

Final Report

2026 Global CLT Peer Exchange

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil * April 12–16



Executive Summary

In April 2026, practitioners, organizers, and community leaders from eleven countries gathered in Rio de Janeiro for the first Global Community Land Trust Peer Exchange, a five-day, in-person convening of workshops, panels, and site visits across the city's favelas.

The cohort was deliberately diverse: practitioners from established community land trusts (CLTs) in North America and Europe sat alongside organizers working in informal settlements across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Though different histories, the same underlying dynamics

around displacement, racial injustice, and land dispossession showed up in every context represented and shaped conversations throughout the week, from technical debates about governance structures to the specific realities of Rio's favelas.

Those five days grounded abstract questions of governance and tenure in concrete places and people. What emerged went beyond shared knowledge; it was changes in practice, new relationships, and a set of commitments that participants carried home. This report documents the full arc of that week.

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Background and Context

About the Global CLT Peer Exchange

More than a year in the making, the Global Community Land Trust Peer Exchange was the result of sustained coordination between Rondo Community Land Trust, Catalytic Communities/Favela CLT Project, and the International Center for Community Land Trusts (CLT Center). The exchange was a direct outgrowth of the relationships built when Black Canadian delegates chose Rondo CLT as one of the stops on the 2024 Liberated Land Trust Tour organized by the Canadian Network of CLTs, as well as the connections developed through the CLT Center's Global South CLT Initiative. Support for the exchange was provided by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

In April 2025, the organizing team set their sights on Rio de Janeiro. Brazil's deep African and Black roots, combined with the years of work that Catalytic Communities and the Favela CLT Project had dedicated to building a CLT movement in the city's favelas, made Rio the right place to host a gathering of this kind. The exchange centered on how CLTs address Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) vulnerabilities and can be a tool to ensure social justice and housing rights across contexts. A community of practitioners was already organizing, communities were already engaged, and the questions the exchange wanted to explore were already being asked and answered on the ground.

Over five days, participants from Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, Kenya, Paraguay, Portugal, Puerto Rico, South Africa,

the United Kingdom, and the United States engaged in dialogue, working sessions, and site visits grounded in local realities, creating space for shared learnings and continued global collaboration. This experience was designed to foster deep peer learning and strengthen transnational relationships between activists and community organizers working in contexts shaped by displacement and housing insecurity.

The exchange's objectives were to:

- Build and strengthen relationships among CLT and other community-led housing initiatives across the globe;
- Create a space for sharing of experiences and learnings among practitioners;
- Foster an understanding of favelas and informal settlements of Brazil, questioning dominant narratives that portray such communities only in a negative light and highlighting their qualities;
- Push forward the CLT movement, contributing to make it more globally diverse, with increasing representation of the Global South;
- Provide support and encouragement to emerging CLT efforts in informal settlement communities around the world; and
- Build solidarity between established CLTs and emerging CLT efforts for the purposes of mutual learning.



The Global South CLT Initiative Context

The CLT model has its roots in the Global North, where the majority of established CLTs operate. But thanks to the pioneer experiences of Kenya, Puerto Rico, and the creation of the Brazilian Favela-CLT Project, interest in the model is growing in the Global South, driven by organizers and communities who see in it a potential for securing tenure and advancing community-led development in contexts marked by the vast presence of informal settlements.

To address this growing interest, the CLT Center launched an initiative in 2023 to map and connect groups and organizations exploring CLTs as potential tools for overcoming the land and housing challenges specific to their contexts..

The initiative established connections with local groups in countries including Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, and Uganda. To assess the feasibility and potential of the CLT model to address each place's specific needs, the CLT Center began hosting meetings with representatives from across the Global South. Intentionally, several of those representatives participated in the Rio Exchange, bringing them into direct conversation with one another and with established CLT practitioners for the first time.

Additional information:

[Global South CLT Initiative webpage](#)

The Rio de Janeiro and Favela-CLT Project Context

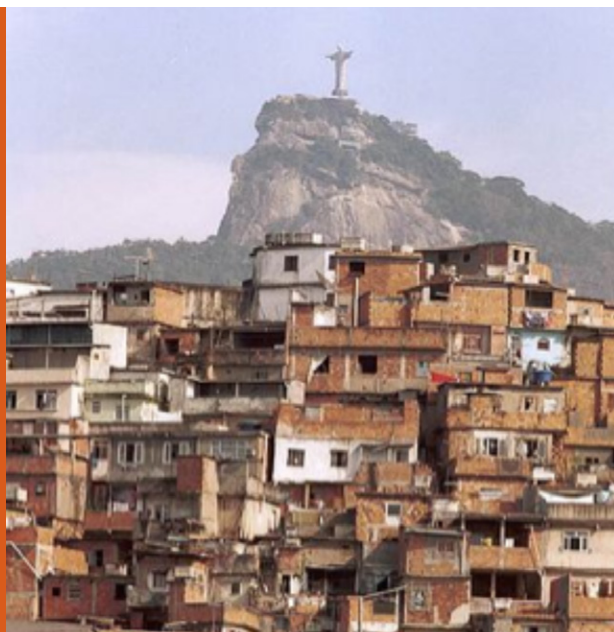
Rio de Janeiro is the second largest city in Brazil, with approximately 6.7 million residents in the city and over 12 million in its metropolitan area. Known for its striking landscape of mountains and beaches, it remains a key cultural and economic center, but is marked by significant social

inequality deeply rooted in its urban development. Rio's informal settlements — favelas — are a key characteristic of the city, housing around 30% of its population. These areas often have limited infrastructure, insecure tenure, and higher exposure to risks like flooding and landslides, but are also marked by strong sense of belonging, solidarity networks and self-management practices.

Based in the city, Catalytic Communities (CatComm) has worked with favela leaders for 25 years, supporting local initiatives that promote sustainable, community-led development. In 2018, it founded the Favela-CLT Project, an initiative dedicated to implement the CLT as a tool to formalize land rights and ensure security of tenure in favelas and urban communities. Rio was chosen to host the Global CLT Exchange given its unique housing and urban features, as well as its emerging CLT movement.

Additional information:

[Favela-CLT Project webpage](#)





Site visit to Shangri-Lá Cooperative

Participants and Organizations

The exchange brought together a cohort of practitioners from long-established CLTs in North America and Europe alongside organizers working in informal settlements across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, each bringing deep knowledge of their own context and a

shared interest in exploring what the CLT model could offer. The room held people at very different stages – from decades-long CLT veterans to activists who had been in early conversation about the CLT Center’s Global South Initiative – and that range shaped the quality of every conversation.



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Participants and Organizations, continued



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SHEKARA GRANT
Weymouth Falls CLT
Canada



SHILPA SHANKAR
Robert Wood Johnson
Foundation
USA

The 24 international participants listed above formed the core cohort. The exchange was equally shaped by the people who made it possible on the ground. Tarcyla Fidalgo, leader of the Global South CLT Initiative at the CLT Center and coordinator of the Favela-CLT Project, served as lead local organizer alongside Felipe Litsek of the Favela-CLT Project and Theresa Williamson of Catalytic Communities. Other CatComm team members included Aline Araújo (Communications), Bárbara Dias (Photographer), Luiza Andrade (Videographer), and Maria Clara Veloso (Administrative support).

Addie Backhus from Rondo CLT and Ben Harris from the CLT Center contributed to the exchange's operations and communications throughout. The week was further enriched by the community leaders who opened their territories and shared their stories: Cosme Felippsen in Providência, Márcia Souza at the Museu da Favela in Cantagalo, Maria da Penha at the Museu das Remoções in Vila Autódromo, and Jurema da Silva Constâncio at Cooperativa Shangri-Lá.

