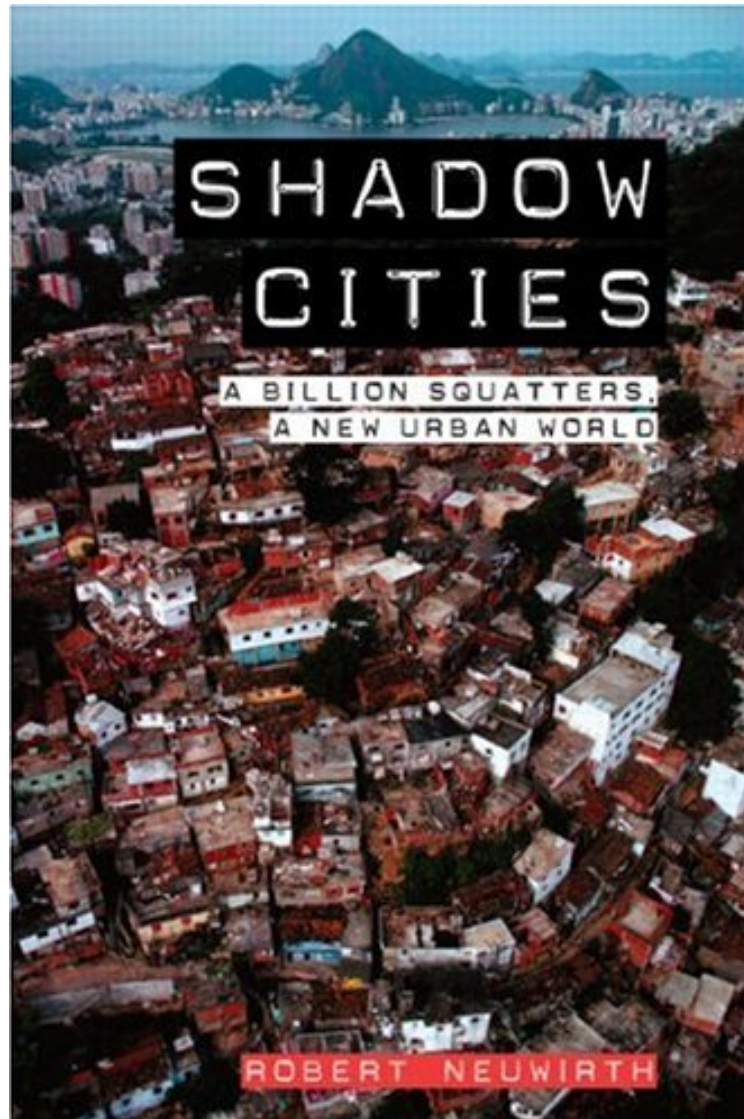


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Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, a New Urban World

Robert Neuwirth

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Robert Neuwirth : Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, a New Urban World before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shadow Cities: A Billion Squatters, a New Urban World:

30 of 32 people found the following review helpful. Building the Cities of Tomorrow By customer A billion squatters living around the world and the number is growing. This book gives us a glimpse into the day-to-day life of 4 distinct squatter communities: Rocinha (Rio de Janeiro); Southland (Nairobi, Kenya); Squatter Colony (Mumbai {Bombay}); and Sultanbeyli (Istanbul). Taking up residency in these neighborhoods, the author found not only the most dismal of

living conditions (piles of trash lining the streets; no running water, sewers or toilets), he also found lively, hard-working, resourceful and optimistic inhabitants. What surprised me most was learning that many of those who live in these squatter communities actually prefer to live there rather than to be relocated to government housing. For example, in one area of Rio, there is a city housing project which consists of concrete apartment buildings. The buildings themselves are crumbling and the grounds are littered with garbage and broken glass. There is a sense of hopelessness. In contrast, living in a squatter town, one is not restricted to a single concrete room. One can build a mud hut initially and enlarge, upgrade or even tear down and rebuild in brick or wood. If one is resourceful, one can build an extra room to rent out or even open a business. This gives a squatter a sense of pride and a sense of being in control of his own destiny. This is not a romanticized look at squatters, though. Much is said of the opposition these residents face at the hands of the politicians, the land developers, the wealthy, and the press. Problems with crime and drugs are also addressed. But it would be hard to walk away from this book and not feel sympathy and respect for these people. The number of squatters living in these communities worldwide is expected to reach 2 billion by 2030. That is roughly 1 in 4 people on earth. Perhaps that alone is reason enough to become aware and informed on this subject. A very interesting book. Illustrated with black and white photographs. 7 of 8 people found the following review helpful. Excellent read. By Sariputra This is one of the best books I have read in a while. The author - Robert Neuwirth - lived in four slum areas in or near major cities in the third world and then reported what he found. Neuwirth seems to have a unique knack for putting threads of stories together in a way that produces a compelling and fascinating tale. He reports bits and pieces of information received from local squatters, landlords, politicians, social activists, etc., and put together a story that seems so complete that you feel that you have the "feel" of life in these places. The book does have weaknesses. His historical accounts of slums strike the reader as piecemeal and thrown together. The portions of the book which deal with various proposed solutions fail to even discuss the significance of overpopulation in the etiology of slum development. But I gave the book four stars nonetheless. Neuwirth's first hand account of slum life in the modern world is almost spellbinding. Contrary to what one would expect, the book is not just an endless recitation of privation and poverty. The "slums" that he describes contain tales of triumph as well as oppression; ingenuity as well as exploitation. The book celebrates the human spirit as well as it pointing out its sins. Some of things reported in the book will surprise. For instance, the Brazilian "slum" of Rocinha is so vibrantly alive, one almost feels envious of those who reside there. Similarly, the tenacity of slum-dwellers in confronting adversity is often breathtaking. Then again, on the other hand, the brutal exploitation of the poor by people only slightly more advantaged is a disheartening commentary on the human race. Overall, this is quite a tale. Robert Neuwirth's book is a great read and well worth the time and the price. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It's amazing to look into the lives of people around the ... By Matthew Hogue Interesting read on the squatter cities. It's amazing to look into the lives of people around the world who live a completely different lifestyle

