

- **middle-class residential areas** surround the high-class residential areas. Many of these areas started out as low-class housing. They have since been upgraded and provided with some basic amenities.
- **low-class residential areas** are found on the lower land to the south-east of the where there is a risk of flooding. These areas are essentially shanty towns. There is one notable area close to the CBD on its south-western side – again this is an area prone to flooding.



Figure 6.20: Part of Zomba's CBD

6.5 Shanty towns

The speed of urbanisation in LICs is fast and continues to accelerate. Most people who migrate to LIC cities come from poor rural areas in search of work. There are no houses for them, so they build homes on the only land available which is usually in areas of no economic value, on the edge of town, along main roads or on steep slopes. These DIY housing areas are generally referred to as **shanty towns**. In many instance, people build on land that they do not own, or on which they do not have permission to build. As a result, such areas are also known as **squatter settlements**.

Many of the areas on which shanty towns are built are unsafe. They may be prone to flooding or landslides or are in heavily polluted locations. Usually they are not serviced with refuse disposal etc. The actual dwellings are made out of scrap materials such as packing boxes, metal and plastic sheeting. However, for many, even living in a shanty town and working in the informal economy can be better and offer greater opportunities than the life they have left behind in rural areas.

Shanty towns are known by different names around the world:

- favelas (Brazil)
- barrios (Latin America)
- bidonville (North Africa)
- bustees (Indian subcontinent)
- squatter settlements (North America).

Case study: São Paulo's favelas

About 20 per cent of the residents of São Paulo, Brazil's largest city, live in shanty towns (known here as 'favelas') and scratch a living in the informal sector. São Paulo has approximately 2500 favelas. Some of the best known are Heliópolis (population around 60 000), Paraisópolis (30 000) and Jaguare (24 000). All are away from the city centre but close to new factories. Some of the biggest favelas are now up to 40 years old, and it is these which have seen the greatest level of improvement (Figure 6.22).



Figure 6.21: A favela in São Paulo – note the city centre in the distance



Figure 6.22: A favela in São Paulo in the process of being redeveloped.

When they were first built, few homes had even the most basic facilities, and there were no community facilities. Many people would illegally hook up to overhead electricity lines. Over time, communities developed and became organised. In Jaguare, a strong Neighbourhood Association has developed. By working together, people in this favela have persuaded the Brazilian government to help them reduce crime and offer people, especially children, a wide range of sport or other activities.

Community groups have actively campaigned in many favelas to improve housing conditions and have put pressure on city authorities to provide basic services such as water, sanitation and

electricity. Some of these are via self-help or site-and-service schemes. The government or a non-governmental organisation (NGO) provides building materials which local people use to build better homes. The PROSANEAR

programme is a partnership between the Brazilian Government and the World Bank. It has done much to deliver water and sanitation to a growing number of São Paulo's favelas.

In some favelas, help has been made available so residents can get legal rights over their homes and land. This means that they are more secure, and can sell (and buy) property. This stability has also encouraged further investment in favelas. There are also schemes to lend small sums of money to people running businesses in favelas via '**microlending**'. A microcredit scheme was launched in Heliópolis favela by a US non-profit-making organisation and a Brazilian bank working together. Local people with small businesses, such as bakers and grocery store owners, may apply for loans of between \$100 and \$1500 to develop their businesses.

No two favelas are exactly alike. Because of this, any improvement programme has to be tailored to suit the specific conditions in each favela. Hence the variety of actions just described. However, if any project is to succeed, it is vital that there is community approval and participation. A majority of residents (often set as high as 80% of them) must agree to the project for it to be accepted and to work. They also have to agree to pay some of the costs of installing and providing the services. Sadly, for many residents, this last requirement is too much.

As life improves in an increasing number of São Paulo's favelas (Figure 6.22), there is concern that this will merely encourage more newcomers to the city. In the long term, there needs to be other solutions. The best would probably be to improve the quality of life in the rural areas of Brazil, and so reduce the volume of rural-urban migration. São Paulo is seeing new **edge cities** like Berrini and Jardines develop on the city's outer limits. These may help by encouraging rural-urban migrants – and existing residents – to live away from the main city.

This is a very important point, that no two shanty towns are alike. The only thing they have in common is that they have arisen in order to provide poor people with some basic shelter in urban areas.

6.6 Changes at the edges of HIC cities

The areas where the green fields and open spaces of the countryside meet the built-up parts of the towns and cities is known as either the **rural-urban fringe** or the **urban fringe**. Here countryside is being lost by the outward growth of towns and cities, particularly their suburbs. The **greenfield sites** of the open land around the edge of a city are in great demand for housing, industry, shopping, recreation and the needs of the public utilities, such as reservoirs and sewerage works.

One reason for urban growth and change in the rural-urban fringe is a feeling of dissatisfaction with the city (Figure 6.23).

- Housing is old, congested and relatively expensive
- There are various forms of environmental pollution – air quality is poor, and noise levels are high
- Companies find that there is a shortage of land for building new shops, offices and factories. As a consequence, what unused land there is, is costly.

These are all **push factors**. There are also **pull factors** on the urban fringe.

For more information about changes in the urban fringe, see Chapter 5.9 (page 139).