Rey are very narrow, and in areas where there are sidewalks in many cases these have been occupied, obstructing the passage of pedestrians. These obstructions also affect businesses and commercial activities that depend on the flow of pedestrians. Still, this current use of streets and sidewalks may also be seen as an opportunity as it gives life to these communities as many activities take place in public spaces. Thus these

spaces also facilitate social interaction and conviviality among neighbors and members of the community. Nevertheless, it is common for there to be disputes over the proper use of streets and sidewalks, particularly those near private households or those that obstruct the passage of vehicles or of pedestrians. Another common complaint among the residents has to do with loud music that comes out of small commercial establishments called *colmados*, that are generally found on street corners. The complaint is not only against the noise that comes out of these establishments day and night, but also the sale of alcoholic beverages on the premises.

The meso level tends to be forgotten when plans for urban improvement or rehabilitation are being discussed. This type of policy and action only works when there is participation by the community (or at least, by those who are involved or will be affected) and a consensus about the general stipulations. Community members, local organizations and authorities can offer incentives and support to facilitate the flow of vehicles, pedestrians, parking areas, and green spaces with infrastructure for the inhabitants.

THE MICRO LEVEL: THE LOT

To achieve improvements at this level, programs of financial support are required (e.g., micro credits) that are not linked to property title. Given the small size of the lots and the high rate of overcrowding that exists, a priority area is technical and financial assistance to get roofs of zinc sheeting replaced with concrete or blocks, to get a second floors constructed, and to provide stairway prototypes to give private access to the upstairs floors.

At the level of the dwelling, therefore, the main priority can be technical and financial assistance to promote refurbishment of the property, as many of their installations were installed over 40 years ago. In Santo Domingo, some programs and initiatives that can be supported are:

- Building additional floors
- Building access / stairways to the second floor
- Renewal of electrical installations
- Improved drainage
- Actions to help persons of advanced age move about in their homes
- Improved ventilation and more natural light in the building

- Promotion of recycling at the household or community level, composting, and rainwater collection for personal use or for the patio
- Title regularization, or when this is not possible, registering the property
- Legal assistance to facilitate (or formalize) the succession of the dwelling, or if desired, its sale

SUMMARY

The case of Santo Domingo shows significant points of convergence with the other cities in this book, and also has points of divergence which should be studied in depth. As mentioned earlier, the process of urbanization and the development of precarious settlements are both strongly linked to the political, social and economic changes that followed the fall of the dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo (1930-1961) and affected the living conditions of a large part of the Dominican population. There can be no doubt that some of the main challenges in the Caribbean context are urban poverty, unemployment, and tenure insecurity. The Dominican case also teaches us that questions of gender should be taken into account as the rate of female-headed households is high, and also because of the advanced age of the residents of these settlements. Related to this point is the lack of legal tenure and the succession of properties. These issues should be studied in depth. This chapter is merely a first attempt to start a conversation about possible housing policies that might improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of precarious settlements, and this conversation would have to take into account three levels of intervention (macro, meso and micro) as well as the different actors, including individual households, community-based organizations, and local governments.
