



Consolidated Research

Sustainable Urban Development

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INTRODUCING SUSTAINABLE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

The historical evolution of our world is marked by a continual shift from a rural society to urban modes of living. Today, three billion people, half of the world's population, live in cities. One billion urban residents live in slums, condemned to a life of poverty and ill health, because they are exposed to air pollution and are denied clean water, basic sanitation and adequate shelter.¹

The city as a nucleus of human activity has generated many economies of density, most of them positive, but also some very negative (e.g., organized crime, environmental decay, traffic congestion, economic disparities etc.). And as a consequence we witness nowadays an increasing concern about the urban environment as part of the global sustainability debate

With the inevitable danger of overlap and generalization, Urban Environmental Management identifies three dimensions:

- **Natural Environments**
Resources, processes and effects related to flora and fauna, human beings, minerals, water, land, air, etc.
- **Built Environments**
Resources, processes and effects related to buildings, housing, roads, railways, electricity, water supply, gas etc.
- **Socio-economic Environments**
Resources, processes and effects related to human activities, education, health, arts and culture, economic and business activities, heritage - urban lifestyles in general.

Obviously, sustainability implies looking at social, environmental and economic aspects of our development simultaneously – trying to integrate them as comprehensively as possible in our decision making process. **People, Money and the Environment** needs must be balanced. However, discussions usually tend to focus on (natural) environmental issues alone, and decisions are made in favor short term economic gains, neglecting social and people issues the other two aspects. Integrating (public and private) stakeholders and affected population in the planning process for sustainable development has become an important prerogative over the

¹ Towards Sustainable Urban Development, UNEP & UN-HABITAT

last few years. This is well documented in the Local Agenda 21 initiatives as one of the results of the Earth Summit in Rio 1992. This calls for the integration of the political-administrative or "institutional" system in the sustainability debate.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Since it is very difficult to list to the last detail, exactly "what" sustainable development implies – with all its consequences for social, economic and environmental survival – it might help to appreciate that "sustainability" in itself is a dynamic concept and thus requires to focus on the process and not the product.

Based on the above identified issues cities and states must take into consideration several aspects in order to make sure that urban development and development plans of cities and regions are sustainably planned and executed. These issues are:

- protecting the environment by promoting the preservation of biodiversity and natural habitats
- building communities that encourage interaction and support among residents and businesses
- analyzing impact of physical planning on employment, education and health services for the poor to address the socio-economic gap between the rich and the poor.
- incorporating transport strategies and infrastructure to encourage use of public transport and increased opportunities for physical fitness
- using water and energy efficiently with a focus on conservation and recycling
- reducing waste by encouraging recycling and onsite treatment for re-use
- adopting eco-friendly designs and choosing appropriate building materials, with an emphasis on recycling and on reducing energy costs

Consequently by reviewing the above issues we can easily conclude that "Economy, ecology and social cohesion are the pillars of a sustainable city. These must be in balance and therefore require an integrated approach."²

GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

UNDP's definition of good governance is:

"The exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences."³

² **Conference Strategies for Sustainable Cities** (The Hague, 23, 24, 25 June 1999: <http://www.denhaag.nl/sust.cities99/theme.htm>)

³ UNDP *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*, New York, 1997, pp. 2-3.

The argument for good urban governance is clear. Most of humanity will soon live in cities, and the trend of urbanization is irreversible. Cities hold tremendous potential as engines of economic and social development, creating jobs and generating ideas through economies of scale and creative and innovative civic cultures. Accordingly the key ingredient to realizing the Inclusive Sustainable City is neither money nor technology, nor even expertise (although these are important), but good urban governance (UN-Habitat, *Global Campaign on Urban Governance* 2002).

An important area where local authorities can have an impact on poverty reduction is mainly represented in the ability of the urban poor to influence local decision-making. This greatly determines the “pro-poorness” of local strategic planning, priority setting and capital investments. Progress in poverty reduction depends on the quality of the participation of the urban poor in the decisions affecting their lives and on the responsiveness of urban planning and policy-making processes to the needs of the urban poor.