Agenda Overview

Date	Focus	Activities
Saturday 11 April	Arrival	Airport transfer to Scorial Hotel
Sunday 12 April	Grounding in Rio CLT foundations and understanding Rio's urban context and history	09:00 – 09:30 Institutional and participants introductions 09:30 – 10:30 Workshop: Pillars of the CLT Model (John Davis, International Center for CLTs) 10:30 – 10:40 Coffee break 10:40 – 12:00 Presentation about Rio de Janeiro context (Theresa Williamson, CatComm) 12:30 – 14:00 Lunch: Angu do Gomes community restaurant 14:30 – 16:00 Site visit: Providência favela 16:30 – 20:00 Site visit and dinner: Vito Gianotti Occupation

The 2026 Global CLT Peer Exchange cohort



Date	Focus	Activities
Monday 13 April	Learning from each other Discussions on equity and surfacing lived experiences and shared struggles	9:00 – 10:00 Participant introductions and their organizations/Institutional remarks 10:00 – 12:00 Exchange: CLTs and racial, gender, and socio-economic justice 12:00 – 13:30 Lunch: Hotel 13:30 – 15:30 Panel: CLTs and BIPOC vulnerability (lessons and future directions)—John Emmeus Davis, CLT Center 16:00 – 19:30 Site visit and dinner: Museu da favela (Cantagalo)
Tuesday 14 April	Learning across contexts Organizing practices, cross-regional exchange, and public dialogue	9:00 – 12:00 Free time 12:00 – 13:30 Lunch at Hotel 13:30 – 17:00 Workshop: Community organizing (Lyvia Rodríguez del Valle, El Enjambre/Caño Martín Peña CLT) 18:00 – 21:00 Roundtable and exchange on collective ownership and CLTs for BIPOC communities and networking with community leaders and residents—Dinner and cocktails at Raízes do Brazil (Agroecological Social Movement)
Wednesday 15 April	Community-led solutions in practice Community resistance, collective housing, and CLT in practice	9:00 – 12:00 Site visit: Museu das Remoções at Vila Autódromo 12:30 – 15:00 Lunch and side visit: Shangri-Lá cooperative (CLT in development) 16:15 Return to hotel 17:30 – 20:30 Copacabana beach dinner
Thursday 16 April	Reflection and next steps Shared learnings and future application	9:00 – 12:00 Free time 12:00 – 13:30 Lunch: Hotel 13:30 – 17:00 Recap: Group reflection and discussion on key takeaways and future applications 18:30 – 22:00 Closing dinner and samba experience at Lapa
Friday 17 April	Departure	Airport transfer

Panels and Discussions

THEME 1 Pillars of the CLT Model and Lecture on Rio's Favelas

The exchange started off with a warm welcome and the opportunity for participants to introduce themselves. One by one, participants shared where they came from, the communities they work with, and their expectations for the exchange. What emerged was clear: everyone in the room was shaped by deeply different contexts but similar struggles with displacement, housing insecurity, and the ongoing effort to keep communities in control of their own futures.

Across these introductions, several shared intentions surfaced:

- A desire to learn from each other's realities, not just frameworks;
- Curiosity about how the CLT model adapts across contexts; and
- A recognition that this week is about knowledge, relationship-building, and solidarity.

The first substantive session, "Pillars of the CLT Model," was designed to build a shared understanding of the Community Land Trust, its origins, and main characteristics. The group watched a lecture titled "Roots of the Community Land Trust" by John Emmeus Davis, a founding figure of the CLT movement in the United States, tracing the model's origins across three dimensions: ownership, organization, and operation. The CLT's innovation lies in how it combines collective ownership of land with individual ownership of buildings. Its organizational principle is community governance where residents and the surrounding community hold meaningful power over decisions. Operationally, CLTs commit to permanent affordability, stewarding land across generations rather than treating it as a commodity. The model today extends well beyond housing, incorporating issues such as food sovereignty, cultural activities, ecological preservation, and other dimensions of community life and self-determination.

Bringing the cohort together for the first time



Harry Smith, a longtime CLT practitioner and board member of the CLT Center, expanded on the historical context. The CLT model in the US, he emphasized, did not emerge from affordable housing policy: “The land trust movement didn’t come from an affordable housing or anti-displacement model. It came out of the civil rights movement.” Between 1910 and 2000, Black families in the US lost 90 percent of their land holdings, from 16 million acres to three million, through systematic dispossession: discriminatory lending, outright violence, and state-sanctioned theft. That history gave the model its moral core. As Harry put it, “power comes from the land, but land comes from power.” Collective ownership, in this framing, is not primarily a housing strategy; it is a political one.

The group discussion that followed asked CLT practitioners and non-practitioners to respond to different versions of the same question: what does the model mean to you, and what does it look like in practice?

In sharing personal experiences, key themes emerged:

- **Flexibility and fidelity:** Participants agreed that the CLT model must adapt to different contexts, but flagged the risk of adaptation becoming co-optation — a version of the model so stripped of its community governance principles that it resembles any other housing development strategy. The tension between flexibility and fidelity to core values ran through almost every contribution.

- **Beyond housing:** Many participants emphasized the impacts of CLTs beyond affordable housing, encompassing food sovereignty, commercial spaces, cultural preservation, ecological stewardship, and economic development. The CLT was understood as a platform for building community power and ensuring land access to historically marginalized communities.
- **Governance as a live challenge:** The tripartite board structure (composed of residents, community members, and public interest representatives), is central to the CLT model in theory. However, some practitioners were candid about how difficult it is to preserve this structure in the long term. The group discussed how to continue to engage residents in the CLT operations, given the technical barriers for effective participation and the competing demands on residents’ lives.
- **Land as racial justice:** Across every context represented in the room, participants kept returning to the same idea: collective land ownership as a tool for racial justice — for returning land to Black, Indigenous, and communities of color who have had it systematically taken from them. This claim resonated across representatives from both the Global North and Global South, revealing a common vision that housing and land issues have deep connections with systemic racism.
- **Common challenges:** The individualistic ideology of land ownership, which is deeply embedded across very different cultural and political contexts, was named as the shared obstacle. Shifting that mindset requires sustained organizing work that goes well beyond technical explanations of the model.



Theresa Williamson delivering a lecture on “Rio de Janeiro’s Favelas as a Lens to Rethink Housing”

The next session shifted the conversation from model to place. Catalytic Communities has spent 25 years working with favelas in Rio de Janeiro. Their work focuses on building a counter-narrative to the stigma about these communities that has long been used to justify evictions and neglect and support the work of grassroots organizations and local leaders.

Theresa Williamson delivered a lecture on “Rio de Janeiro’s Favelas as a Lens to Rethink Housing,” drawing from 15 years of working in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, expounding upon their origins, their qualities, and the dominant narratives that have distorted how they are understood. Favelas, she argued, are responses to urbanization rather than failures of it, communities built by people who needed housing and built it themselves, developing in the process strong social bonds, creative problem-solving, and self-management practices that formal planning rarely acknowledges. She was equally direct about the forces working

against those communities, noting that “favelas are a territorial manifestation of the legacy of slavery...they’re a way to keep, to this day, an underclass that serves and is not served.” 129 years of policy toward favelas, she noted, has been defined primarily by neglect and repression. “Neglect,” she was clear, “is a policy choice.”

Participants’ questions after the presentation included how communities resist co-optation or over-regulation by government plans that prioritize visibility over real needs; how organizers sustain engagement across struggles that unfold over decades; how local struggles can be communicated and amplified to global audiences, building up global solidarity; and finally, how formal planning tools like master plans and zoning can be made flexible enough to accommodate the organic, self-built nature of favela urbanism, including whether communities have genuine representation in high-level planning decisions.

The second day was dedicated to exploring how the CLT model relates to systemic inequality across race, gender, and socioeconomic dimensions. Before beginning, the facilitator noted that “BIPOC” is a term rooted in the North American context and may be unfamiliar or imperfect in other settings. That framing was itself a signal of what the day was trying to do across two sessions: bring global conversations about racialized vulnerability into contact with one another, without flattening the very real differences in how race, identity, and dispossession are lived and named across contexts.

