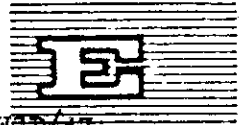


UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



47138

Distr.  
LIMITED



E/CN.14/SWCD/17  
9 January 1963

ENGLISH  
Original: FRENCH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
Standing Committee on Social Welfare  
and Community Development  
Second session  
Leopoldville, 4 - 9 February 1963

THE PHENOMENON OF SQUATTING IN LEOPOLDVILLE

## THE PHENOMENON OF SQUATTING IN LEOPOLDVILLE

The disruption of the social structure which we deal with in another work<sup>1/</sup> has led to the establishment, since 1960, of a very extensive squatting zone in Leopoldville. Leaving aside the inherent difficulties of rapid urbanization, the fact that the squatting problem has still not been solved in a town such as Leopoldville, where the population is doubling in less than 20 years by natural increase alone, is found to hamper considerably the normal development of this urban centre.

As the term "squatting" was only recently introduced into sociological vocabulary, it may be useful to give some explanation of it in the light of observations made in this connexion in other parts of the world.

On this point the "Report on the World Social Situation" published by the United Nations in 1957 (1) mentioned the following:

"... The rapidly growing cities of the less developed regions of the world generally have several districts or zones which are imperfectly integrated:

1. A modern commercial, administrative, and upper-class residential centre;
2. An "old city" of narrow streets and densely occupied buildings;
3. A zone of huts or shacks, within or without the city limits proper, lacking most urban features except density of settlement and urban types of employment among the residents.

This pattern has many variations.

- The zone of huts or shacks is usually on the periphery of the city. In some cases it is made up of coherent villages maintaining traditional values and social controls similar to those of the rural

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<sup>1/</sup> P. Raymackers: The organization of squatting zones, a factor in the absorption of structural unemployment in the urban centres of developing countries - with reference to the urban centre of Leopoldville (Rep. of Congo). To be published in 1963.

villages; more frequently however, this zone consists largely of amorphous mushrooming shantytowns, lacking any formal administration or any apparent informal social organization. Such shantytowns may be outside the administrative boundary of the city, so that no authority is responsible for providing urban services and enforcing housing regulations; even when the shantytown is within the city limits, however, the municipal authorities may pay little attention to its needs, particularly if, as is often true, the residents are "squatters" with no legal right to the land on which they build their shacks.

- Under present conditions, the great majority of the urban poor are housed either in the older parts of the cities or in the peripheral villages and shantytowns.

- Peripheral shantytowns spring up on land that is not being used for one reason or another. The occupant may simply set up a hut as a squatter, may pay a small rent to the owner of the land or, in the case of some better organized groups of workers, may obtain recognition from the Government of his right of occupancy. The land is often unused because it is undesirable or unsuitable for permanent buildings. It may consist of swamps (as in certain districts of Bangkok), steep hillsides (as in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro), low ground subject to flooding (as in the outskirts of Baghdad), or refuse dumps.

These facts aptly describe the position in Leopoldville in 1960 and 1961 and coincide with the sense we have attributed to the term "squatting".

The primary meaning - a much narrower one - is: "the action of appropriating a piece of land".

In the specific case of Leopoldville, we must point out that it is through an illegal appropriation of land that there arose this "zone of huts or shacks within the city limits proper, lacking most urban features except density of settlement and urban types of employment among the residents".

Hence we shall give the term "squatting" this latter meaning, which is a wider one than it usually has, especially in the advanced economies.

There are a great many squatting zones in the world, especially in the countries with less developed economies. Besides the marginal zones referred to above, we might mention the "Callampa" of Santiago de Chile, the shantytowns of North Africa - particularly those in the Algerian and Moroccan cities - the shantytowns of certain Nigerian urban centres; the outskirts of certain Italian and French towns are also noteworthy. As for the Republic of the Congo, at the time of our surveys squatting zones had been noted in many places, including Boma, Kasangulu and Coquilhatville.

The phenomenon of squatting in Leopoldville has been followed from its very beginning.

A basic survey - comprising 30 general reports and 919 individual questionnaires - was made between 20 September 1960 and 20 January 1961, while a supplementary survey, intended to follow up the development of the phenomenon, was made between 1 October and 30 November 1961. This latter survey comprised 20 general reports and 300 individual questionnaires.

#### 1. GEOGRAPHICAL FRONTIER

##### A. Location

Map I shows the Leopoldville squatting zone as it was at the end of 1961. Few major geographical changes were recorded between November 1960 (basic survey) and November 1961 (supplementary survey). In November 1961 the zone affected by squatting had the following boundaries:

in the North, the communes of Kinshasa

Bandalungwa

Ngiri-Ngiri

Kalulu

Limete

in the West, the trunk road K'Coliane -- Ndjelo-Banza -- By Pass

in the South, the trunk road Levunium-Kingasani

in the East, the trunk road from the Aerodrome of Ndjili to Kimbanseke.

##### B. Area covered

As at 7 April 1960, the Office of the African Cities (Office des Cités Africaines) at Leopoldville estimated at "more than a thousand hectares of land the area occupied by squatters to the south of Leopoldville, i.e. without counting the zone located to the east of the river Ndjili". (2)

As at 2 August 1960, the Administration of the State of Leopoldville estimated the area occupied by illegal plots in Leopoldville at 5,100 hectares. (3)

Observations gathered during the basic survey between 20 September 1960 and 20 January 1961 confirmed the fact that nearly 5,000 hectares had been parcelled out illegally by squatters in Leopoldville. At that time the parcelling out did not necessarily mean actual occupation.

The survey carried out between 4 October and 30 November 1961 showed that there had been few changes in the area of the various squatting zones since the basic survey. On the other hand, it showed a rapid increase in the population density of the squatting zones.