Consequently Good/Sustainable urban governance must enable women and men to access the benefits of urban citizenship. Good urban governance, based on the principle of urban citizenship, affirms that no man, woman or child can be denied access to the necessities of urban life, including adequate shelter, security of tenure, safe water, sanitation, a clean environment, health, education and nutrition, employment and public safety and mobility.

Cities “properly planned and managed, hold the promise for human development and the protection of the world’s natural resources through their ability to support large numbers of people while limiting their impact on the natural environment.”⁴

Only in recent years has the concept of sustainable development begun to be applied to the field of urban planning. Government agencies at all levels are adopting plans to make urban growth more sustainable. A close examination of such plans shows six basic principles derived from research -we might call them the six C's — being applied.⁵

- 1. Compactness. The first principle is that more compact, densely developed cities are less auto dependent, less expensive to serve with infrastructure, and put less pressure on nearby farm, forest, and environmentally sensitive areas.
- 2. Completeness, A second principle of sustainable urbanization is that communities should be made more complete. A complete community is one in which the segregation of urban activities has been reduced.
- 3. Conservation. A third principle of sustainable urbanization — conservation — involves the use of a number of tools (in addition to development regulations) to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- 4. Comfort, Comfort takes note of the fact that it is important to create public spaces and routes that are pleasant for pedestrians and for non-auto users, such as bicyclists.
- 5 & 6. Coordination and Collaboration involves joint planning by numerous jurisdictions.

⁴ Habitat Agenda para 7 in UN-Habitat The Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda, Nairobi, 1997.

⁵ *"The Six C's of Sustainable Urbanization"* is by Gary Pivo, who is the Chair of the Department of Urban Design and Planning at the University of Washington.

URBAN GOVERNANCE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

UNDP's 2000 Human Development Report demonstrates that despite the significant advances in human development in previous decades, extreme poverty persists. One billion people in developing countries do not have access to safe water and 2.4 billion people lack adequate sanitation. About 790 million people are hungry and food insecure. And an estimated 1.2 billion people live on incomes of less than \$1 per day (UNDP-HDR 2000, page 4).

In some cities, the **welfare approach**, which stresses the importance of providing individuals and groups with the goods they need in order to effectively participate in society, such as land and infrastructure, may be most appropriate. In others, the **human development approach**, which aims at empowering groups and individuals to strengthen their ability and willingness to participate in society, may be key to good urban governance and social inclusions. In other contexts, the **environmental approach**, stressing the precautionary principle and concern for future generations, may be the desired entry point to the good urban governance debate.

However, the **institutional approach**, which is concerned with the roles of actors and the institutional frameworks that determine the formal and informal incentives for inclusion, is likely to be of particular importance in all regions.

NORMS FOR GOOD URBAN GOVERNANCE

Based on its 20 years of experience working with cities and the lessons captured from various experiences good urban governance UN-Habitat proposes to characterize the principles of Good Urban Governance by **sustainability, subsidiarity, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and citizenship, and security** that are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

Sustainability: Cities must balance the social, economic and environmental needs of present and future generations. This should include a clear commitment to urban poverty reduction.

Subsidiarity: Responsibility for service provision should be allocated at the closest appropriate level consistent with efficient and cost-effective delivery of services.

Equity: Decision-making processes and the basic necessities of urban life should be equally accessible to all members of society. The sharing of power leads to equity in the access to and use of resources. Women and men must participate as equals in all urban decision-making, priority-setting and resource allocation processes. In some slums, residents pay more for drinking water than porch housing sectors of the city.

Efficiency: Cities must be financially sound and cost-effective in their management of revenue sources and expenditures. Actors, such as government, private sector and civil society must contribute formally or informally to the urban economy. A key element in achieving efficiency is to recognize and enable the specific contribution of women to the urban economy.

Transparency and Accountability: Transparency and accountability are essential to stakeholder understanding of local government and to who is benefiting from decisions and actions. Access to information is fundamental to this understanding and to good governance.

Civic engagement and citizenship: People are the principal wealth of cities. In cities, people must actively contribute to the common good. Citizens, especially women, must be empowered to participate effectively in decision-making processes.

