

Preparing for Sustainable Urban Growth In Developing Areas

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Population Division Meeting

January 20-22

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

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