Dynamic Session: CLTs and intersectionality

The morning session used a participatory format to surface how participants understood the relationship between CLTs and four dimensions: race, gender, social inequality, and land rights. Working individually first and then in groups, participants wrote responses on post-its and placed them on themed boards, creating a collective map of the room’s thinking before any structured discussion had taken place. The following reflects participants’ contributions as written:

Race	Gender	Social Inequality	Land Rights
• CLTs as tool to reclaim Black land that was lost; • CLTs to stop gentrification: keep BIPOC population; • CLTs as a way to correct racial injustices; • CLTs as reparations; • Opportunity for diaspora groups to relate to traditional collective ownership regimes; • Black CLT leaders; • Tool to organize against environmental racism; • Reclaim racial diversity; • Face racial wealth gap; • Address colonialism – white control of land.	• Strong female leadership in CLT movement; • Black women protagonism in favelas and social movements; • De-constructing patriarchal society; • Special housing needs for women; • CLTs creating safe spaces for women and gender diverse people; • CLTs as opportunities to address gender bias; • Need to stand against gender bias that appear in collective processes; • Gender intentionality.	• CLTs ensure equity and fair access to land; • CLTs as a way to build community wealth; • Access to land for historically marginalized communities; • Improvements retained by the community; • CLTs as a tool for social justice + resistance; • Social cohesion; • Prevent displacement of poor communities; • Incentives to economic mobility; • Shared awareness on rights and identity.	• CLTs as a way to understand land rights; • Power to the people, not for profit; • Importance of discussing Indigenous land rights; • Tenure security; • Land / people / culture: land as basis for other rights; • Stewardship protects land rights for the community; • Collectively-owned land as a strategy against gentrification; • Balance individual and collective interests.

The results were striking in their consistency across contexts. On race, the word that appeared most often, across every geography represented in the room, was reparation. As the facilitator summarized the boards: “Reparation. Again. Reparation one more time.” Participants saw CLTs as a tool for reclaiming land that had been systematically taken from Black, Indigenous, and communities of color through colonialism, slavery, and structural racism.

On gender, the discussion surfaced a tension that several participants named directly. Black-led CLTs are predominantly led by women, particularly Black women. As one participant from Canada observed, “organizations that are led by women struggle to be taken seriously” by funders and governments in ways that their male-led counterparts do not. Representation within movements is real, but recognition and resources are another matter.

On social inequality, participants pointed to CLTs as tools of resistance against commodification and displacement, with particular emphasis on keeping improvements, economic and physical, retained within the community rather than captured by the market. Regarding land rights, participants were clear that land is the foundation on which all other rights rest: culture, identity, livelihood, and belonging are all inseparable from the question of who controls it.

A nuance that emerged across the group discussions was the contextual specificity of racial categories. The facilitator observed that in Brazil, many people who identify as “pardo” (brown) do not identify as Black, and that her own racial identity shifts depending on whether she is in Brazil, the US, or Europe. This was a direct challenge to the assumption that the language developed in one context can travel unchanged to another.

Genuine solidarity across these differences requires holding that complexity rather than resolving it too quickly.

After addressing each written thought, the group then divided participants into four groups to debate the results of the first dynamic. The group discussions allowed more time for participants to interact and share their visions. Following this, each group presented the results in the plenary meeting, and the main aspects were documented and posted in the intersectionality posters.



Participating in the exploration of CLTs and intersectionality



Group lecture around CLTs as a Tool for BIPOC Populations

Lecture: CLTs as a Tool for BIPOC Populations

The afternoon session was dedicated to addressing how CLTs are shifting operations to serve BIPOC populations across contexts, featuring a virtual lecture by **John Emmeus Davis**, followed by a hybrid debate.

John opened with characteristic candor: “since you’ve got this white guy from Vermont talking about people of color, I think it could be much better to hear from Mikeya and from Ashley.” He framed his contribution as a starting point for others to build on, drawing five lessons from New Communities Inc., the first CLT in the United States, founded in 1969 by veterans of the Civil Rights Movement in southwest Georgia.

His first lesson came from Reverend Charles Sherrod, one of New Communities’ founders: “all power comes from the land. If you could get your hands on the land, if you could control the land, you could then control the trajectory of development in your own community.” Collective ownership, in Sherrod’s framing, was the only form of land tenure that could protect marginalized communities from dispossession, because individual title was too easily extracted by more powerful forces.

His second lesson was a direct critique of where the CLT movement has since drifted: “simply giving individual title to land did not guarantee security going forward, because it was so easy for the powers that be to get that land back.” The contemporary CLT movement in the US, he argued, has placed too much emphasis on homeownership and resale value: “there is so much emphasis on the equity that you earn when you resell your house, that there’s not been enough emphasis on security, on secure hold over the land and your house going forward.” Security of tenure, he insisted, must come before wealth-building.

The third lesson is that community land should serve multiple uses beyond housing, from agriculture and businesses to art studios and community spaces, and that reclaiming this broader vision is essential to genuine place-making and community empowerment.

The fourth lesson was about the “C” in CLT: New Communities was the first to insist that the surrounding community, not just those living on the land, must have a guiding role in governance, a principle that is being diluted in too many contemporary CLTs.

Finally, he emphasized that CLTs function as a bulwark in times of crisis, whether facing racist attacks, natural disasters like COVID, or hostile political shifts, because collective organization gives communities a resilience and mutual aid capacity that isolated individuals do not have.

The debate that followed brought practitioners from across the Americas, Africa, and the Caribbean into conversation with those five lessons. Common threads emerged across very different contexts: collective land ownership as power, security, and protection rather than a limitation on individual wealth; the need to expand the CLT vision beyond housing into economic development, culture, and community infrastructure; the difficulty of sustaining genuine governance over time; and the ever-present threat of forces seeking to erode collective land rights.

“All power comes from the land.”
— Reverend Charles Sherrod
(New Communities, Inc)

*John Davis framing lecture around CLTs
as a Tool for BIPOC Populations*

Key takeaways from the debate:

- **Community empowerment and development are two sides of the same coin:** When combined on a platform of collectively owned land, the CLT becomes a powerful tool for mutual aid, equitable development, and political resistance.
- **Collective land ownership is fundamentally about power and security:** Across all contexts, participants converged on the idea that removing land from the speculative market and placing it under community control is not a limitation but a form of protection against displacement, disaster capitalism, hostile governments, and the slow erosion of wealth that individual ownership has historically failed to prevent for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color;
- **CLTs must go beyond housing:** a recurring theme was the need to reclaim a vision of the model as a platform for comprehensive community development — encompassing economic enterprise, culture, arts, agriculture, and infrastructure — and to pair that development with genuine, sustained community governance that keeps residents at the center of decision-making rather than treating participation as performative.



THEME 3 Community organizing within CLTs

The community organizing workshop on April 14th, facilitated by **Lyvia Rodríguez del Valle**, former Executive Director at the Caño Martín Peña CLT and co-founder of El Enjambre Colectivo, was the most practically grounded session of the week. It moved deliberately from the conceptual to the lived, defining what community organizing is, to mapping how it works in practice, to sitting with the challenges practitioners face every day.

Lyvia opened by drawing on the Puerto Rican experience to frame what was at stake: “people need to choose collective care. It cannot be imposed, otherwise it will not stand the test of time, and it requires long-term organizing. Organizing is not only for the initial stages of the land trust. Otherwise, when there is a change in generations, it will not be pertinent anymore to the people, and it will be very easily disbanded, even if it exists on paper.”

That framing gave the session its purpose: community organizing is the ongoing condition for a CLT’s survival and legitimacy, not a preliminary step toward building one.



Community organizing workshop



Dynamic Session: What is Community Organizing?

The opening plenary mapped out the key characteristics of genuine community organization and the specific role of community organizers within it. Participants identified a set of features that define genuine community organization: distributed and accountable leadership (not centered on one person), critical consciousness about the systemic roots of inequality, mechanisms for conflict resolution, diverse forms of participation beyond formal meetings, social cohesion and collective identity, and clear shared goals that evolve over time. The group also emphasized community control (not merely consultation) and the importance of technical allies who support without dominating the process.