## 2. ORIGIN OF SQUATTING

The underlying causes of squatting in Leopoldville are numerous, and their effects have varied over time,

The oldest and deepest cause is that of the bad living conditions in the old African cities of the classic type, that is, severe overcrowding, most frequently accompanied by complete lack of comfort and highly inadequate public health conditions.

In 1946, when the total African population of the town was no more than 110,000 - of whom 98,000 lived in old cities of the classic type - the author of a study of the indigenous city (cité indigène) of Leopoldville (4) condemned the existing situation. Having denounced the population density of the old classic-type cities (160 per parcelled hectare) as far too high, he concluded :

"... There is only one remedy for this situation : a further considerable extension of the city. Unfortunately the work of sanitation and of cleaning up in the Lemba trough never progresses rapidly enough to meet the demand". (5)

According to a recent estimate, in July 1960 the African population of Leopoldville - some 380,000 - occupied an actual area of "classic housing" of about 2,500 hectares, or an average density of 150 per hectare.

We note first of all that the population has more than trebled since 1946, the present index number being 345 (1946 = 100).

Next it must be borne in mind that, since 1946, only 20,000 modern dwellings have been built, which would house at most 100,000 persons<sup>1/</sup>; to this figure must be added the population of the city of Ndjili, of 35,000.

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<sup>1/</sup> At least 3,000 of these modern dwellings were unoccupied in July 1960 because of their high rent.

Thus it will be readily understood that, far from diminishing, the actual population density per hectare in the old classic-type African cities had considerably increased, to the point of becoming "explosive". This "explosive" character was highlighted in 1956, in a study of urban and social geography dealing with Leopoldville (6). Rev. Father DENIS, author of the study, wrote:

"... For the whole of the Old City of Leopoldville, the average density per hectare is 302. But it should be pointed out that there are no multi-storied houses in these districts; thus the extreme degree of overcrowding can be appreciated". (7)

It should also be remembered that, remaining very close to the traditional kind of life, this not yet urbanized population finds it difficult to endure relegation to the unhealthy restricted spaces of the old classic-type cities. A recent report by the Administration of the State of Leopoldville confirmed these observations. (8)

There is another point of comparison for the "recently-urbanized" residents of Leopoldville: the very "well ventilated" condition of the European city, the example of which has certainly been one of the underlying causes of squatting; we note that political independence, the attainment of which revived race tensions, has considerably strengthened this factor, making urban promiscuity still more intolerable.

The 20,000 residents of the European city occupied an area of nearly 1,200 hectares, which represents a density of 17 per hectare. At the same period, the African cities of Leopoldville as a whole had an average density of 150 units per hectare, and, in the old classic-type cities, the density per hectare was more than 300.

The results of the survey carried out between 20 September 1960 and 20 January 1961, confirmed by the supplementary survey of October and November 1961, strikingly illustrate the foregoing:

A. Previous residence of the squatters

TABLE I.

Previous residence of the squatters of  
Leopoldville, 1960-1961

	<u>Basic survey</u>	<u>Suppl. survey</u>
Old classic-type cities	84 % (770)	88 % (262)
O.C.A. camps (9) or company camps	9 % (81)	8 % (25)
Recent immigrants	2 % (23)	4 % (13)
Other cases	5 % (45)	— —
Total	100 % (919)	100 % (300)

B. Reasons for participating in squatting

TABLE II.

Reasons for participating in squatting in  
Leopoldville, 1960-1961

	<u>Basic survey</u>	<u>Suppl. survey</u>
Previous rent too high	31 % (289)	33 % (100)
Disputes with the landlords	6 % (58)	5 % (14)
Desire to have own plot	13 % (161)	19 % (56)
Previous rent too high + desire to have own plot	9 % (84)	14 % (42)
Previous rent too high + disputes with the landlords	13 % (162)	14 % (43)
Total socially positive reasons	82 % (754)	85 % (255)
Political reasons	4 % (39)	3 % (8)
Speculation	7 % (65)	10 % (30)
Total socially negative reasons	11 % (104)	13 % (38)
Others	7 % (61)	2 % (7)
Overall total	100 % (919)	100 % (300)



We placed under the heading "Others" the special case of a semi-rural group whose village had moved from the neighbourhood of Leopoldville to the outskirts of the town. An examination of the reasons for squatting in relation to whether the squatter was employed or unemployed showed, during the basic survey, the following distribution:

TABLE III.

Relation between reasons for squatting and  
whether squatter was employed or unemployed  
basic survey (1960-1961)

<u>Reasons</u>	<u>Employed</u>	<u>Unemployed</u>	<u>%</u>
Socially positive	73 %	85 %	+ 12 %
Socially negative	21 %	8 %	- 13 %
Others	6 %	7 %	+ 1%
	100 %	100 %	0

It emerges from this examination that the unemployed, who constituted 73% of the population of this zone at the time of the survey, settled there from social necessity (85%), whereas this necessity was less pressing for those who were employed. On the other hand, the supplementary survey revealed that the socially positive motives for squatting were tending to become less important. Indeed it was noted during the supplementary survey that an increasing number of employed persons were settling in the zone for speculative reasons. We will return to this point.

In order to have a true understanding of the motivations of squatting, it is useful to ask the following question :

"Bearing in mind the "explosive" situation described above, what was the catalyst, or what were the catalysts, which allowed the phenomenon to develop?".

At the end of 1959, and especially at the beginning of 1960, certain political leaders, anxious to satisfy some of their constituents, saw in the more or less gratuitous granting of plots to their favourites an easy and uncomplicated way of ensuring a higher standard of living for them while building up for themselves some personal political fiefs.

Some BaHumbu land chiefs (chefs de terre), the traditional owners of the land, very quickly perceived the profits they could acquire by selling plots, and this second catalyst speeded up the development of the phenomenon of squatting that was started for political motives.

