

PhD project by Nick Nowara

## Incremental housing and its flows in Lima, Peru

As of 2007, the majority of the world's population lives in cities, and governments around the world are challenged to meet the demand for housing. Rapidly growing (urban) populations have become a concern for many countries and international organisations such as the UN or the Cities Alliance. As a result, 'access to adequate, safe and affordable housing' is identified as an ongoing challenge in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While several governments are attempting to meet this demand through the provision of standardised public housing and the use of resettlement programmes, these approaches have often been criticised for creating their own problems. These regularly include being cut off from social networks, reduced access to public transport and employment opportunities, as new housing is often located in peripheral areas.

Peru is a paradigmatic case for a different approach, that of incremental housing. This step-by-step process, whereby building components are appended or improved as funding, time, or materials become available is undeniably a driver of urbanisation. It is widely recognised that incremental building practices can be a starting point for socially relevant, realistic solutions to persistent housing shortages. Moreover, it is estimated that 20-70 percent of the housing stock in the Global South is built incrementally. In Peru, a country with one of the largest housing deficits in Latin America, two out of every three new homes built are incremental. At the same time, the urban area of Peruvian cities has increased by around 50 percent in the last two decades, while 92 percent of construction over the same period has been incremental.

Whereas incremental housing is most visible in spatial and legal niches, it is also linked to city-regional industries and global markets that develop in transversal relationships with state actors and governance. Therefore, in order to understand this practice and to create a better understanding of its significance for the development of cities like Lima, I will apply a 'city-wide flows perspective'. In doing so, I argue with van Noorloos et al. (2020, p.15) that 'given the significant time, effort and money invested in these incremental housing flows, engaging in such a flow perspective can offer new dimensions and opportunities for the institutions and actors that are willing to create alternative solutions'.

With a focus on incremental construction, I focus my research specifically on the embeddedness of incremental housing in citywide, regional and sometimes global resource flows of building materials as a starting point. Therefore, I will not only study the everyday forms of incremental construction, but also the underlying decisions about building materials, use, financing, and possible changes in each of these decisions over time. By systematically studying incremental housing as a practice at the intersection of various citywide, regional or global flows of materials, people and finance, I contribute to a more nuanced understanding of incremental housing as such. This has implications for housing research and policy, particularly at a time when we are witnessing an increase in state-produced mass housing across the Global South.