Concerning the role of organizers specifically, participants distinguished them from community leaders: organizers facilitate, listen, synthesize,

and advocate, but do not impose their own agenda or need to be residents themselves. One participant noted that in Rio's favela context, the word "leader" carries connotations of top-down, patriarchal authority, while "community mobilizer" better captures what organizers actually do. As the exchange discussions repeatedly made clear, language is not neutral.

Dynamic Session: How to Organize Communities

Divided into three groups, participants drew on their experiences to map strategies for beginning and maintaining community organizing processes. The key points of the discussion were registered in posters, which were later shared with the larger group in a plenary.

The following reflects participants' contributions as written:

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
• Identify who is already organizing • Start with relational questions • Meet people where they are • Use social media • Engage resident's expertise skills • Always finish a meeting with a clear next step • Discussing basic knowledge of citizenship rights • Stipends / honoraria for time • Building trust • Organize events, online tools, site visits, have a shared schedule	• Small meetings / workshops • Engage neighbors • Identify people's skills and needs • Informal conversations • Highlight the common history • Understand people's context, observation and listening • Building trust • Social / fun activities • Avoid technical language • Food—share meals • Transparency—adopt realistic goals	• Good communication tools • 1-1 meetings • Active listening • Simplify language • Building trust • Action-reflection tools • Building data (mapping, surveys, etc) • Engage the youth • Participatory, democratic practices • Clear notion of the common goal • Enable legal services



Community Organizing within CLTs, continued

Across all three groups, building trust emerged as the central prerequisite, not as a step in the process but its ongoing condition. Several specific engagement strategies stood out. The Favela-CLT Project's approach was articulated clearly: "we always start a new community with what we call a diagnostic workshop, focused really on understanding the territory, its qualities, its challenges. And only later on we get to the issue of land tenure models such as the CLT." Communities should encounter the CLT as a response to challenges they have already named.



Other strategies that surfaced across the groups: establishing a regular, predictable meeting schedule so participation becomes habitual; using site visits and concrete cost comparisons to make the CLT model tangible rather than abstract; involving youth in telling their community's stories through media and arts; and identifying background champions who support the work without taking on formal leadership roles. Several participants also noted that conflicts, rather than being avoided, can be opportunities to build trust.



Ashley Allen shared a complementary approach: "meeting people where they are, going to the places communities already gather rather than expecting them to come to formal meetings." Several participants emphasized shared meals as an organizing tool: food lowers barriers, signals care, and recognizes that people coming to evening meetings after long working days should not have to worry about dinner.

Participants also discussed the importance of compensating community members for their time. Stipends and honoraria were raised across multiple discussions as a matter of both equity and sustainability: unpaid participation consistently disadvantages those who can least afford it.

The three groups of the dynamic session: "How to Organize communities"

Dynamic Session: Challenges

For the next exercise, participants were asked to write down one major challenge they are facing in their current work. The challenges were then mixed and redistributed across groups, who were asked to offer strategies for addressing them.

This structure, separating the naming of challenges from the ownership of solutions, allowed people to speak to one another's difficulties with more openness and creativity than a direct discussion might have produced.

Challenge	Strategies to overcome it
Lack of time / burnout	• Define short, medium and long term goals. Celebrating goals and victories; • Finding issues that resonate with most people; • Social recognition of leaders—legitimacy; • Extraction in communities—importance of a two way reciprocity. Clear awareness on what residents are bringing, what the organizer is bringing; • Identify root causes—why are people not participating?; • Work-life balances; • Meeting people where they're at. Use online meetings if it helps.
Constantly competing interests / how to find common ground?	• Using methodologies to achieve consensus; • Safe spaces for discussions; • Prioritize what is resonating broadly - what matters more to the group, and not specific people.
Manage expectations	• Break things into small, achievable pieces; • Under promise and over deliver; • Be clear of roles; • Stay flexible, adapt; • Co-creator, not a provider of solution.
How to encourage self governance?	• Insist on face to face meetings; • Use conflicts as opportunities to build trust; • Plan to create and encourage new leaderships; • Identify champions on the community (not necessarily leaders); • The importance of self building, recover social muscle so that people do things together to achieve goals.

Challenge	Strategies to overcome it
Ensuring participation for people with excessive work responsibilities	• Do not make people feel bad, be supportive and comprehensive; • Offer assistance; • Bring food and notes for people who did not attend; • Never run out of food; • Offer stipends.
Technical language barrier	• Using infographics, videos, cartoons, theater; • Offering office hours: one-on-one meetings; • Help acquire technical language; • Creating a glossary; • Using existing communication channels; • Using comparable terms.
Conflict resolution	• Going back to the common goal; • Bringing an external mediator; • Real participation requires conflict.
Transparency / expectations	• Bringing people along in the process; • Realistic expectation; • Sharing focused information for the current demand; • Create community special committees.

One participant reflected that through the group conversation, they had realized that self-governance was already happening in their organization, with community leaders being brought onto the board and absorbing decision-making authority, but they had not recognized it as such until the discussion helped them reframe it.

On technical language as a barrier, participants offered a range of practical solutions: infographics, participatory theater, one-on-one office hours, and familiar analogies. One example that landed

with the group: explaining collective land ownership by analogy to a co-op, where residents own their units but not the shared infrastructure. The CLT works similarly, at the scale of land.

On conflict resolution, participants pushed back against the instinct to avoid disagreement in community organizing. As one facilitator put it simply: “real participation requires conflict.” The goal is to create conditions where conflict can be worked through rather than suppressed.

Synthesis Session

The session demonstrated the central role of community organizing in CLTs. The engagement and participation of residents is what actually puts the “C” in CLT, and must be continuously earned through trust, presence, and genuine accountability to the people the organization exists to serve. As Lyvia noted, “the only way to achieve this is through community organizing.” Challenges are similar across contexts, and listening to how different organizations dealt with obstacles demonstrates that those strategies are as transferable as any technical knowledge about the CLT model itself.

Key takeaways from the session:

- **Community organizing has to be intentional:** across discussions, it became clear that all agents involved must have a clear understanding on the objective of community organizing. The common goal must be always present;

- **Trust is the prerequisite:** overall consensus that trust is the main factor in order to begin and maintain a mobilization process. Trust must be built among all parties: residents, community leaders, community organizers, technical experts;
- **Information management matters:** overwhelming communities with technical content undermines participation. Accessibility comes first, depth second.
- **In-person exchange is irreplaceable:** the session itself demonstrated this. Participants left with reframes of their own work, practical tools from other contexts, and a shared vocabulary that virtual exchange rarely produces;
- **Pace is a strategic choice:** community organizing moves in different rhythms. Knowing when to push and when to slow down is itself a skill.

Synthesis Session



Roundtable Event

One of the most significant moments of the exchange was the roundtable held on the evening of April 14th at Raízes do Brasil, an agroecological space run by the Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores (Small Farmers' Movement) centered on food sovereignty. The setting itself was deliberately a community-rooted space that embodied the CLT's vision of land serving multiple dimensions of community life beyond housing. The roundtable was organized around a single question: why is collective ownership a powerful strategy for addressing community challenges, and why CLTs in particular? A panel of favela leaders from Rio de Janeiro, global housing activists and CLT practitioners shared their experiences on working with community-driven approaches to land rights.

Unlike previous panels, this session was grounded in lived experience, the concrete practices of each participant regarding their own context. Below is a brief summary of the issues raised by each speaker:

Tarcyla Fidalgo opened by tracing the arc of eight years of work that had led to this moment. "Today, eight years later, here we are with all these guests who represent the international recognition of the work that has been done tirelessly here in Brazil," she said. "This is also a celebration." She was candid about the model's limits: "The CLT is not a silver bullet. It is not the solution to all problems. It does not work for every community. But it is a small contribution — one more tool in an area where people have simply lost hope." She

Tarcyla Fidalgo moderating the roundtable discussion held at the agroecological space run by the Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores (Small Farmers' Movement)



closed by connecting the Brazilian experience to the broader Global South CLT Initiative, describing a movement in which countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America are finding in each other the same struggles and the same possibilities.

