

URBAN CHALLENGES AND THE NEED TO REVISIT URBAN PLANNING

Over the last century, urban planning¹ has become a discipline and profession in its own right, has become institutionalized as a practice of government, as well as an activity of ordinary citizens and businesses, and has evolved as a complex set of ideas which guides both planning decision-making processes and urban outcomes. At certain times, planning has been seen as the activity which can solve many of the major problems of urban areas, while at other times it has been viewed as unnecessary government interference in market forces. More recently, it has been argued that systems of urban planning in developing countries are also the cause of many urban problems, and that by setting unrealistic standards, planning is promoting urban poverty and exclusion.

This Report views urban planning as a significant management tool for dealing with the sustainable urbanization challenges facing 21st century cities. While the forces impacting on the growth of cities have changed dramatically in many parts of the world, planning systems have changed very little and contribute to urban problems. This does not need to be the case: planning systems can be changed so that they are able to function as effective instruments of sustainable urban change, that is, capable of making cities more environmentally sound and safe, more economically productive and more socially inclusive (see Box 1). Given the enormity of the issues facing urban areas, there is no longer time for complacency: planning systems need to be evaluated and if necessary revised.



Urban planning is a significant management tool for dealing with the challenges facing 21st century cities

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URBAN CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

Future urban planning needs to take place within an understanding of the factors which are shaping the socio-spatial aspects of cities and the institutional structures which attempt to manage them. It also needs to recognize the significant demographic and environmental challenges which lie ahead.

¹ The term 'urban planning' has the same meaning in this Report as 'city planning' and 'town planning', and is used throughout to refer to planning in large cities as well as medium-sized and small urban places.

Box I The goals of sustainable urbanization

Environmentally sustainable urbanization requires that:

- greenhouse gas emissions are reduced and serious climate change mitigation and adaptation actions are implemented;
- urban sprawl is minimized and more compact towns and cities served by public transport are developed;
- non-renewable resources are sensibly used and conserved;
- renewable resources are not depleted;
- the energy used and the waste produced per unit of output or consumption is reduced;
- the waste produced is recycled or disposed of in ways that do not damage the wider environment; and
- the ecological footprint of towns and cities is reduced.

Only by dealing with urbanization within regional, national and even international planning and policy frameworks can these requirements be met.

Priorities and actions for economic sustainability of towns and cities should focus on local economic development, which entails developing the basic conditions needed for the efficient operation of economic enterprises, both large and small, formal and informal. These include:

- reliable infrastructure and services, including water supply, waste management, transport, communications and energy supply;
- access to land or premises in appropriate locations with secure tenure;
- financial institutions and markets capable of mobilizing investment and credit;

- a healthy educated workforce with appropriate skills;
- a legal system which ensures competition, accountability and property rights;
- appropriate regulatory frameworks, which define and enforce non-discriminatory locally appropriate minimum standards for the provision of safe and healthy workplaces and the treatment and handling of wastes and emissions.

For several reasons, special attention needs to be given to supporting the urban informal sector, which is vital for a sustainable urban economy.

The social aspects of urbanization and economic development must be addressed as part of the sustainable urbanization agenda. The Habitat Agenda incorporates relevant principles, including the promotion of:

- equal access to and fair and equitable provision of services;
- social integration by prohibiting discrimination and offering opportunities and physical space to encourage positive interaction;
- gender and disability sensitive planning and management; and
- the prevention, reduction and elimination of violence and crime.

Social justice recognises the need for a rights-based approach, which demands equal access to 'equal quality' urban services, with the needs and rights of vulnerable groups appropriately addressed.

Source: Partly adapted from UN-Habitat and DFID, 2002, pp18–27

MAIN FORCES AFFECTING URBAN CHANGE

Over the last several decades, global changes in the physical environment, in the economy, in institutional structures and in civil society have had significant impacts on urban areas.

Environmental challenges

The most important environmental concern now is climate change. Climate change will affect the basic elements of life for people around the world, including access to water, food production, health and the environment. Hundreds of millions of people are likely to suffer hunger, water shortages and coastal flooding as global warming increases. The poorest countries and people are most vulnerable to this threat.



The most important environmental concern today is climate change

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The global use of oil as an energy source has both promoted urbanization, and its easy availability has allowed the emergence of low density and sprawling urban forms – suburbia – dependent on private cars. An oil-based economy and climate change are linked: vehicle and aircraft emissions contribute significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. Responding to a post-oil era, in the form of public-transport and pedestrian-based movement systems, more compact cities, present new imperatives for planning.