Since the power of the government was greatly weakened during the first six months of 1960, the process of development of squatting could not be checked.

The response to the call for squatters thus made by certain interested politicians and chefs de terre was all the greater because, since the end of 1958, the time when the present political crisis began, there had been a steadily increasing number of unemployed, and hence of bad tenants, in Leopoldville.

It is interesting to note that at that time the average rent for a most squalid dwelling in one of the old classic-type cities was 300 francs a month, to which sum 25 francs had to be added for water supply. For those who were lucky enough to be employed, the minimum legal wage was then 900 francs per month.

The race tensions prevalent in Leopoldville in 1960 were highly conducive to squatting. After the socio-economic catastrophe of July 1960 the phenomenon of squatting speeded up and took on a permanent character.

This development was to continue throughout the second half of 1960; it was highlighted by some results of the survey conducted at that time:

A. Employment : The distribution of the 919 persons interviewed during the basic survey is as follows:

Unemployed	73%	(673)
Employed	27%	(246)

According to the "Conjonctures socio-économiques à Léopoldville" (10) founded at the same time, 50% of the total economically active population of the town was out of work. The figure of 73% of the squatters unemployed is therefore eloquent. (We included among the employed persons a certain number of independent workers (or workers on own account) (11) whose economic activity could really be regarded as non-redundant).

B. Source of income : 23% (205) of the squatters earned a fixed wage; this shows up all the more clearly the precarious lot of the remaining 77% (714) of which:

25 % (232) obtained their income from work "on own account" which could objectively be regarded as economically redundant.

7 % ( 65) lived entirely on help from the clan.

45 % (417) lived on a variety of resources (savings, the clan and work on own account including small-scale trading ...)

In view of the material impossibility of carrying out a classic-type census in the squatting zone, we asked these being interviewed whether they actually lived in the zone. By this means we established what we call the "residence ratio". This is a subjective figure, as opposed to the objective figure which would be provided by a classic census.

C. Residence : The trend of the residence ratio over the three successive visits comprising the basic survey is also significant :

1st visit (median date: 10 October 60) : 61% (186/305)  
2nd visit (median date: 16 November 60): 64% (182/279)  
3rd visit (median date: 04 January 61) : 72% (217/300)

An additional, but limited, visit at the end of January 1961 revealed that out of 35 persons questioned, 22 actually lived in the zone.

The supplementary survey conducted in October and November 1961 showed a fairly district trend in the squatters' employment situation and source of income, as well as in the residence ratio of the squatting zone.

A. Employment

	<u>Supplementary Survey</u>	<u>Basic survey</u>
Unemployed	64 % (191)	73 % (673)
	36 % (109)	27 % (246)

Figure No.1 shows the evolutionary curves of the employment situation among the squatters and in the whole of the urban centre between December 1960 and November 1961.

It is of the utmost interest to note this fact : whereas unemployment is increasing in the town as a whole, it is tending to fall in the squatting zone. This confirms that there is a growing osmosis between the squatting zones and the zones of classic-type housing in Leopoldville.

B. Source of income

TABLE IV.

Source of income of the squatters at the time of the basic and the supplementary surveys in Leopoldville, 1960-1961.

	<u>Suppl. survey</u>	<u>Basic survey</u>
Earning a fixed wage	35 % (105)	23 % (205)
"Own account" income that can be regarded as economically redundant	22 % ( 67)	25 % (232)
Mutual assistance from the clan	12 % ( 35)	7 % ( 65)
Miscellaneous resources	31 % ( 93)	45 % (417)
Total	100 % (300)	100 % (919)

C. Residence

The supplementary survey shows a residence ratio of 84% for the 300 squatters interviewed in October and November 1961. Figure No.2 shows the trend of the residence ratio between October 1960 and October 1961.

It emerges from this that the number of residents in the Leopoldville squatting zone is continually increasing and that, consequently, its population density is rising.

### 3. SOCIOLOGICAL SKETCH

#### The ethnic position

The phenomenon of the gathering together of ethnic groups, which is to be observed in other urban centres that are springing up, both in Africa and elsewhere, can also be seen in the Leopoldville squatting zone.

It should be noted that the large amount of urban immigration in Leopoldville during the last fifteen years, and the extremely limited available living space, largely prevented the gathering together of ethnic groups prior to 1960. Moreover, the policy of the Belgian administration was to prevent any concentration of these groups.

The surveys gave the following composition by ethnic groups for the zone occupied by the squatters:

TABLE V.

#### Ethnic distribution of the squatting population in Leopoldville, 1960-1961

	<u>Basic survey</u>	<u>Suppl. survey</u>
1. BaKongo	49 % (449)	47 % (141)
2. Kwango-Kwilu	4 % (40)	7 % (22)
3. BaYaka	33 % (304)	33 % (99)
4. BaTeke	8 % (77)	9 % (27)
5. Lac, Banningville	2 % (14)	1 % (2)
6. Haut-Congo + Others	4 % (35)	3 % (9)
Total	100 % (919)	100 % (300)

For the urban population as a whole, the demographic surveys (12) carried out in Leopoldville gave the following distribution:

TABLE VI.

Ethnic distribution of the population of Leopoldville  
(figures published in 1957)

1. BaKongo	60 %
2. Kwango-Kwilu	5 %
3. BaYaka	5 %
4. BaTeke	3 %
5. Lac, Banningville	7 %
6. Haut-Congo + Others	20 %
Total	100 %

Comparison of the demographic surveys and the surveys on squatting revealed the following differences:

TABLE VII.