- **Ashley Allen** shared her path from experiencing youth homelessness to leading the Houston Community Land Trust, describing how stigma masks structural causes and how community organizing transformed skepticism about CLTs in a city where individual ownership is a deeply held value. Despite significant victories including securing major public investment, political shifts and internal conflicts brought sustained challenges. Through it all, the mission held: “it’s one thing to get someone in a home,” she said. “It’s another thing to be able to keep them there, and the CLT model is one tool to do that.”
- **Gugun** emphasized that addressing informal settlements requires an integrated approach linking land, housing, and livelihoods, as most residents depend on informal work. Communities in Jakarta, often stigmatized as slums, face evictions, poor services, and marginalization, with displacement frequently pushing people farther from employment. Through people’s organizations and cooperatives, communities pursue land legalization, housing improvements, and economic strategies. Lasting change, he argued, depends on shifting from treating land as a commodity to recognizing it as a collective right.
- **Maria da Penha** reflected on the forced eviction of Vila Autódromo during the 2016 Olympics with characteristic directness. “The right is very beautiful only on paper. But in day-to-day life, especially for us in favelas, we do not have rights. Those who have rights are those who have money.” Twenty families managed to stay through two and a half years of resistance and an extrajudicial agreement with the city.



*Emerson from cultural group Caxambu
from Salgueiro Favela*

struggle, as a tool for defending the right to permanence and preserving memory as a form of power. On the CLT model, she was clear: “if we had known this tool before, perhaps our community could have resisted better and perhaps would not have had to leave.”

- **John Mussington** brought the Barbudan tradition of communal land ownership into the conversation, describing how the entire island has been collectively owned for generations, formalized in the constitution, rooted in African traditions of land stewardship that survived enslavement. “if you understand your connection to the land, if you understand how that is a part of you and you are a part of it, that strength — no one will be able to move you and disconnect you.” External forces including disaster capitalism and mass tourism now threaten that tradition, pushing land toward individual, commodity-driven ownership. For him, CLTs echo the Barbudan legacy and offer a framework for defending what communities have always known.
- **Crystal West** discussed how informal settlements in South Africa have rapidly expanded since the end of apartheid, often lacking basic services and located far from economic opportunities. While communal land traditions exist in rural contexts, CLTs remain largely unfamiliar in urban settings, but she saw in them a promising mechanism for long-term affordability, community-led development, and intergenerational housing security.

Roundtable, continued

- **Ricardo Carneiro** described the case of Cova da Moura, a self-built neighborhood in Portugal's Lisbon metropolitan area facing stigma, criminalization, and pressure from state intervention despite constitutional guarantees. He opened with a legal observation that resonated well beyond Portugal: "the Constitution says everyone has the right to housing. It does not say everyone has the right to housing to be purchased, or housing to be deserved. It says everyone has the right to housing." A CLT feasibility study, recently completed, is being used not only as a technical instrument but as a political tool to mobilize residents and advocate for collective land regularization.

After the panel, favela leaders from Cidade de Deus, Rocinha, Caminho Calharins and Morro da Tijuca asked questions and shared their own struggles. Comments emphasized the threat of



Lara Oliveira, community teacher for the Alfazendo Project, Cidade de Deus

in Rio de Janeiro, and how it has been impacting favelas. Their questions and stories reinforced what had been building all week: that the threat is the same across contexts, and that collective action, grounded in land, is what makes a community capable of standing against it. The evening closed with dinner and informal exchange where community leaders and participants could interact with the linguistic support of bilingual organizers in the room.

Roundtable participants from left to right: Ashley Allen, Guntoro, Maria da Penha, John Mussington, Crystal West, and Ricardo Carneiro



Site Visits and Field Experiences

To promote a space for interaction among participants and local residents, a significant part of the exchange was dedicated to visiting favelas and urban communities in Rio de Janeiro. In total, five communities were visited across the five days,

each guided by a local community leader who shared the history, struggles, and daily life of their territory. Participants were guests, and received as such.

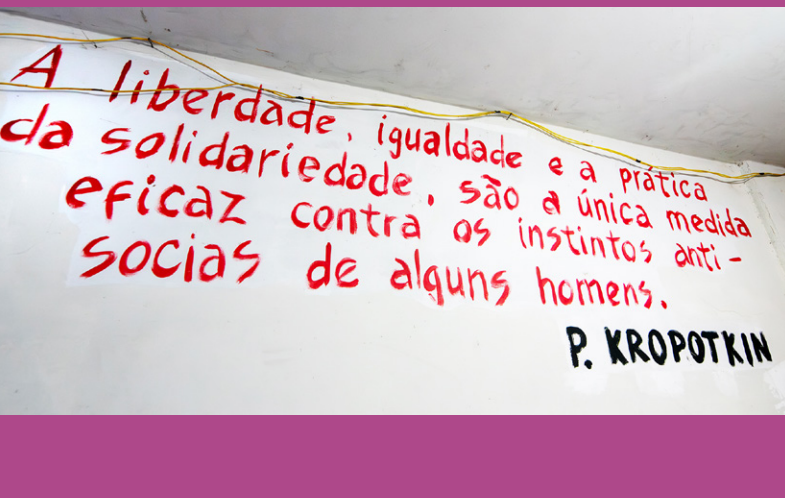
SITE VISIT 1 Providência Favela and Vito Giannotti Occupation

The first day of visits began in Rio's central area, starting at Providência, considered the first favela in Brazil. The tour was guided by Cosme Felippsen, a community-led tourism organizer and lifelong resident. He opened with the history of the slave trade and its consequences for Brazilian society, tracing a direct line from the colonial period to the urban geography participants were

standing in. Providência favela was born in the early 1900s from a broken government promise. Following a civil war, soldiers who had fought were promised land. When that promise went unfulfilled, they occupied a hillside and built their own—a community that has been resisting displacement in various forms ever since.

Site visit to Morro da Providência favela





Site Visit 1, continued

The visit raised questions participants carried through the rest of the week: how do you define a favela, who defines it, and what is at stake in that definition? How does the relationship between a community and the state shape what is possible within it?

After the tour, the group visited Vito Gianotti, a housing occupation in a formerly abandoned building located in Morro do Pinto, organized by three movements: the Movement of Struggle in Neighborhoods, Villages and Favelas (MLB), the Central of Popular Movements (CMP), and the National Union for Popular Housing (UNMP). This experience is representative of a strategy that many housing and urban social movements adopt in Brazil: occupy empty buildings to demand a proper housing policy. The experience included a visit in one of the apartment units that shelter low income families and a full presentation on its history and current objectives, given by representatives of the three movements. It finished off with a collective dinner of Brazil's national dish, feijoada.

Key lessons:

- Favelas serve as an affordable housing alternative for a significant amount of the population, being deeply linked with Brazil's slavery period and unequal access to land;
- The relationship of such communities with the state is marked by either tolerance or repression, with a lack of a permanent public policy that attends their interests;
- Social movements promote the right to adequate housing through collective action and political pressure, occupying empty buildings as a way to press for the fulfillment of the social function of property.

Site visit to Morro da Providência (top) and Vito Gianotti Occupation (middle) with Cosme Felippsen.
Quote painted on the wall of the Vito Gianotti Occupation in English: "Freedom, equality, and the practice of solidarity are the only effective measures against the anti-social instincts of certain men. — Peter Kropotkin"

SITE VISIT 2 Cantagalo (Favela Museum)

Cantagalo is one of three interconnected communities that form a small complex, alongside Pavão and Pavãozinho, on the border of Ipanema and Copacabana, one of the most valued areas of Rio. The visit was guided by one of the founders of the museum: Márcia Souza, who took the group for a tour around the community, stopping by key sites to share its origin, its culture, and its relationship to the city around it. She explained that the favela was built largely by internal migrants that came to Rio in search of work and better living conditions, serving as labor for the surrounding high-income neighborhoods. Topics covered included access to water, sewage, and electricity, cultural and religious life, the presence of organized gangs, and the role of memory in community identity. Participants had questions on the collective organizing practices undertaken by residents, risk of real estate speculation, building techniques and the structure of houses, among others.