Urbanization modifies the environment and generates new hazards, including deforestation and slope instability, thus resulting in landslides and flash flooding. The world's one billion urban slum dwellers are more vulnerable, as they are usually unprotected by planning regulations.

Economic change

Processes of globalization and economic restructuring in recent decades have affected urban areas in both developed and developing countries. Particularly significant has been the impact on urban labour markets, which show a growing polarization of occupational and income structures.

In developed countries, firms have sought lower production costs by relocating to developing countries, to less developed regions within the developed world, or even from inner city areas to suburbs.

Urban residents are disproportionately affected by global economic crises. The current global recession that began in 2008 has accelerated economic restructuring and rapid growth of unemployment in all parts of the world. One important effect of these economic processes has been the

rapid growth in the informal economy in all urban centres, but particularly in developing countries.

Future urban planning in both developed and developing countries will thus be taking place in a context of inequality and poverty and with high levels of informal activity.

Institutional change

Within the last three decades, there have been significant transformations in local government in many parts of the world, making them very different settings from those within which planning was originally conceived.

The most commonly recognized change has been the expansion of the urban political system from 'government' to 'governance', which in developed countries represents a response to the growing complexity of governing in a globalizing and multi-level context. In developing countries, the concept of governance has been promoted along with decentralization and democratization.

These shifts have had profound implications for urban planning, which has often been cast as a relic of the old welfare state model and as an obstacle to economic development and market freedom. Generally, urban planning is highly reliant on the existence of stable, effective and accountable local government, as well as a strong civil society. Many developing countries simply do not have these. Under such conditions, urban planning will continue to be ineffective.

Changes in civil society

Since the 1960s, there has been a growing unwillingness on the part of communities to passively accept the planning decisions of politicians and technocrats. Planners have come to recognize that planning implementation is more likely to be effective if it can secure 'community support'. Successful participatory planning is largely conditioned by broader state-civil society relations, and the extent to which democracy is accepted and upheld.

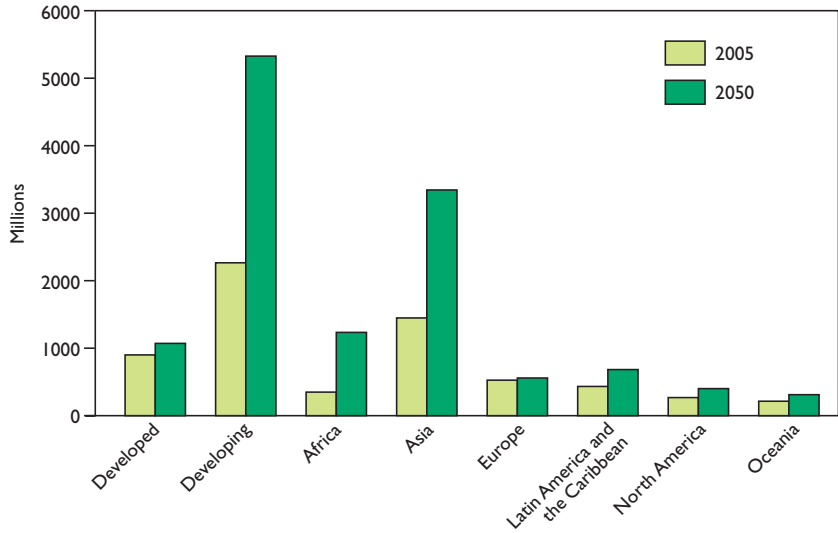
There has been a tendency in planning to assume a one-dimensional view of civil society and the role it might play in planning initiatives. The ideal of strong community-based organizations, willing to debate planning ideas, may be achievable in certain parts of the world, but civil society does not always lend itself to this kind of activity. While organized civil society has been a characteristic of Latin America, it takes very different forms in Africa, the Middle East and much of Asia, where social networks which extend beyond kinship and

Figure 1

Urban population by region, 2005–2050

Note: Asia does not include Japan.

Source: UN, 2008



ethnicity remain, to a large extent, casual, unstructured and paternalistic.