Ethnic rations : Total population of the town -  
Squatting population

	<u>in %</u>	<u>Demog. surveys</u>	<u>Squatting surveys</u>		<u>/</u>	
			BASIC	SUPPL.	BASIC	SUPPL.
1. BaKongo		60	49	/	47	- 11 / - 13
2. Kwango-Kwilu		5	4	/	7	- 1 / + 2
3. BaYaka		5	33	/	33	+ 28 / + 28
4. BaTeke		3	8	/	9	+ 5 / + 6
5. Lac, Banningville		7	2	/	1	- 5 / - 6
6. Haut-Congo + Others		20	4	/	3	- 16 / - 17
		100	100	/	100	00 / 00

The differences noted are most often related to the degree of technical skill, and consequently the economic status, of all the members of the ethnic groups considered. In the specific case of the BaTeke, political factors also play a part.

1. BaKongo group - 11 % / - 13 %

- (a) Observers agree in recognizing that the socio-economic status of this group is relatively higher than that of the other ethnic groups represented in Leopoldville.

Since squatting in Leopoldville is primarily a socio-economic phenomenon, it will be readily understood that the urban BaKongo are less numerous in these zones than in the rest of the town.

- (b) Among other things, since the BaKongo area is close to the town, and since there are many BaKongo in the town, assistance from the clan is more effective for this ethnic group than for the others; for this reason the needy BaKongo are able to remain "artificially" in the old classic-type cities.

2. Kwango-Kwilu group - 1 % / + 2 %

The comparison between the squatting surveys and the demographic surveys calls for no comment.

3. BaYaka group + 28% / + 28 %

The lack of technical skills, and hence the low economic status of the BaYaka are well known, and a large number of them were affected by the depression. The observed difference confirms, if there is still any need for it, the socio-economic origin of squatting in Leopoldville.

4. BaTeke group + 5 % / + 6 %

The BaTeke group is relatively the most numerous in the zone considered because, from the very beginning of the phenomenon of squatting in Leopoldville, it was subjected to strong political pressure to resettle large areas of the Leopoldville plain. It is interesting to note that this political action arises out of land disputes of traditional origin which were mentioned by certain authors as early as the 17th century. (13)

5. Lac, Banningville group - 5 % / - 6 %

As the members of this group have fairly high technical skills, they were relatively unaffected by the depression. Like the BaKongo, they therefore took little part in the squatting.



6. The Haut-Congo group + Others - 16 % / - 17 %

The slump did not greatly affect this group of prosperous workers; hence, like the preceding group, it did not take much part in the squatting.

We note that there is very little interpenetration among the various ethnic groups represented in the squatting zone.

THE SOCIAL POSITION

Civil Status : The civil status of the squatters, as it appeared from the interviews, is as follows:

TABLE VIII.

Civil status of the squatters of Leopoldville, 1960-1961

	<u>Basic survey</u>	<u>Suppl. survey</u>
Married	82 % (755)	86 % (257)
Single	18 % (164)	14 % (43)
Total	100 % (919)	100 % (300)

We point out that only adult males were interviewed.

The civil status by ethnic groups is as follows:

TABLE IX.

Civil status of Leopoldville squatters, by 1960-1961

	<u>Married</u>		<u>Unmarried</u>	
	Basic survey	Suppl. survey	Basic survey	Suppl. survey
1. BaKongo	90 % (407)	94 % (133)	10 % (42)	6 % (8)
2. Kwango-Kwilu	80 % (33)	86 % (19)	20 % (7)	14 % (3)
3. BaYaka	64 % (197)	70 % (70)	36 % (107)	30 % (29)
4. BaTeke	98 % (75)	89 % (24)	2 % (2)	11 % (3)
5. Lao, Banningville	85 % (12)	100 % (2)	15 % (2)	0 % (0)
6. Haut-Congo + Others	88 % (31)	100 % (9)	12 % (4)	0 % (0)
Average	82 % (755)		18 % (164)	

The fact that the number of unmarried BaYaka is relatively high must be attributed to the custom of this group according to which the young man goes to Leopoldville to earn the bride-price which will enable him to marry and to settle in the customary centre.

### Number of Children

The number of children declared by the 919 adult males interviewed during the basic survey was 1,940, i.e. an average of 2.11 children for the whole of that group.

The supplementary survey conducted among 300 squatters indicates a total of 619 children, or an average of 2.06 children for the whole of that group.

At the end of 1959, the average number of children per adult male for the whole of the adult male population of Leopoldville was 1.74 (14).

The difference between the 1959 figures and those of our surveys is probably explained by the poverty of most of the squatting population: despite assistance from the clan, large families are always the worst affected by economic depressions.

### Unemployment

As we indicated in the chapter concerning the origin of squatting in Leopoldville, the number of unemployed among the squatters is very high, although it is tending to diminish owing to the growing osmosis between the classic-type cities and the squatting zone. In fact, whereas 73 % of the economically active population of the squatting zone were affected by unemployment at the time of the basic survey, 64 % were unemployed at the time of the supplementary survey conducted nearly a year later.

Of the total economically active population of the town, the unemployed represented 49 % at the time of the basic survey, and 54 % at the time of the supplementary survey. Figure 1 already mentioned illustrates this interesting contrast in the development of unemployment in Leopoldville.

The large proportion of unemployed living in the squatting zone and the well-known lack of technical skills among most of the squatters clearly show that they must be regarded as structurally unemployed. This latter observation is important both from the angle of seeking solutions

to the problem of squatting properly so-called and from that of seeking new patterns of employment for the benefit of the squatters.

Thus, in addition to the unemployed youths and unemployed adults residing in the more classic-type cities - the groups analysed in section 2 - the squatters form a third group of the population for which new patterns of employment are essential.

### Resources

An examination of the resources of the Leopoldville squatters confirms this preponderance of structurally unemployed. At the time of the basic survey, only 23 % of the squatters stated that they received a fixed wage for regular services in administrative departments or in European-type businesses.