The Museu da Favela's central argument, made visible through the tour itself, is that memory is a form of power. Documenting a community's history, its struggles, and its qualities is a way of asserting its right to exist and to be treated with dignity. As one participant reflected in the closing session: "for me, it was very important to see the way in which they have been able to bring to the forefront the memory of past struggles and the people who used to have the space, and how important that is, and how to build from that."

Key lessons:

- Importance of memory preservation in favelas, as a tool to promote social change;
- The role of internal immigration in the origins and expansion of Rio's favelas;
- Access to public services can vary deeply among different favelas, with better conditions often present in consolidated communities in valued areas.

Site visit to Cantagalo Favela Museum with Márcia Souza and overlooking Cantagalo



The fourth day was dedicated entirely to field visits in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro, where two communities told very different stories about collective resistance and collective building.

Vila Autódromo is a community that survived one of the most documented forced eviction processes in Brazil's recent history. During preparations for the 2016 Olympics, the city government removed nearly all of its residents, destroying homes and applying sustained pressure over two and a half years. Twenty families refused to leave. Maria da Penha and Luis guided participants through the physical remnants of that resistance, through the Museu das Remoções which she co-founded to preserve the community's memory, and through what it had taken to remain. The lesson the community's story offered was not only about what was lost but about what organizing collectively made possible against forces that seemed overwhelming. The state, this

community showed, can be an agent of displacement as much as any private developer.

Shangri-Lá told a different kind of story. The first housing cooperative in Rio de Janeiro, it was built through *mutirão*, a collective construction practice in which residents built the homes themselves. Participants learned about the influence of Uruguayan housing cooperativism on Brazil's housing movements, and about the work of the União Nacional por Moradia Popular. Residents and community leaders Jurema da Silva Constâncio, Leonardo, and Jaqueline shared how self-management and collective organizing had shaped the community from its founding and continued to define how it functioned. Today, Shangri-Lá is in the process of adopting the Community Land Trust model to preserve the collective spirit that gave birth to the community and ensure security of tenure.

Maria da Penha and her husband speaking to the cohort about their experience with mass evictions. At right, a visit to Vila Autódromo in José Operário Church.





Site Visit 3, continued

Site visit to Shangri-Lá

Key lessons:

- Forced evictions processes are a permanent threat faced by favelas, and collective action can be a powerful strategy to resist against them;
- Housing strategies focused on self building practices are a way to improve conditions of living and keep residents engaged;
- CLTs in informal settlements are used in Brazil as a tool to both prevent eviction processes (market or state driven) and strengthen self management of land.



Jurema da Silva Constâncio during the site visit to Shangri-Lá.

Across all five communities, participants encountered specific forms of community ingenuity and solidarity. Many of the exchange's most lasting impressions came from these hours in Rio's streets and hillsides. In the closing session, **John Mussington** described what he would carry home:

"I'm going to remember Brazil, and I'm going to remember those steep steps, and I'm going to remember the hope I've seen in the eyes of these children, that in spite of the conditions that they're living in, they're laughing."

The visits also made the week's theoretical discussions concrete. Questions about community governance, tenure security, the role of memory, the relationship between resistance and collective ownership stopped being abstract after participants stood in the places where those questions were being lived. That grounding was the site visits' most important contribution to everything else that happened during the exchange.

Learnings, Outcomes, and Recommendations

Lessons, Memories, and Future Goals

The last day of the exchange was structured around three questions: what did you learn this week? What will you carry home? What do you wish for this group? The session was, by multiple accounts, the most emotional of the week. People had spent five days in conversation, in each other's communities, at each other's tables. What came out in the closing circle was beyond a summary of the week's content, something much harder to document: the experience of having been genuinely seen and changed by other people.

Tarcyla, the facilitator, opened simply:

**"One wish for this group:
What will you remember from
this exchange in ten years?"**



Closing session featuring cohort members

- **Mikeya Griffin** grounded her reflections in the C of CLT: “To be connected to the ‘C’ in Community Land Trust is not just about community. It is about the emotions, the stories, the culture, the power, the people, the resistance. It’s about hope. It’s about self-determination.” She closed with a vision: “Ten years from now, I know that there will be hundreds of millions of acres of collective ownership across the globe. I never call it a model. It is a movement — and I’m committed heavily and deeply to the movement of equality and justice, environmental justice and economic justice, for people and place.”
- **Djaka Blais** spoke about what the week had restored: “This was a real grounding experience — pointing back to what’s the North Star we’re working towards, and seeing examples of how to get there. I’m going to take this experience as one of those grounding, peaceful places I can go back to in moments of stress or difficulty.”
- **Ashley Allen** spoke about what it meant to be in a room with people who understood the fight: “We saw people here who were really in the fight, who didn’t give up, resisted, even when they were few and many people had abandoned the fight. It was good to be in a room with people who understand that — because you do feel like sometimes you’re alone.” She described the recognition she found in Rio’s communities — the dominoes, the birthday parties, the dancing — and what it meant to see it: “This could be any Black community that I know in the United States.” She took home something specific: “It’s possible to fight back. It’s possible to fight back and win. To see what it looks like on the other side, what it looks like to win, even in the harshest conditions — I’m bringing that back with me.” She went on to share a vision for what the movement could become: “in ten years, the CLT will not just be something that we talk about as an option. It will be the standard.”
- **Joanne Cheung** offered a moving reflection: “I think time is not linear, it’s volumetric. The time we spent together is like a great ocean, and it’s going to carry me for a long time.” She spoke about having drawn her energy from anger for years and finding it unsustainable, and about what the week had restored: “Seeing Rio, seeing everyone here — it reminds me that joy is also a responsibility I have for myself, and a responsibility I have with everyone here and everyone who’s in the struggle. It is a source of renewable energy. It cannot be depleted.” She closed with a vision for the movement: “We cannot heal the land without healing the landscapes of our hearts. The ball rolls — from Dudley to the Caño to Rio, it’s going to keep rolling. We are the people who are building that field.”
- **Felipe Listek** spoke on behalf of the local organizing team: “Favelas have so much that they can contribute to this movement. I really hope that in ten years, we will have the community land trust as a reality in Brazil and as a reality for informal settlements.”
- **Charles Bradley** described arriving with expectations and leaving transformed: “I have two words for the program: blown away. I’ve never been in a room to hear this before — from everybody, such a rich concept and a direct response to what they’re dealing with in terms of struggle. I will return to the US enlightened.”
- **Crystal West** opened the reflections with a ten-year vision: “In ten years, we will have a functioning, context-specific CLT model that has upgraded occupations and informal settlements in South Africa. I came here wanting to be a sponge and just take it all in — and it’s been exactly that.”
- **Shekara Grant** spoke about what Rio had clarified for her: “The big thing I’ll take with me is that resistance is necessary. Here, there’s such a clear autonomy in the organizing — starting from that place of resistance and delivering for the community, allowing the community to meet their own needs. That’s a big gap in Canada.”



Closing session featuring cohort members

The table below shows a full breakdown of the main shared ideas throughout the session.