Security: Every individual has the inalienable right to life, liberty and the security of person. Insecurity has a disproportionate impact in further marginalizing poor communities. As we all know, safety and security in big cities are of a major concern particularly in poorer neighborhoods.

ARAB STATES & SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Most of the growth in the area is happening within cities, with urban population doubling between 1975 and 1995. Presently, around 60 per cent of the total population lives in cities, and this trend will be further reinforced in the future to reach around 66 per cent by 2020.

Urban growth seems also to be concentrated in a number of cities in the region that exhibit very high growth rates. Strong upward trends are visible for most large cities, such as Cairo in Egypt and Baghdad in Iraq.

Impact

The growth of cities in the region is often accompanied by a number of serious problems, notably environmental deterioration, which negatively affect living conditions at both local and global scale. Large urban population translates into high consumption levels of non-renewable resources e.g. water consumption, elevated pollution rates especially air, and increasing social inequality that exhaust cities' environmental support capacities and exacerbate insecurity.

The most acute cases of urban problems are Cairo, Beirut, and Damascus, which are affected by high levels of air and noise pollution causing serious health hazards. These cities suffer from large traffic congestion, parking problems, the absence of green spaces, and sometimes flooding.

Land degradation has been the dominant pattern in the region, especially in Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, as well as GCC countries. Decades of abuse in soil and water uses have hence led to soil degradation, the loss of fresh nonrenewable water reserves, and the deterioration in water quality.

Addressing the issue

Poverty, it is believed, is a main incentive for the over-exploitation of nature and the depletion of its resources. Other central element leading to unsustainable development are misguided state policies that have failed to regulate and properly control patterns of development or violation of regulations by influential interest groups in search of immediate economic gains.

In its more expanded version, the concept of sustainability accounts for the need to improve the living conditions of present generation, especially the poor among them without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This understanding of sustainability highlights important connections between society, the environment, and the process of development.

Consequently, policies aiming at limiting city growth need to be considered. Hence, slowing down rural migration to the city and providing opportunities in other centers are options to be highlighted. Tools of urban planning regulating the growth of the city should, therefore, play a key role in sustainability. Land use regulations, zoning, and other development controls as well as the prioritization of investments in urban infrastructure are all necessities to ensure sustainable urban development. Employment for all, in the long term, cultural and other social considerations must not be left out of the equation for sustainable urban planning.

Roles and Responsibilities

Most of the devised policies, so far, have in general focused on improving urban management in order to enhance urban efficiency and productivity. This entails a changing role for the state that would withdraw from direct servicing and assume its role as a regulator and enabler of the market. Furthermore, states should invest in improving their own institutional capacities and urban management through capacity building with training networks and technical assistance programs for planning.

Moreover, the state should seek to increase community participation through NGOs and civil society groups who are essential in achieving social and environmental improvements. Consequently, shifting the role of the state and increasing the participation of civil society groups in the processes of development have placed the debate of sustainable policy making at the heart of the governance. It also focuses closely on the active involvement civil society, both from the private and NGO sectors.

The notion of partnership, which encourages dynamic systems of relationships linking state and non-state actors at various levels, brings the latter to the level of partners in fostering development. Furthermore, the shift in the role of the state from provider to enabler requires different operating structures for the state fostering good governance.

Policies fostering good governance include decentralization in administrative, fiscal and political structures, capacity to build partnerships, privatization of services, legal capacity to hold partners accountable, and strong monitoring systems that prohibit corruption.

Since the early 1990s, the decentralization of public sector institutions in lower income countries has emerged as an important priority for the proponents of good urban governance by transferring responsibility for planning, management and resource raising and allocation from the central government to field units/institutions.

WHY SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

To conclude with it is beneficial to refer to the definition of Sustainable Urban Development by Banister (1999) in order to have a better understanding of sustainability as the integration of ecological, social and cultural considerations. He interprets the ultimate end of pursuing urban sustainability as the improvement of quality of life itself more than the efficient use of natural resources. Consequently cities are not only resource consumers and waste producers but also providers of quality of life including cultural, leisure and recreational resources.