(This figure of 23 % of fixed resources should be compared with the figure of 27 % of employed persons; the reason for the 4 % difference is that we classed among employed persons those engaged in economically valid work on own account. The resources of these persons were of course classified under the heading of resources stemming from work on own account)

25 % of the squatters stated that their resources were derived from "independent" work. (11).

An analysis of this type of activity shows that it most frequently consists of economically negative expedients. This is in fact disguised unemployment, frequently detrimental to the country's economic development.

7 % of the squatters interviewed said that they could not live without direct aid from their clan. This aid takes the form of loans of money or gifts in kind.

45 % of those interviewed stated that their resources were derived from many sources : such as aid from the clan and savings, or savings and work on own account.

The data from the supplementary survey which we showed in section 2 (Table IV) confirm the indications of the basic survey, except for the changes noted in the general employment situation of the squatters.

### Activities

An examination of the activities engaged in by unemployed squatters also shows how artificial and uneconomic is the work carried out by this category of the population. We mention at random the following activities recorded in the individual questionnaires :

- seller of lianas for squatters' building,
- woodcutter for squatters' dwellings,
- retail seller of drinks,
- bicycle repairer,
- water carrier,
- seller of consumer goods (shops),
- employed by another squatter,
- eto.

Certainly, these activities constitute an occupation, but they cannot logically be regarded as "economic".

It should be stressed that throughout the interviews the squatters, although they were not being questioned on the matter, complained bitterly of the lack of opportunities for working.

This confirms that, in contrast to what was asserted by certain superficial observers, we have in the squatting zone a sound population which asks nothing better than to be able to carry out more productive activities.

### Social Relations

On the whole, the relations between the squatters are excellent. To the question, asked during the basic survey, what terms they were on with the other squatters, 83 % (762) of those interviewed made it clear that their relations were very good, while only 5 % (48) said that they were

bad. (Nearly half of the 48 squatters who complained of bad relations had just been the victims of thefts by other squatters). The remaining 12 % (109) were unable to indicate on what terms they were with the other squatters, being new arrivals in the zone.

At the time of the supplementary survey, 90 % (268) of the squatters interviewed said they were on good terms with the other squatters, while 5 % (16) complained that they were on bad terms. The remaining 5 % (16) were unable to judge, being new arrivals in the zone.

It clearly emerges from a detailed study of the 1219 individual questionnaires completed for the squatting zone in Leopoldville that ethnic grouping is one of the factors making for stability in this population.

#### Social Problems

The basic social problem of this population is the absence of any structure, of any leadership. This absence of structure is seen in very many fields:

A. Absence of chiefs: In most cases neither the land chiefs (chefs de terre) concerned nor the political leaders are in a position to guide the daily growing population of the zone, still less to organize it. It follows that there is a constant tendency to anarchy, and the only thing that moderates it is the fact of belonging to an ethnic group and hence adhering to similar customs within the framework of this ethnic community.

B. Lack of sanitation: We would mention particularly the absence of any drainage in frequently marshy regions; the lack of pure water forces the squatters to make do with water from streams, which is particularly dangerous in tropical countries; the lack of sewers; in the absence of refuse-collecting services, the refuse is often deposited in the open air on as yet unoccupied plots.

C. Lack of education: In most of the sectors, there is no kind of organized education at all. But many children go to schools located in the classic-type cities. There is no opportunity for adult education at all. However, the supplementary survey revealed that primary schools had been set up within the context of the activities of various religious denominations.

D. Absence of leadership of adolescents: This element of the population is particularly affected by unemployment. In the squatting zone, the adolescents tend to gather in gangs whose activities are distinctly delinquent or pre-delinquent. These local gangs attack passers-by and hold them to ransom. All the seeds of delinquency observed in the old classic-type cities where the social leadership is most inadequate are to be found in the squatting zone (thefts, violence, drug-taking, attacks on girls).

E. Absence of police: The lack of discipline and of civic responsibility among a large proportion of the squatting population is not offset by the presence of any police, who could help greatly to prevent some excesses, particularly as regards security. Yet at the time of the surveys there was no police station in the 5,000 hectares parcelled out by the squatters.

The survey revealed the existence in the squatting zone of most of the social evils observed in the old classic-type cities: drug addiction, prostitution, drinking saloons, selling locally-made spirits in particular, receivers of stolen goods.

#### Attitudes Towards Squatting

It is particularly helpful to know what is the squatters' attitude to squatting, in case some social welfare measures are undertaken in the squatting zone.

A. All the squatters interviewed were asked to state their identity. This enabled us to see how far they were afraid of measures against their illegal settlement in the zone. 57 % (526) of the squatters interviewed in the basic survey, and 63 % (188) in the supplementary survey, specified their identity. The increased figure confirms that the population is acquiring roots in the squatting zone.

Judging by the observations made during our other surveys in Leopoldville, it is probable that, in reply to the same question, 80 % of the residents of the classic-type cities would have revealed their identity.

B. This first indication as to the squatters' attitude to squatting is confirmed by the replies to the question whether or not those interviewed were satisfied with squatting.

The results of the supplementary survey also confirm here that the population is becoming increasingly firmly established in the squatting zone.

TABLE X.

Attitude of the residents of the squatting zone in  
Leopoldville towards squatting, 1960-1961

	<u>Basic survey</u>	<u>Suppl. survey</u>
Stated that they were satisfied	73 % (667)	86 % (257)
Appeared not satisfied	17 % (157)	11 % (35)
- for material reasons	(12 % (114))	(10 % (31))
- for psychological reasons (insecurity or fear of being one day evicted)	(5 % (43))	(1 % (4))
Unable to specify, having recently arrived in the squatting zone	10 % (95)	3 % (8)
Total	100 % (919)	100 % (300)

C. 79 % (728) of the squatters reached by the basic survey, as against 75 % (224) in the supplementary survey, are optimistic about the future in the squatting zone. In material terms this optimism is most frequently reflected in investment in the building of a house in durable materials.