Learnings / impacts	Memories	Wishes for the future
- CLTs understood as more than a housing tool: a political strategy for resisting land dispossession, structural racism, and extractive capitalism; - Strong recognition that land, housing and people are interconnected and must be addressed together; - CLTs not as a model, but movement; - Collective resistance and autonomy are essential: change often comes from organized people, not just governments; - Shift from technical/ academic perspectives to emotional, relational, and lived-experience-based learning; - Importance of centering care, solidarity, and trust in movement-building.	- Lasting impressions of joy, dignity, and resilience in favelas, especially among children and community leaders; - Creativity, resourcefulness, and strong social bonds in contexts often labeled as “precarious”; - Powerful examples of women-led leadership and collective struggle; - Deep emotional connections, friendships, and sense of global solidarity (especially across Global South and Black communities); - The exchange as a space of healing, inspiration, and shared humanity, beyond professional interaction; - Power of in person peer exchanges to build connections and strengthen global solidarity.	- Continued connection and collaboration, with more in-person exchanges and active communication; - Expansion of the network into a strong, supportive global movement; - CLTs and collective land models becoming mainstream, not exceptional; - Ability to scale impact: upgrading informal settlements, strengthening communities, influencing policy; - Long-term vision of systemic change, shifting land from commodity to right, grounded in solidarity and collective power.

After sharing personal reflections, participants grouped their goals for the future into nine themes:

1. Supporting each other
2. Focusing on people (the “C” in CLTs)
3. Expanding the network
4. Staying connected
5. Spreading the word of CLTs as a possible solution
6. Organizing more in-person meetings
7. Raising awareness and goes beyond housing
8. Multiplying resources and institutional capacity
9. Developing CLTs in informal settlements

Tarcyla reading off cohort goals during closing session



Participants then wrote down how they could contribute to each goal, individually and institutionally. The commitments that emerged, documented in full in the table below, reflect the diversity of the cohort and the seriousness with which they took the week's work. A few threads ran through all nine themes: the value of peer exchange as a

methodology, the importance of sustained connection rather than one-time gatherings, the need to resource organizations from the Global South to participate fully in the movement, and the shared recognition that CLTs are a political project as much as a technical one.

1. Supporting each other	• Make time to reflect. Share successes, strategies materials in network (Curtis) • Ensure UHPCLT documents our activities well in order to ensure knowledge mobilization and replicability (Jane) • Make time to follow and connect with fellas who have aligned projects / values. • Commitments: support each other. Become available to share experiences, tools and reach out to others that can have tools that we can learn from. Individually I will facilitate exchanges on specific issues if resources are available. (Lydia) • Will make myself available to email or meet 1-1 or with a group about specific CLT topics that came out of this convening. (Harry) • Support each other. Remain open and actively communicate with members of the network and provide tangible assistance whenever possible and provide encouragement and more support.
2. Focusing on people (The "C" in CLTs)	• Commit to organizing training and capacity building for community organizing. (Djaka) • Able to facilitate a workshop or conversation about the principles and examples of the "C in CLT." (Harry) • Explore different community engagement approaches and methods, and show others the power of community engagement across diverse geographic contexts, by sharing the stories we were told on this exchange. (Rondo CLT) • Make sure the CLT movement reinforces its core tenants so that it cannot be co-opted. We need flexibility so that it can operate in various contexts, but we can never erase the roots and core principles, or it becomes like every other community development strategy. • Create a dialogue and exchange agenda between the International Habitat International Coalition and CLTs. (Facundo) • As an organization, Guara is willing to support other network members with our capacities in urban planning, design and architecture, and mutual aid in construction. (Jonny)

<i>Focusing on people, continued</i>	• Our organization will commit to hosting community conversations to spread the word about Community Land Trusts. Being a matriarchal society, we are going to push for women's land ownership. The organization is going to work towards a community museum and archives. • I am going to help connect the CLT model with both our Residence Association Act at the county government level and the Community Land Act at the national government level, for perpetual self-management of residency. I will use the internet to do educational sessions on the CLT model and share the experiences learned here and the good practices that have worked. I seek assistance in connecting social movements here with those in East Africa. (Daniel)
3. Expanding the network	• Support a team on planning network structures and/or polling the group about how to structure it as a network. (Lydia) • Personal: I will personally schedule our next virtual meetup in June. Institutional: Source funding to continue meeting in person, but will need other countries to do the same. (Shekara) • Share what I learned across my networks in Canada. I commit to amplifying the work of others in the group. (Djaka) • Will share information about this effort with the board and staff of the Network and the International Center for CLTs. • Personally engage with others through attending events (virtual summit). Rondo CLT will continue to fundraise for these exchanges and work them into the strategy and budget for the organization. Uplift stories and lived experience as epistemology. (Addie) • On a personal level, I will bring this discussion to my organization to deepen the learnings and explore how to apply CLTs in my country, Paraguay. (Jonny) • To create and produce a visual representation report of the exchange and share it with European CLTs. (Janet) • Personal: connect the CLT movement with the food sovereignty movement and the indigenous land rights movement, including La Via Campesina and others. (Joanne)
4. Staying connected	• I am willing to stay on the WhatsApp group to keep the communication going. (Gugun) • I will intentionally reach out to cohort and my network to cultivate relationships and spread the word. I will keep my commitment to being the squeaky wheel about future projects and look for opportunities for collaborations and resources. (Charles) • I will be completely available for communication through any means and will make the effort to speak the language of exchange. (Jonny)

<i>Staying connected, continued</i>	• Create a digital toolkit, possibly on Drive, to share research and communication materials about CLTs in multiple languages. • Call or email anytime! (Harry) • Join and actively participate in networks created to facilitate connections. (John Mussington) • Personal goal: build an online oral history archive on community land as a tool of resistance and liberation. Change mainstream narratives and mindsets. (Joanne) • Support and actively engage in regular virtual meetings where we can share what is happening in our communities, workshop solutions for challenges and opportunities we have, offer workshops on topics of choice, and have fun with online games. Hogan's Alley can help with the coordination of the meetings. (Djaka) • Personal commitment: commit to strengthening the capacity of communities, produce more evidence-based research by consolidating learnings, develop popular materials that are context specific, and strengthen the network of subject experts through communication via WhatsApp and email. • I commit to reaching out to each person over the next 6 to 12 months. (Djaka) • Personal: you are all welcome to attend the Canadian Network of Community Land Trust Summit from September 28 to October 1. Institutional: organize a meetup outside of the CNCLT Summit program for us to spend time together offline. (Shekara) • Participate in future meetings of this group, both virtual and in person. Work with John Smith to host anyone who wants to visit Boston and DSNi. (Harry) • Create a toolbox in digital format (drive?) to share research and communication pieces from CLTs (in several languages). (Facundo)
5. Spreading the word of CLTs as a possible solution	• Promotion of CLTs. Work to establish, maintain and/or improve the tools and systems needed for CLTs to exist and function, both in my own community and in other communities. (John Mussington) • Personal goal: to promote CLTs through greater use of social media, explaining what a CLT is. Organize workshops. (Janet) • CLT Network focused on resource sharing, content creation and collaboration. (Lydia) • Creation of the platform "CLT Portugal" (support / advocacy). (Ricardo) • Continue to advocate, present and share. Post more content on behalf of UHPCLT. (Curtis) • Increase policy advocacy around CLTs (Jane)

<i>Spreading the word, continued</i>	• Provide tools, time and resources to support the growth of the movement. Continue to resist the co-opting of the CLT sector – we are not only housing organizations. (Shekara) • Learn more about all the organizations represented this week and spread the word about global solutions that could work locally. (Ashley) • Personal goal: finish my oral history book on community land as climate action. (Joanne) • Commitment to bring CLTs into a research project on new tools at the University of Buenos Aires. (Facundo) • Develop educational workshops and materials on CLTs for our communities. (Djaka)
6. Organizing more in person meetings	• Incorporating into the annual budget and fundraise specifically in learning exchange opportunities, including conferences, this yearly exchange and one on one learning sessions. (Ashley) • Communicate travel to one another: events, conferences will attend, or personal travel near one another to create opportunities for in person meetings and also joint advocacy at events (ex: WUF, Grounded Solutions, CLT Networks but also independent travel). (Theresa) • Joint support planning committee (Curtis) • In person meetings. Help plan or facilitate meetings (Lyvia) • Welcome others to visit anytime they are in Minnesota (Rondo CLT)
7. Raising awareness: land goes beyond housing	• CLTs are not just about housing. Work to include principles of CLTs in communities regulations / legislation to ensure all aspects of CLT operations are addressed. (John Mussington) • Document our strong ancestry. Collect stories from communities. Do more storytelling. (Curtis) • Support replication of climate memory housing circles in other places + establishment of CLT or community museums (Theresa)
8. Multiplying resources institutional capacity	• Using my organization and network, I will build collective land ownership movement in Southeast Asia (Gugun) • I will work to change and expand the narrative about CLTs in the Global North and South as a corrective to extractive capitalism. Working within my organization and with various networks and stakeholders. (John Smith) • Work to achieve this goal through International Center for CLTs (Harry) • Studying legal framework to build CLT legislation in Indonesia (Gugun)