Consequently Sustainable urban development may be defined as a process of synergetic integration and co-evolution among the great subsystems making up a city (economic, social, physical and environmental), which guarantees the local population a non-decreasing level of wellbeing in the long term, without compromising the possibilities of development of surrounding areas and contributing towards reducing the harmful effects of development on the biosphere.

Examples of Best Practices in Urban Environmental Management

Ex. 1 - Improving the urban environment in the City of Nablus, West Bank

The project consists of the relocation of some of the main polluting industries located within the residential neighborhoods of the old city of Nablus towards the East of the city, in an area allocated to these activities by the city's master plan. It also led to the creation of an industrial estate at this location. This process was undertaken on the initiative of the city's municipality, which was able to operate in strong partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and several private companies. It aims at reducing the high level of urban pollution in terms of noise, air, and other health hazards as well as the heavy congestion generated by the location of these industries within the city core. It also hopes to upgrade the old city core, which had deteriorated due to the presence of these industries and hence recreate in it housing areas that would limit the city's expansion towards the suburbs. Within a limited span of time, the partners have been able to raise awareness among the actors affected by the relocation and generate enough incentives to encourage them to participate in the initiative. The project has led to important improvements in the city's environment. It has also allowed industries to perform more efficiently and hence improve their economic performance.

The project is remarkable in several ways:

- The role of the local authority, in this case the Municipality of Nablus, in initiating an environmentally and socially conscious project, and hence its ability to monitor, control, and provide the necessary incentives and to participate in the urban environmental management of the city in a leading role.
- The creation of solid public-private partnership and the positive outcomes of this process.
- The involvement of residents of Nablus and their awareness that health and environmental issues had to be addressed.
- The success of the initiative and hence the effective reduction of urban pollution levels and the improvement of environmental health in Nablus.

- The positive economic repercussions of the intervention, in terms of both enterprise development (formal and informal sectors) and investment development.

Ex 2 - Awareness Raising for Environmental Protection in the Old Town-Aqaba Gulf

In Jordan there were first efforts made by a local community group in the old town of Aqaba to dealing with the issue of protection of the marine environment and reducing land based pollution to the coral reef rich Red Sea marine ecosystem. In general, the project aimed at reducing the adverse impacts of human activities on the general and marine environment by instilling a sense of guardianship in the local public. The project includes an element of capacity building for the Red Crescent Center which is conveniently located in the "old Town" area of Aqaba and already involved in public awareness and community development activities in this poor area. This enable the Center to conduct public awareness activities that would promote knowledge about the environment in general and the marine environment in particular, promote proper waste disposal practices which would decrease garbage on the beach and coordinate with other initiatives that are involved in marine environment protection in the Gulf. The project was supported by UNDP GEF SGP.

Ex 3 – Rehabilitation & Upgrading of the Manshiet Nasser Informal Settlement by GOPP- Egypt

The Rehabilitation and Upgrading of The Manshiet Nasser Informal Settlement located in the heart of Cairo City, is a unique initiative to improve the living environment of more than 500,000 inhabitants. The project focused on relocating a percentage of inhabitants into a close by planned settlement equipped with all services and amenities, and developing and renewal of the site of the existing slum.

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Major achievements of the project include affordable housing options to the poor; empowered civic engagement at early stages of decision making; institutionalized participatory urban management; maintained and enhanced livelihood systems of inhabitants; preserved social capital and ties of original dwellers; and socio-economic sustained development. The initiative has demonstrated how empowerment of local inhabitants to effectively participate in decision making at an early stage of planned interventions can reduce the scope of conflicts and enable mobilization of resources for effective implementation.

Ex 4 - Stimulus measure for Sustainability, Oslo, Norway

In Oslo, the capital and largest city of Norway with the population of 553,396 inhabitants in addition to the usual work in the agencies, urban districts and other enterprises, a number of stimulus measures have been launched. Some examples:

- "Green Inspiration Centre". A separate information centre has been set up in Oslo. The centre focuses on environmental protection in everyday life and seeks to inspire the population to take up environmentally friendly patterns of behavior. The centre has recruited around 5,700 "green families" and 30 "eco teams"
- The information sheets "Ideas and Inspiration" is a newsletter on environmental work in Oslo that is published by the Local Agenda 21 node in

