

Alain Vimercati

BOLIVIA: CITIES BY, WITH AND FOR THE PEOPLE



Bolivia, one of the poorest countries in Latin America, is facing an annual urban population growth of 2.4% and actually over 67% of its approximately ten million inhabitants live in cities, putting major pressure on the country's scarce land resources. This problem is compounded by poor planning causing urban sprawl and a growing deficit in the access to adequate housing, basic infrastructure and services. The complexity of the problems need an interdisciplinary approach between all relevant stakeholders and urban specialists, recognizing that the social production of habitat is a reality and, at the same time, an opportunity to develop solutions and approaches with and for low-income people that are sustainable, affordable, culturally appropriate and socially acceptable. The architects and the urban specialists then should integrate participatory planning and design methods to face the problems of the rapid urbanization, developing urban and housing approaches that pay more attention to compact settlements with urban and architectural qualities, mixed uses, flexible spaces, incremental assisted self-help housing, socio-cultural aspects and appropriation, livelihood requirements and overall quality of life.

Alain Vimercati is a Swiss architect graduated at the ETH Zurich. He worked three years in an architecture office in Zürich and for six years has been working as a professional co-worker in the Fundación Pro-Hábitat in Cochabamba, Bolivia, supported by the swiss NGO Comundo. In Bolivia he's working in social production of habitat and housing processes, urban densification as well as equipments projects based on participatory processes and design. He has won a national competition with a collective housing project proposal and another one with an Urban Centrality project in the city of La Paz. He participated on the development of a new project integrating land regularization, participatory planning and design methods for settlements improvement and urban densification; actually, he's working on its implementation.

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