

Preparing for Sustainable Urban Growth In Developing Areas

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Focus and Objectives

- Continue to draw attention to future implications of inevitable and unprecedented urban growth
- Critical feature: urban doubling in Africa and Asia
- Need for change in attitudes -> proactive approaches to materialize social and environmental potential
- Specifically: This paper reflects on importance of several spatial issues in urban sustainability – need for guiding vision
- Two main axes:
 - The importance of attending land and housing needs of the poor: potential win/win situation
 - The significance of the urban blot

NEGATIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS URBANIZATION

- Hostile stances have increased with urban growth in developing countries
- Efforts to divert or reduce R-> U Migration
- Restrictive land use planning, building regulations and evictions
- Deny the poor basic services
- Generally make it difficult for poor to have decent housing
- Such attitudes responsible for deepening poverty and making cities unmanageable

IGNORING THE URBAN POOR

- Despite being major group in urban population, in urban growth and in labor force, the poor are ignored in urban plans: housing most blatant and detrimental omission
- Poor often forced to invade and settle precariously in wrong places: watersheds, wetlands, steep hillsides
- This deepens poverty and increases vulnerability
- Also makes planning and improvement difficult
- Impacts negatively on environment and quality of life for all: waste management, air quality, floods, landslides
- Even bad for business: vicious circle

FROM VICIOUS CIRCLE TO WIN/WIN

- Failure to attend land and housing needs of the poor generates slums, deepens poverty, hampers investment and contributes to environmental problems
- Effective proactive attitudes and preparation for urban growth would:
 - Allow the poor to access what city has to offer
 - Facilitate better urban governance
 - Reduce social and environmental problems
 - Improve competitiveness and create jobs
 - Improve quality of life for all
- Simple but powerful message

THE EXPANSION OF URBAN SPACE: HOW BIG AND HOW BAD?

- Traditionally, environmentalists criticized urbanization: spatial issues a key item in that view
- Various aspects focused in literature, but - relevance for policy in future urban growth? Discussion needs better focus
 - The size of the urban blot
 - Decreasing densities
 - Invasion of ecosystems
 - Urban structure: sprawl vs compact
 - Car transportation and urban sustainability

THE SIZE OF THE URBAN BLOTS

- What is its size? Better measurements: between 0.4 and 2.8% of Earth's land area in cities
- Point – blots not a big issue in themselves (less than annual losses to erosion or salinization)
- But two concerns – rapidly decreasing urban densities, and invasion of key ecosystems
- Trend: population would grow by 1.48 while land use by 2.75 between 2000-2030
- Suburban sprawl and peri-urbanization under globalization are likely to accelerate decreasing density: Shanghai 150% in 10 years

INVASION OF ECOSYSTEMS

- Traditional concern: ecological fragility and agricultural areas
- Coastal land areas are much more urban (3, 14, 24%): especially in Asia and Africa
- Cultivated agricultural systems and inland water zones also more urban than average
- Key issue: will future growth in Africa and Asia follow past patterns or MDCs'?
- Presently more dense: what effect development?
- Accumulated advantages vs globalization and decentralization?? Opening for policy

URBAN FORM AND STRUCTURE: SPRAWL VS COMPACT

- Discussion inconclusive and ethnocentric
- Values associated with compact city (reduced pressure on natural resources, public transportation, etc) more environmentally friendly
- Suburban sprawl being globalized
- But suburbanization less significant in volume than peri-urbanization (leapfrog development linked to speculation, changing production modalities and improved transportation)
- Real issues: need to prepare for sustainability with strategic planning and participation inspired by social and environmental concerns

CAR TRANSPORTATION, SPRAWL AND EQUITY

- Transportation issues at the center of sustainable urban space: has impacts on economy, equity and sustainability
- Increase from 200 to 850 million in 36 years (China)
- Costs of space for roads and parking and for building roadways are astronomical
- Objects of consumption for elites has perverse effect on public transportation: restricted access to automobile use in developing countries, yet prioritized
- Environmental impacts also significant, air quality, energy costs, land use

POLICY IMPLICATIONS: PROCESS, PARTICIPATION AND INTERVENTION

- Urbanization theoretically important ally for sustainability:
- Point: better social and sustainable use of space would improve urbanization's impact
- This requires vision & foresight to orient the use of urban land within an explicit concern for both social and environmental values
- Planning ahead for rapid urban growth has clearly not been the norm
- Population sciences could make a more effective contribution to where and how cities grow
- Getting people involved
- Help particularly needed in smaller cities