- Oslo and distributed to all urban districts, agencies and other enterprises as well as relevant organizations, associations and societies. Supported by the City of Oslo, the newsletter comes out 4-6 times a year.
- Oslo organizes environment days/weeks/festivals every year in connection with World Environment Day on 5 June, in which relevant organizations, the business sector and municipal agencies take part. In the last two years, a "Green Market" has been arranged in the city centre with around 40 different stalls in an event
 - The City of Oslo awards an "Urban Environment Prize" every year to "the individual, organization, company, agency or district that through his, her or its care for and input into the urban environment in Oslo stands out as an example for others".
 - City has drawn up its own Environment and Sustainability Report and it is available via CEROI (Cities Environment Reports on the Internet).

Ex 5 - Sustainable water services in Stockholm

A thorough analysis of water services was carried out in the European capitals including; Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, London, Madrid, Rome, Paris and Stockholm. The report is called "Analysis of Drinking Water and Wastewater Services in eight European Capitals: The Sustainable Development Perspective" (April 2006). Instead of using traditional performance indicators for finance and technique the consultant developed a new system of parameters and themes within four main areas: Financial, environmental, social and ethical aspects, all related to sustainable development. Stockholm Water Company earned scores well above average on all issues and the consultant stated that the water services in Stockholm are the best and that we post a very high performance on the sustainable development front!

Ex 6 - Global Campaign on Urban Governance

UN-HABITAT launched the Global Campaign on Urban Governance in 1999 to support the implementation of the Habitat Agenda goal of "sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world." The campaign's goal is to contribute to the eradication of poverty through improved urban governance. There is a growing international consensus that the quality of urban governance is the single most important factor for the eradication of poverty and for prosperous cities.

The campaign aims to increase the capacity of local governments and other stakeholders to practice good urban governance. The campaign focuses attention on the needs of the excluded urban poor. It promotes the involvement of women in decision-making at all levels, recognizing that women are one of the biggest levers for positive change in society.

UNDP BEST PRACTICES

UNDP Nepal shares experiences of UNDP Nepal with poverty reduction and empowerment strategies based on PPPUE's⁶ approach, which led, inter alia, to a set-up of 39 public-private partnerships so far in five municipalities. These new alliances concentrate on providing increased and better access to basic services (water supply, sanitation, electricity, waste disposal) through the involvement of civil society (in particular women) in planning and implementation processes. The Office has currently two projects under the Governance Unit of UNDP/Nepal – Public Private Partnership for Urban Environment (PPPUE) and Rural Urban Partnership Programme which are focusing on environmental issues in urban areas. For further information: <http://www.rupp.org.np/>

UNDP Pakistan provides some past project experiences under different UNDP umbrella programmes with several larger urban environmental projects. All projects included explicit local governance empowerment components. UNDP Pakistan's website provides a comprehensive overview on project design, objectives and achievements.

UNDP, Public-Private Partnerships for the Urban Environment (PPPUE), <http://www.undp.org/ppp/about/index.htm>, is the programme that has dealt specifically with urban environment projects. PPPUE has also recently released a **Toolkit for Pro Poor Public Private Partnerships**, <http://pppue.undp.org/toolkit/>, aimed at members of local government, business and community organizations interested in an innovative approach to the problems of service delivery, especially to the poor.

UNDP - Local Initiative Facility for Urban Environment (LIFE)

The LIFE – Small Grants Programme provides support for small-scale activities that address local urban environmental problems. The LIFE Programme started off as a two-year experiment in approximately 24 developing countries (including Colombia) in 1992, to help developing countries improve their urban development. The principal objective of the LIFE Programme is to promote "local-local" dialogue and collaborative action amongst municipal authorities, NGOs and CBOs to improve the quality of the urban environment leading to sustainable human development. Under this programme, grants are provided directly to Local Government Authorities (LGAs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) for activities in the LIFE problem-areas.

⁶ **PPPUE** (Public-Private Partnerships for the Urban Environment) Within **UNDP**, **PPPUE** is the programme that deals specifically with urban environment projects from a partnership perspective: <http://www.undp.org/ppp/about/index.htm>