URBAN CHANGE

Changes in economic and governmental systems, in the nature of civil society, and in the nature and scale of environmental challenges, have all had major impacts on processes of urbanization and urban growth, and socio-spatial dynamics in urban settlements.

Urbanization and urban growth

The global urban transition witnessed over the last three



Urban poverty and the growth of slums have refocused attention on planning

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decades has been phenomenal. While the period 1950–1975 saw population growth divided between the urban and rural areas of the world, the period since has seen the balance tipped dramatically in favour of urban growth. In 2008, for the first time in history, over half of the world's population lived in urban areas and by 2050 this will have risen to 70 per cent. Figure 1 shows urban population growth projections by region.

Urban socio-spatial change

Planners and urban managers have to increasingly contend with new spatial forms and processes. Socio-spatial change has taken place primarily in the direction of the fragmentation, separation and specialization of functions and uses in cities.

In many poorer cities, spatial forms are largely driven by the efforts of low-income households to secure land that is affordable and in a reasonable location, often in peri-urban areas. This process is leading to new urban forms as the countryside begins to urbanize. In fact, the bulk of rapid urban growth in developing countries is taking place in the peri-urban areas.

Large cities are spreading out, engulfing nearby towns, leading to continuous belts of settlement. In Latin America, the coastal corridor in Venezuela now includes the cities of Maracaibo, Barquisimeto, Valencia, Caracas, Barcelona-Puerto La Cruz, and Cumana.

Type of plan	Description
Master plan	These are physical plans which depict on a map the state and form of an urban area at a future point in time when the plan is 'realized'. Master plans have also been called 'end-state' plans and 'blue-print' plans.
Comprehensive plan	Reflecting the belief that the planning system should plan towns (or large parts of them) as a whole and in detail. In the past, this term also suggested that wholesale clearance of the existing city should occur in order for the new comprehensive plan to be realized.
Comprehensive City Plan	Term used in China to describe an urban master plan (1989 City Planning Act)
General plan	Another term for a master plan, indicating uses and building norms for specific plots. Usually underpinned by a zoning system.
Layout plan or local plan	These are physical plans, often at a local scale, depicting details such as roads, public spaces and boundaries.
Destination plan or building plan	A plan for a specific area where substantial change is anticipated, usually in the context of a wider, strategic or 'structure' plan or 'scheme'.
Strategic spatial plan	The terms 'structure plans' and 'strategic plans' are closely related, and the latter term is now more commonly used. A strategic plan is a broader-level, selective (or prioritizing) spatial plan, usually showing, in a more conceptual way, the desired future direction of urban development. Particular decision-making processes accompany the production of a strategic plan.
Directive or development plan	A more generic term referring to structure or strategic plans.
Land use zoning	Detailed physical plans or maps showing how individual land parcels are to be used, and assigning to the landowner (which may also be the state) certain legal rights and conditions pertaining to the use and development of the land. Ideally the zoning plan aligns with the master plan.
Regulatory planning	Refers to the rights and conditions set out in the zoning plan, along with legal requirements pertaining to the process of allocating or changing land use rights, buildings and space use.

Table 1

Definitions of various types of urban plans

WHY DOES URBAN PLANNING NEED TO CHANGE?

'Modern' urban planning emerged in the latter part of the 19th century, largely in response to rapidly growing and polluted cities in Western Europe, brought about by the industrial revolution. The adoption of urban planning in this part of the world as a state function can be attributed to the rise of the modern interventionist state. Urban 'visions' proposed by the leading pioneers of urban planning in Western Europe and the US in the late 19th century were to shape the objectives and forms of planning, which in turn showed remarkable resilience through the 20th century.

Planning was seen as a technical activity in the physical planning and design of human settlements, with social, economic or political matters lying outside the scope of planning. Planning involved the production of master plans, blueprint plans or layout plans, showing a detailed view of the built form of a city once it attained its ideal end-state. The legal tool for implementing these visions was the land-use zoning scheme.

Over the years, a range of different terms have been used to describe plans. Table 1 describes the main terms in use.

While the origins of master planning were strongly influenced by values in developed countries, this did not prevent these forms of planning from spreading to almost every part of the world in the 20th century.

Given its weaknesses, master planning has been replaced in some parts of the world by processes and plans that are more participatory, flexible, strategic and action-oriented. But in many regions, particularly in developing countries, master planning and land-use zoning, used together to promote modernist urban environments, still persist.