<i>Multiplying resources, continued</i>	• Encourage other networks to share our work. Social media, academic institutions, traditional media, NGOs. We need to share amongst each other but also with entities outside our immediate network to expand our reach. • Growing the CLT movement. Work to share expertise and experiences in the operation of CLTs. (John Mussington) • Guara can seek cooperation in a search of resources to the expansion of the network, whether with self funding to mobility and shelter or debating common scholarships. (Jonny) • Organisational Commitment: Mobilize resources to test the model. Support communities in joining the collective land ownership conversation as a catalyst for informal settlement upgrading. Boost human capacity through the recruitment of governing bodies. Map like-minded organizations to test and popularize the CLT model.
9. Developing CLTs in informal settlements	• Learn more about history + current context of informal settlements. Share strategies leaders are using to promote security of tenure (Harry) • Organize collective construction projects (Joanne) • Learn more about informal settlements and work with international partners to design strategies that are impactful to address tenure and community control of land (John Smith) • Dialogue and capacitate on the CLT model in settlements and cooperatives close to our organization (Jonny) • Share my experience with favelas, commit to correct negative stigma. Share context about similarities with our communities (Curtis) • Communicate with others in the security / personal network about the parallels between favelas and black communities in Canada • Continue to strengthen the pre existing, infrastructural systems with our CT communities • Accompany processes to create, design steward collective tenure in self built communities - peer to peer learning, exchanges through action – reflection. Main focus in Latin America. We are building a website that organizes tools related to collective tenure, that are derived from practice with examples, resulting from collective systematization processes. Share the tools. (Lyvia) • Share experiences as examples of how activities and systems actually can work to the benefit of people living in informal settlements. Actively share information about the success or functioning of informal settlements and CLTs. (John Mussington) • Commit to drive a people-centered process of co-creating a CLT vehicle appropriate to upgrading informal settlements in a manner that is flexible / adaptable and fit-for-purpose, to ensure replicability and scalability. Incorporate CLT solution seeking into the organizational strategy for prioritizing in a programmatic manner. Program CLT model development for informal settlement upgrading. (Crystal)

From the shared ideas above, we can conclude that participants left the exchange with a collective sense of purpose and a set of concrete, heartfelt commitments that will carry the energy of this gathering far into the future.

Across the nine interconnected themes, this diverse global community of CLT practitioners, advocates and researchers has pledged to support one another through regular virtual meetings, shared resources and one-on-one connections, while deepening the focus on the “C” in CLT” by centering people, community organizing and capacity-building at the heart of their work. The network will grow stronger as members expand outreach through social media, academic institutions, policy advocacy and platforms in multiple

languages, while welcoming new regions – from Southeast Asia to East Africa – into the collective land ownership conversation. Relationships forged here will be nurtured through the WhatsApp group, oral history archives, visual reports and in-person visits, ensuring that no connection made this week is lost. The movement will push boldly beyond housing to reclaim land as a tool of climate action, food sovereignty, Indigenous rights, and resistance against extractive capitalism, while developing practical strategies for informal settlements and self-built communities around the world. What began as an exchange of knowledge has become a living network of trust, solidarity and action, and the seeds planted here will grow into lasting transformation for communities across the globe.

Full cohort after the closing session



Annexes

The official photo album link of the Exchange sessions: [Exchange Album](#). Links to photography of Field Visits: [Providência](#), [Vito Gianotti](#), [Cantagalo–Favela Museum](#), [Raízes do Brasil event](#), [Vila Autódromo](#), and [Shangri-Lá](#). Online Exchange materials: [Global CLT Exchange Notion Website](#).

Recommendations for the Global CLT Movement

The exchange produced five recommendations for the broader CLT movement, developed collectively in the closing session. They are documented in full below. Taken together, they make an argument worth stating plainly: the global CLT movement needs infrastructure for genuine peer exchange, not as a supplement to its other work, but as a core methodology for building the relationships, shared knowledge, and mutual accountability that the movement's long-term strength depends on.

1. Build a Multilingual Knowledge Commons:

Build and expand a shared digital infrastructure — a toolkit, platform or collaborative drive — where peers from the Global North and South can deposit and access research, communication materials, tools, stories and good practices in multiple languages. This is not just about information sharing; it is about valuing knowledge from different contexts, not only related directly to the CLT but also other community-led initiatives that are aligned with the pillars of the model.

2. Reclaim and Defend the “C” in CLT: The movement must resist co-optation by consistently centering community organizing, capacity building and people-led processes in its practices. CLTs are not merely housing organizations, and the global movement should actively develop training, workshops and advocacy materials that reflect the full breadth of what CLTs represent — including food sovereignty, climate action, Indigenous land rights, and resistance to extractive capitalism.

3. Global Exchanges as a Strategic Priority:

The commitments that resulted from this exchange demonstrates that in-person gatherings are powerful strategies to build and strengthen connections. The movement should collectively fundraise, budget, and advocate for regular learning exchanges, ensuring that organizations from the Global South are not excluded due to resource constraints.

4. Supporting Context-Sensitive CLT Initiatives in the Global South:

A major frontier for the global CLT movement lies in informal settlements and self-built communities, particularly in Latin America, Africa and Asia. The movement should invest in peer-to-peer learning, participatory action-research and co-design processes that adapt the CLT model to these contexts in ways that are flexible, replicable and genuinely community-led, rather than imposing rigid frameworks developed elsewhere.

5. Strengthen Political Advocacy and Legislative Frameworks Globally:

The movement must move beyond the project level and engage systematically with policy, legislation and governance. This means mapping and connecting with like-minded organizations, building coalitions with movements and networks, and supporting members to develop legal frameworks that enable CLTs to flourish. Advocacy should be coordinated globally while remaining rooted in local realities, ensuring that the CLT model is recognized not just as a housing solution, but as a transformative tool for land justice.

Next Steps

The Rio exchange was designed to create durable impacts, and the commitments made in the closing session reflect that intention. In the immediate term, participants agreed on three concrete next steps:

- The exchange's WhatsApp group will be maintained as an active communication space for sharing updates, opportunities, and ongoing work across the network;
- Regular virtual meetings will bring the cohort together on an ongoing basis, offering recurring opportunities to reconnect, share how commitments are being acted on, and sustain the relationships built during the week;
- The organizing partners will assess the feasibility of a second Global CLT Peer Exchange, to take place in a different country, building on the network and learnings that Rio produced.
- These next steps are modest by design. The goal is continuity rather than momentum for its own sake. What the exchange built — relationships, shared frameworks, mutual accountability — is worth protecting carefully, and that requires consistent, low-barrier connection rather than ambitious plans that are difficult to sustain. The seeds planted in Rio will grow in the communities participants returned to. The task now is to keep them connected to each other.

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We would like to thank all participants for traveling to Rio, engaging fully in the exchange, and committing to carry its work forward. The diversity and depth of this cohort made the week what it was.

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whose years of work in Rio made the week possible. Ben Harris of the CLT Center and Addie Backhus from Rondo contributed to operations and communications throughout. Greg Rosenberg, also from the CLT Center, played a key coordinating role in bringing the exchange to fruition.

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