On the other hand, 21 % (191), as against 25 % (76) in the supplementary survey, showed some anxiety regarding their future: uncertainty as to the actual possibility of remaining in the squatting zone, fear of not having the means of subsistence, the desire, often "theoretical" to be able soon to return finally to the village of origin, etc.

D. As we have already stated, the relations between the squatters are on the whole very good, and squatting does not seem to have raised problems in that respect. In view of the ethnic regrouping which squatting entails, it can even be considered that the relations between the various elements of this population are better there than in the classic-type cities.

The continually growing residence ratio (it was 84 % (252) at the time of the supplementary survey as against an average of 66 % (607) at the time of the basic survey) indicates that the squatting movement will end by the "invaded" land being permanently occupied; this would, if there were any need for it, contradict the assertions of some observers who claim that "the squatters will very quickly get tired of the uncomfortable kind of life they are leading in the zone".

In dealing with the origin of squatting in Leopoldville, we showed that the vast majority of the squatters (82 % in the basic survey, 85 % in the supplementary survey - Table II) had been reduced to squatting for social reasons. It would, however, be wrong to claim that socially negative motives did not enter the picture to some, relatively slight, extent.



Thus we described as a socially negative reason the act of some speculators (basic survey : 7 % (65) ; supplementary survey : 10 % (30)) who found in the squatting movement the opportunity to buy land which they hope to re-sell subsequently with a substantial margin of profit.

Certain political leaders also advocated the occupation of various parts of the zone on the basis of the fact that the land traditionally belonged to their ethnic group, thus bringing about an occupation which we may call socially negative; 4 % (39) in the basic survey; 3 % (8) in the supplementary survey.

#### 4. ECOLOGICAL SKETCH

##### The dynamics

Seen from the ecological angle (15), the squatting movement in Leopoldville can be split up into three successive periods:

- A. Sale of the land - Right of occupation
- B. Occupation - Preparatory work prior to settlement
- C. Settlement

##### A. Sale of land - Right of occupation

Most frequently it was the BaHumbu land chiefs (chefs de terre) who, taking advantage of the opportunity of obtaining a good price for land which would sooner or later have been claimed by the State, decided to divide up their holdings and sell out.

In some cases also, third parties have been simply occupying land belonging either to the State (Domain), or to private persons (Concessions) or, less frequently, to land chiefs (chefs de terre).

Thus there have been various kinds of illegal occupation, the seriousness of which depends on the previous ownership of the estate.

Moreover, the Administration regards any occupation of land as illegal which has not been approved by its services, even if the estate legally belonged to the grantor.

The current regulations stipulate the following:

- (a) Decree of 20 June 1957: "Art. 20: So long as permission for allotment has not been given, no one may: announce publicly, offer for sale, alienate or acquire one or more plots of such allotment (50)".
- (b) Ordinance 97/253 of 1 August 1953 / Ordinance 97/413 of 4 December 1953 : "The road systems must be studied and completed before the plots are marked out".
- (c) Decree of 20 June 1957 : "Persons selling and buying illegal plots shall be prosecuted".

It is obvious that many squatters, having paid the price of the parcelled property to the chef de terre, are occupying in good faith allotments which the Government regards as illegal. In this case it will be difficult to contemplate "radical" solutions, which will never be accepted by those concerned, who legitimately appeal to custom and not to a recent and imported legislation, however positive it may be.

The price of the lots varies greatly according to the most diverse factors, which we will not analyse here in detail. We will, however, mention:

The personality of the chef de terre and of the buyer (social rank, ethnic group.)  
location of the allotment  
the state of security in the sector  
political influences (thus, during a brief period, certain political parties granted plots upon presentation of a party membership card).

However, we can consider that, on the whole, the price of the plots followed the classic fluctuations of a real estate market.

Usually the squatter approaches a chef de terre or his representative and pays the value of his purchase, after a careful demarcation of the estate by an improvised "surveyor". A few posts are the first formal signs of the new right of occupation; fairly soon a placard mentioning the name of the new owner (and sometimes his address in the old classic-type city) complete the marks of this right of occupation.

B. Occupation - Preparatory work prior to settlement

Taking advantage of his forced idleness if he is out of work, or of his leisure time if he is working, the squatter periodically leaves his residence in the old classic-type city and visits the squatting sector where he has acquired his plot. His family often accompanies him and helps him in the preparatory work prior to settlement. Thus he makes a start on the clearing work; this is often done by the wife, while he himself, carrying a machete knife and accompanied by children if he has any, joins one of the human columns that go into the forest near the town to select the trees which eventually will become beams, roof-poles and struts. This preparatory work before settlement is very long and arduous. In all the action undertaken in the squatting zone, one must bear in mind the often inhuman efforts which, say, a roof that cannot always be regarded as adequate, has cost.

This long and arduous labour consolidates the ties between the various squatters in each sector, strengthening a real feeling of mutual help, already based on the fact of belonging to the same ethnic group.

In some sectors, the existence of a chief (often of customary origin, several sectors having developed from a traditional village) helps to strengthen the community ties among squatters.

The length of time taken for the preparatory work prior to settlement varies a great deal; it obviously depends on a number of social and economic factors. It can be assumed that, at the time of our surveys, the Leopoldville squatting zone had reached its maximum geographical extent, but that the same was not true of the density of occupation.

C. Settlement

The day comes when a "temporary" hovel is at last in a position to receive the squatter and his family; that day is also the one that marks for the squatter the beginning of a fresh existence:

the arguments with the grasping landlords of the old classic-type cities are over;

the constant anxiety of the rent to be paid, whereas unemployment prevents any possibility of paying it, is over;

gone is also, to a large extent, the embarrassing and humiliating quest for a little money from more well-to-do kinsmen;

gone, too, is the inhuman crowding of four or five into one windowless room;

there is an end, also, for some, of the danger of floods in the rainy season (in 1958, following a torrential downpour, four young children were drowned in the slums of the St. Jean district);

gone also is the weak social leadership that exists in the classic-type cities - but is this loss really serious ?