THE 'GAP' BETWEEN OUTDATED PLANNING APPROACHES AND CURRENT URBAN ISSUES

Urban areas are now highly complex, rapidly changing entities, shaped by a range of local and global forces often beyond the control of local plans and planners. There is now a large disjuncture between prevailing planning systems and the nature of 21st century cities. These outdated forms of planning persist in so many parts of the world.

The most obvious problem with master planning and urban modernism is that they completely fail to



Post-disaster situations offer urban planning a unique opportunity to rethink past development practices

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accommodate the way of life of the majority of inhabitants in rapidly growing, largely poor and informal cities. The possibility that people living in such circumstances could comply with zoning ordinances designed for European towns is extremely unlikely. Inappropriate zoning ordinances are instrumental in creating informal settlements and peri-urban sprawl. It could be argued that city governments are producing social and spatial exclusion as well as environmental hazards, as a result of the inappropriate laws and regulations which they adopt.

A further aspect of planning which needs to change in many parts of the world is the way it has been located institutionally. In many countries, urban planning is not well integrated into governance systems and tends to operate in isolation from other departments and from the budgeting process.

WHY IS THERE A REVIVED INTEREST IN URBAN PLANNING?

The major challenges of the 21st century are currently leading to a world-wide return to planning: rapid urbanization, climate change, global recession, and resource shortages. These are issues that have significant implications for the spatial structure and functioning of urban areas. Essentially, they demand state intervention to fundamentally change the nature of cities, and this implies a need for planning. As shown below, planning can be an important tool in addressing some of the issues that confront cities, especially sustainable urbanization (environmental, economic

and social), slums and poverty, urban crime and violence, and post-conflict and post-disaster situations.

Urban poverty and the growth of slums have refocused attention on planning. Close to one billion slum dwellers reside in urban areas worldwide. Urban planning can play a key role in achieving Target 11 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which seeks to significantly improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 through alternatives to new slum formation.

As countries urbanize, the issue of sustainable urbanization becomes crucial. Urban planning can play a vital role in ensuring sustainable urbanization. Achieving sustainable cities and contributing to climate protection requires planned change to the way in which cities are spatially configured and serviced. Urban planning can help mainstream climate change considerations into urban development processes.

The way in which cities are planned, designed and managed can enhance or negate safety and security. Experience has shown that it is important for safety principles to be factored into all urban design and planning. Besides, urban planning can contribute to crime prevention through better management of the urbanization process.

Introducing urban planning in post-conflict situations is a crucial step for sound urban development. It also allows for more efficient use of limited local physical, human, technical and financial resources. Post-disaster situations offer urban planning a unique opportunity to rethink past development practices and effectively prepare communities against threats and risks.

NEW APPROACHES TO URBAN PLANNING

Over the past few decades, new approaches, which seek to address the problems in traditional master planning systems have emerged. Most of these initiatives have elements in common. These elements are:

- Strategic rather than comprehensive;
- Flexible rather than end-state oriented;
- Action and implementation oriented;
- Stakeholder or community driven;
- Reflect emerging urban concerns;
- Play an integrative role;
- Focus on the planning process.

The new approaches are grouped under seven broad categories:

- *Strategic spatial planning*, which does not address every part of a city but focuses on only those aspects or areas that are strategic or important to overall plan objectives;
- *Spatial planning to integrate government or public sector functions*, including injection of a spatial or territorial dimension into sectoral strategies;
- *New approaches to land regularization and management*, which offer alternatives to the forced removal of informal settlements, ways of using planning tools to strategically influence development actors, ways of working with development actors to manage public space and provide services, and new ideas as to how planning laws can be used to capture rising urban land values;
- *Participatory and partnership processes*, which include 'participatory urban appraisal', 'participatory learning and action' and 'community action planning', including 'participatory budgeting';
- *Approaches promoted by international agencies*, which have placed emphasis on urban management and specific sectors such as the environment, crime and disasters, as well as on partnerships and participation;
- *New forms of master planning*, which are bottom-up and participatory, oriented towards social justice and aiming to counter the effects of land speculation; and
- *Planning aimed at producing new spatial forms*, such as compact cities and new urbanism, both of which are a response to challenges of urban sprawl and sustainable urbanization.

DEFINING URBAN PLANNING AND IDENTIFYING NORMATIVE PRINCIPLES

The definition of urban planning adopted in this Report is stated in Box 2.