In almost every country of the developing world, the most active builders are squatters, creating complex local economies with high rises, shopping strips, banks, and self-government. As they invent new social structures, Neuwirth argues, squatters are at the forefront of the worldwide movement to develop new visions of what constitutes property and community. Visit Robert Neuwirth's blog at: <http://squattercity.blogspot.com>

From Publishers Weekly In this superbly probing book, investigative reporter Neuwirth relates the struggles and successes of some of the world's most resourceful poor people, among the one billion urban squatters in countries like Brazil, India, Kenya and Turkey. Having lived alongside them in these four countries and thus gained firsthand knowledge of their daily lives, Neuwirth is able to dismantle many common preconceptions about the so-called slums in which they live. The vast, bustling favela of Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro, for example, has distinct neighborhoods, apartments for rent, dance parties in the street and local entrepreneurs, as well as drug lords and gangs. In Nairobi's Kibera, many squatters have white-collar jobs, yet lack the income to rent more than a simple mud hut. Clarifying local legal considerations and housing policy city by city, Neuwirth closely attends to the characters, historical particularities and human potential of the squatter communities he encounters. In his concluding chapters, he pulls back to address the U.N.'s role in ameliorating squatters' problems and polarizing notions of property ownership, among other issues. Pointing out that many major cities were founded on squatter-style neighborhoods, Neuwirth treats readers to some fascinating historical case studies in London and New York. Compelling, thought-provoking and written with laconic grace, Neuwirth's study is essential reading for anyone interested in global urban affairs. Bw photos. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. 'Neuwirth gets the lowdown on the low life by becoming a resident of four of the most happening squatopolises: the thriving extralegal pockets of Istanbul, Mumbai, Nairobi, and Rio. His ghetto epiphanies include impeccable civility, self-organizing local governments, bustling economies, modest crime rates, and squatter millionaires.' - Josh McHugh, Wired 'Urban squatters - families that risk the wrath of governments and property owners by building dwellings on land they don't own - represent one out of every ten people on the planet. Squatters create complex local economies with high rises, shopping strips, banks, and self-government in their search for decent places to live. This book reveals squatter

communities from Rio to Bombay that give a glimpse into our urban future and show new visions of what constitutes property and community.' - architecture week 'Shadow Cities is at its best shining an investigative lens into areas of urban life that have seldom been described before. It is a wonderful story of the vitality and creativity of ordinary people who have managed to survive and sometimes even prosper in the face of government indifference if not hostility.' - Robert H. Nelson, a professor at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy; Reason Magazine '[A] superbly probing book...Compelling, thought-provoking and written with laconic grace, Neuwirth's study is essential reading for anyone interested in global urban affairs.' -Publisher's Weekly

From the Publisher In this superbly probing book, investigative reporter Neuwirth relates the struggles and successes of some of the world's most resourceful poor people, among the one billion urban squatters in countries like Brazil, India, Kenya and Turkey. Having lived alongside them in these four countries and thus gained firsthand knowledge of their daily lives, Neuwirth is able to dismantle many common preconceptions about the so-called slums in which they live. The vast, bustling favela of Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro, for example, has distinct neighborhoods, apartments for rent, dance parties in the street and local entrepreneurs, as well as drug lords and gangs. In Nairobi's Kibera, many squatters have white-collar jobs, yet lack the income to rent more than a simple mud hut. Clarifying local legal considerations and housing policy city by city, Neuwirth closely attends to the characters, historical particularities and human potential of the squatter communities he encounters. In his concluding chapters, he pulls back to address the U.N.'s role in ameliorating squatters' problems and polarizing notions of property ownership, among other issues. Pointing out that many major cities were founded on squatter-style neighborhoods, Neuwirth treats readers to some fascinating historical case studies in London and New York. Compelling, thought-provoking and written with laconic grace, Neuwirth's study is essential reading for anyone interested in global urban affairs. Bw photos. Agent, Jan-Erik Guerth. (Dec.)