In contrast, a better life - or rather a less bad one - is in prospect for these poverty-stricken people: "Do you not see that this is a good thing for us?" Said a newly-installed squatter to the interviewer, proudly showing him the squatting zone. Viewed from that angle, squatting undoubtedly constitutes "social betterment", however marginal, although it must be noted that the arrival of squatters who are better off than their predecessors tends to diminish the social value of squatting.

The settlement of the squatter in the zone, which is often located at the outskirts of the town, also brings about a slight improvement in his resources: the wives of the squatters can grow food crops, which was formerly impossible, and the yield seems to be relatively high.

## HOUSING

Houses built of cardboard, sheet metal, clay lumps (pisé), planks, adobe bricks, stones, etc. the whole range of the social status of the squatters is reflected in the housing.

All degrees of adjustment to urban life by the residents in the zone can also be found in the different types of houses. The experienced observer will discover most of the traditional dwellings of the ethnic groups represented in the zone, side by side with modern and often smart houses. Between these two extremes, unfortunately, is ranged the majority of the buildings which are houses only in name and whose shapes show an imbalance of technical design which is rarely met with in more stabilized social groups.

Here is the description of the types of dwelling most frequently met with:

- (a) Plots: The average size of the plots is 23 X 25 metres. They are usually located on flat ground; however, it frequently happens that the "surveyors" paid no attention to the natural slope of the ground when the parcelling out was done, and this is vital for efficient drainage. In some sectors it is by no means rare to find plots on a hillside.
- (b) Fences: They are generally made of sticks (of wood) cut in the forests near Leopoldville. They are often as high as two metres, which is the size found in the traditional housing. It also happens, although this is less frequent, that one finds some wire fences or wire netting similar to those seen in the old classic-type cities.
- (c) Dwelling: 1. Foundations: In most cases, the foundations are limited to a levelling and consolidation of the ground by means of the classic implements (spades, hoes,...), and to the laying of a few cement bricks on which the walls of the dwelling will be constructed. The cement bricks are often replaced by sun-dried earth bricks. The few more stylish houses have more stable foundations. On the other hand, the clay lump (pisé) houses have no foundations.

2. Walls : They are most frequently built of clay or mud and lumps (pisé) and sometimes covered with a thin coating of cement or whitewash. It is not uncommon, after the rains, to see walls collapse onto the inhabitants of the house.

3. Roofs : These are constructed in many different ways. The most widely used roofing is corrugated iron, and occasionally asbestos board (éternit). One also finds a certain number of thatched roofs, even cardboard roofs, or roofs covered with sarking felt.

4. Aspect : This generally depends on the overall aspect of the "chequer-board" in which the plot is located. It is not usually very favourable.

5. Rooms : The number of rooms varies, of course, a great deal. However, houses with two or three rooms are the most numerous. The lighting and ventilation of these rooms are very often defective : small doors, small windows ( - fear of thieves, fear of strong sunlight, fear of ghosts, - ).

6. Furniture : Very scanty - often an incongruous collection among which may be a bed (?), a chair, a table, but rarely more.

(d) Arrangement of the plot : The wife usually prepares the meals outside - a surviving tradition. A hole for refuse and a makeshift latrine often complete the arrangement of the plot, which is usually kept very clean.

Crops are rarely grown on the plot; but poultry is often seen. Housing in the squatting zone often reflects the pride of the new "owner" in having his own home at last, something that he could not have dreamed of until recently and which has cost him a great deal of effort. This pride can be seen in the few flower-beds where

the flowers try hard to live in very unpromising soil, or in this somewhat pretentious pole on which a shabby flag is flying; or again in the care taken in coating the ramshackle building with all the old paint leavings that could be collected.

This must be borne in mind if any positive action is contemplated in the zone.

There is no doubt that housing in the squatting zone could be improved; but any tendency towards excessively authoritarian planning would meet with the opposition of the residents.

#### THE INFRASTRUCTURE

When the squatting zone of Leopoldville was split up, the predominant pattern was that of a "fantastic chequer-board". By flying over the zone one gets a very clear idea of the work done to this effect by the "surveyors".

Actually the pattern of squares does not mean much in itself unless it is preceded by overall drainage of the land and unless it is established with allowance for the general slope of the ground, a vital factor for any rational drainage. As far as we know, these important factors were not taken into consideration anywhere by the squatters.

The squatters themselves decided to leave some spaces empty for the future building of schools, and for sites for markets and sports grounds. Even if these areas were not rationally chosen it would, in our view, be bad psychology to change the existing position completely. Each case should be considered separately.

The roads in the squatting zone are often roads only in appearance; frequently traced out on the basis of the zone chequer-work pattern which itself takes no notice of the structure of the ground, they suffer the consequences and in some sectors are practically unusable, even for cross-country vehicles. In this connexion the position is particularly unsatisfactory in the Lemba plain sectors. Any action in this zone will require a

prior improvement of the roads. Not only would this facilitate the movement of the residents of the zone, but it would also contribute greatly to local economic expansion.

At present the markets are still only a ramshackle collection of stalls on waste ground exposed to the wind.

There are very few schools or sports grounds in the zone, and we have already mentioned the lack of leadership for the young people.

The absence of lighting in the zone is conducive to delinquency. The forms taken by this evening delinquency are identical on all counts with those observed in the old classic-type cities not yet provided with public lighting.

As far as we know, no sector of the squatting zone has a water supply. Water is sometimes fetched from streams, often of doubtful cleanliness, a long way from the inhabited zones.