The contexts in which urban planning operates vary across the world. It would therefore be incorrect to assume that a single new approach to planning could be developed. The following principles are thus posed as questions which can be used to assess urban planning systems and to guide revised approaches to urban planning:

Box 2 A definition of urban planning

Definitions of planning have changed over time and are not the same in all parts of the world. Earlier views defined urban planning as physical design, enforced through land use control. Current perspectives recognize the institutional shift from government to governance, the necessarily wider scope of planning beyond land-use, and how plans are implemented.

Urban planning is currently viewed as a self-conscious collective effort to imagine or re-imagine a town, city, urban region or wider territory and to translate the result into priorities for area investment, conservation measures, new and upgraded areas of settlement, strategic infrastructure investments and principles of land-use regulation. It is recognized that planning is not only undertaken by professional urban and regional planners and hence it is appropriate to refer to the 'planning system'. Nonetheless, urban (and regional) planning has distinctive concerns that separates it from, for example, economic planning or health planning. At the core of urban planning is a concern with space, whether static or in movement; the protection of special 'places' and sites; the interrelations between different activities and networks in an area; and significant intersections and nodes which are physically co-located within an area.

Planning is also now viewed as a strategic, rather than a comprehensive, activity. This implies selectivity, and a focus on that which really makes a difference to the fortunes of an area over time. Planning also highlights a developmental movement from the past to the future. It implies that it is possible to decide between appropriate actions now in terms of their potential impact in shaping future socio-spatial relations. This future imagination is not merely a matter of short-term political expediency, but is expected to be able to project a transgenerational temporal scale, especially in relation to infrastructure investment, environmental management and quality of life.

The term 'planning' also implies a mode of governance driven by the articulation of policies through some kind of deliberative process and the judgment of collective action in relation to these policies. Planning is not, therefore, a neutral technical exercise: it is shaped by values which must be made explicit, and planning itself is fundamentally concerned with making ethical judgments.

- Does the planning system recognize, and have the ability to respond to, current and impending environmental issues in ways which promote sustainability?
- Does the planning system recognize, and have the ability to promote social justice? Does it have the ability to promote global charters such as the MDGs?
- Is the planning system backed by, and aligned with progressive national constitutions and international agreements on human and environmental justice?
- Does the planning system fit within the constitutional allocation of powers and functions?
- Does the planning system recognize, and have the ability to respond to, cultural, socioeconomic and spatial diversity?
- Does the planning system facilitate and encourage open dialogue?
- Does the planning system facilitate urban built forms and infrastructural systems which are environmentally sustainable and supportive of local livelihoods and social inclusion?
- Does the planning system acknowledge the importance of informality?
- Is there sustained support for the planning system from government, from politicians, from the business sector and from both wealthy and poor communities?
- Can the planning system cope with the need for flexibility; for example, to be able to implement firm controls where the need for protection and social inclusion exist, or where market externalities occur?
- Does the planning system consider plans and implementation as interrelated processes linked to budgets?
- Are there linkages between directive and strategic spatial plans and the system of land laws and land use management?
- Are there linkages between urban plans and broader institutional visions?

- Is the planning system institutionally located and embedded so that it can play an effective role?
- Does the planning system include an approach to monitoring and evaluating urban plans?
- Are there close linkages between planning practice, the professional organizations of planning, and the planning education systems? Do planning education systems have the capacity to produce sufficient skilled graduates?
- Is there recognition that urban planning systems have limitations in terms of achieving all of the above?

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

This Report is divided into five parts as follows:

- Chapters 1 and 2 provide an introduction to the need to revisit urban planning. They also describe the different urban conditions in various parts of the world.
- Chapters 3, 4 and 5 focus on the process, or procedural, aspects of urban planning. They start by discussing the emergence of modernist urban planning and newer approach, then examine trends in institutional and political forces that have shaped planning systems and the processes of decision-making in planning.
- Chapters 6, 7 and 8 focuses on the content, or substantive, aspects of urban planning. They address issues of more recent concern, which are the urban environment in relation to sustainability, urban informality, and infrastructure planning.
- Chapters 9 and 10 discuss monitoring and evaluation, and planning education, respectively – two issues that have not received sufficient attention in the past.
- Chapter 11 explores the future policy directions necessary to make urban planning more effective as a major tool for achieving sustainable urbanization.