In general the nature of the soil does not greatly facilitate any work that might improve the infrastructure.

There are hardly any mechanical transport facilities in the zone.

#### PROBLEMS

There are many important problems in connexion with the housing and infrastructure of the squatting zone. Consideration of housing has already enabled us to sketch some of them.

As regards housing, the absence of any town planning or sanitation has inevitably fostered the creation of some slums. If positive action is ultimately undertaken in this field, it will be faced with the existing situation, and everything already points to the fact that drastic steps will have to be taken. A sector-by-sector study will provide details of the cost of some dwellings; this information may be useful if some of the houses already erected are moved or expropriated.



As to the infrastructure, vigorous steps must quickly be taken in some sectors of the squatting zone in order to remedy the present inadequacies: we recall the lack of piped water supply, the absence of drainage (especially in the marshy Lemba plain), the absence of sewers or of any refuse-collection service, the absence of any public lighting, the lack of roads and of public transport, the lack of shopping centres, educational institutions or sports installations.

These problems relating to housing and to the infrastructure could easily be solved within the context of a community development programme.

#### ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE HOUSING AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE

##### Housing

"We live according to our means", said one squatter to the interviewer. This maxim is particularly applicable to the squatter's ideas about his housing. In fact very often the squatter, short of resources, builds a small dwelling regarded as temporary in one corner of his plot and prepares in the centre of the plot the foundations of the final dwelling, a larger and more comfortable one.

A similar situation was already noted at Ndjili between 1956 and 1959.

Asked about a theoretical possibility of assistance from the Fonds d'Avance or the Office des Cités Africaines, the residents were highly sceptical.

##### Infrastructure

The numerous complaints made to the interviewers regarding the destitute condition in which the government leaves the squatting zone are evidence that a large number of squatters are convinced of the validity of their right of ownership.

Indeed, many of the squatters reproach the government for having done nothing so far to improve the infrastructure of the zone.

"And yet", they say, "we pay taxes just like the other citizens..."

Many of the squatters made remarks of this kind without having been questioned on the subject.

The interviewers asked the squatter whether they would be willing to contribute by their labour, even for a very small wage, to the building of the infrastructure of their sector of the squatting zone. All the squatters replied in the affirmative, with the proviso, sometimes, that "it must go through the local land chief (chef de terre)". The views of several hundreds of squatters were sounded in this way. But the question was not asked systematically, as the object of the survey was not to prepare directly for this kind of action.

## 5. EVOLUTION

Our research methods have enabled us to follow the evolution of the squatting movement in Leopoldville in 1960 and 1961, particularly at the median dates of the surveys.

These dates are :	10 October 1960	} = basic survey
	16 November 1960	
	4 January 1961	
	1 November 1961	= supplementary survey

Although we have already several times stressed the development of some aspects of squatting over time, we feel it would be useful to refer to some of them again.

### Area Covered

Some "adjustments" were observed between the basic survey and the supplementary survey. However, these "adjustments" do not seem to have greatly changed the area covered by the squatting as a whole, as it was at the time of the basic survey.

### Motivation of Squatting

A new trend appeared between the basic and the supplementary surveys: some elements of the population whom the socio-economic depression has not directly affected began to settle in the squatting zone "because, as the government did not prevent them from doing so, they had every reason to take up plots in the zone also" (16).

This trend, which was apparent in certain statements by squatters at the time of the supplementary survey, is confirmed by the fact that the number of unemployed is tending to grow in the urban area as a whole, while it is decreasing in the squatting zone (Figure 1).

### Incidents

There were some clashes causing a number of deaths between squatters and the police force in the Lemba plain at the end of October 1960, and in the neighbourhood of the township of Ndjili at the end of 1961. Evidence of this came to light in the course of enquiries. As the government authorities took no practical action following these incidents, it seems as though they have virtually accepted squatting: "A fact is stronger than a Lord Mayor".

### Relations Between Squatters

The constant improvement of relations between squatters tends to prove that homogeneous communities are tending more and more to take shape among the ethnic units of the squatting zone.

### Residence

The continual increase in the residence ratio in the squatting zone is evidence that it is permanent. This increase in the residence ratio was particularly emphasized by Figure No. 2.

### Tendencies Towards Organization

The fact that traders are settling more and more frequently in the squatting zone also confirms that the zone is continually becoming more stable. It is noteworthy that the traders who, at the beginning of the survey, only had "temporary" installations, are tending to make them permanent. This applies particularly to saloons and shops. It should also be noted that schools and church buildings are being set up by various religious bodies which are thus more or less consciously consolidating the permanent nature of the Leopoldville squatting zone.

### 6. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

Everything points to the probability that, during the coming months, the population density of the Leopoldville squatting zone will increase, for the following reasons :

1. The socio-economic depression which is one of the main causes of squatting did not seem anywhere near being resolved in December 1961, the final date of our observations.
2. The natural increase of the urban population which, as we have already stressed, is doubling in 17 years, is particularly noticeable in the squatting zone, which has a very young and hence prolific population. Moreover, a considerable proportion of the population of the old classic-type cities where the density is very great as a result of the natural population growth, will continue to settle in the squatting zone where the density is at present less great. The transfers of population between the classic cities and the squatting zone may be compared to the phenomenon of liquids in communicating vessels.
3. The supplementary survey of November 1961 confirmed the permanent nature of the Leopoldville squatting zone.

The continual increase in the population density of the squatting zone shows all the more clearly how urgent it is for measures to be taken both from the social angle and in connexion with housing and the infrastructure. From the financial point of view, it is quite obvious that the longer the necessary measures are delayed, the higher will be their cost.

All steps taken to organize squatting will have to take into account not only the existing situation, but also the rate of growth of the rate population in the urban centre, both short-term and long-term, and the material and human resources available.

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