

**REINVENTING PLANNING:
A NEW GOVERNANCE PARADIGM FOR MANAGING HUMAN
SETTLEMENTS**

A Position Paper developing themes from the Draft Vancouver Declaration for debate leading into the World Planners Congress, Vancouver 17-20 June 2006

Purpose

The draft of the Vancouver Declaration commits planning professionals around the world to work together to tackle the challenges of rapid urbanisation, the urbanisation of poverty and the hazards posed by climate change and natural disasters. This paper supplements the draft Declaration. The paper outlines key principles of a new paradigm for managing human settlements that we call *New Urban Planning*. The purpose of the paper is to provoke and focus debate during the lead-up to the World Planning Congress and the World Urban Forum III in June 2006. The paper reflects the outcome of a series of discussions amongst planners with experience from different countries. It is not intended to be a statement of the views of the planning institutes or other organisations in which the signatories hold office.

Why?

Time is short. Today, for the first time in the world's history, the majority of its population live in cities. Urban development is rapid, and its impacts are long-lasting. **Unless urban areas can be made more sustainable, and rural life more tolerable, the legacy of negative environmental and social costs will become irreversible.** If current trends go unchecked:

- Urban poverty will become pervasive. In 2002 30% of the world's urban population lived in poverty: on current trends this figure will become 45-50% by 2020, some 1.6 billion people.
- The numbers of environmental refugees, people displaced by more frequent and severe disasters as the global climate changes, will mount. The pollutants and greenhouse gases generated by our rapidly spreading urban areas are motors of climate change.
- Cities will continue to provide a refuge for those escaping conflict zones, but will increasingly become places of crime and terrorism.

The combination of these threats amounts to a crisis that is global, systematic and already discernable. Yet much policy-making remains reactive, and presumes that urban development is only a local matter, and that natural disasters and outbreaks of urban unrest are random events. Practices built on these foundations are programmed to fail. In contrast, ***New Urban Planning* means being proactive, focused on sustainability, and making the connections between people, economic opportunity and the environment.** That is why planning is central to a new paradigm for governance of human settlements.

In 1996 the Habitat Agenda identified adequate shelter for all and more sustainable human settlements as international priorities. These were reaffirmed by the UN General Assembly Special Session five years later, and then the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 stressed the need for more sustainable urbanisation. The principles embedded in these documents provide the **ethical basis of the *New Urban Planning* – explicitly pro-poor and supportive of social, environmental and economic sustainability.** However, too few administrations have

made the necessary step change in their capacity to plan and manage change in human settlements.

There is an urgent need for a transformation of capacity for governance of human settlements. We are already witnessing a catastrophe, with slums on a scale never before known, a remorseless increase in refugees, and all-pervasive insecurity. This dystopia is most evident in the developing world but the developed world must also find ways to foster more sustainable communities. In the 21st century we all share one planet

This is why a *New Urban Planning* is needed. Traditional planning practices have been left behind by the pace of urban change. Therefore ***New Urban Planning is not the physical planning or “town planning” of the 20th century***, which in many poorer countries was implanted by colonial governments and never effectively modernised. Innovation, knowledge transfer and capacity building must at least match the rate of 21st century urbanisation. There is no rigid blueprint for how to do *New Urban Planning*. Rather there are guiding principles that the diverse cultures and legal systems around the world can interpret, adapt and develop.

What difference can the New Urban Planning make?

- ***Reduce vulnerability to natural disasters.***

By addressing, in cities throughout the world, some key causes of climate change, and by carefully planning settlements so that fewer people are vulnerable to natural calamities, human settlements will become more liveable and the world will stand a better chance of coping with environmental challenges.

- ***Create environmentally-friendly cities.***

Urban growth has enormous impacts on the local, as well as global, environment. *New Urban Planning* can support environmentally-friendly forms of transport and sustainable building, and conserve environmental assets. More efficient and economical city forms, where legal and governmental systems can deliver them, are vital elements for environmental sustainability.

- ***Reduce new slum formation.***

The Millennium Development Goal that seeks to make a substantial improvement in the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 will be achieved. But, on present trends, the proportion of the earth's people living in slums will increase from 1 in 6 in 2001 to 1 in 3 by 2031. Slum upgrading is a necessary but not a sufficient way of tackling the slum problem. A planning approach is essential to ensure an adequate supply of land for development in safe and accessible locations.

- ***Build sustainable economic growth.***

Urban growth is a major cause and consequence of economic growth and opportunity. By adopting a livelihoods focus, *New Urban Planning* can help to tackle urban poverty and rural-urban migration. *New Urban Planning* practices have reinvigorated declining cities and city centres in the northern hemisphere and facilitated growth in Asia – adapted to local circumstances, they can increase economic opportunities elsewhere.

- ***Conflict Resolution and Safer Cities***

New Urban Planning can aid crime prevention and is crucial to post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction in strife-torn cities. Planned reconstruction and a governance approach that emphasises inclusiveness and partnership, will nurture social and civic capital. Plans provide a framework for different interests to work together in a common purpose, and a transparent and accountable arena for negotiation of conflicts over development, both within civil society and between private and public interests. Cities are where people access new ideas and find

ways to live together as communities and also with strangers from different backgrounds and cultures.

Overall, *New Urban Planning* seeks to enhance quality of life in human settlements. It builds on, but modernises, the planning profession's traditional concerns to address human, social, cultural, environmental, natural aspects of settlements, as well as infrastructure. However, it recognises that in today's world, poverty is central to any planning of human settlements.

How? Ten Principles of New Urban Planning

1. *Sustainability*

The overarching principle that governs *New Urban Planning* is sustainable development as elaborated at WSSD in 2002. This is not an exclusive preserve of planning. The special contribution that *New Urban Planning* makes is its practical focus on integrating social, economic and environmental considerations in human settlements development. *New Urban Planning* takes account of the impact of today's developments on future generations, a crucial factor in environmental sustainability.

2. *Integrated Planning.*

New Urban Planning is integrated planning, not just economic planning, or physical planning, or environmental planning. Set in a favourable institutional framework, integrated planning and action can deliver efficiency and effectiveness by adding value through policies that support, rather than undercut, each other.

3. *Integrated with Budgets*

In order to ensure the integration mentioned above, plans need mechanisms that ensure effective linkages to private and public budgetary processes. Neither plans by themselves, nor unregulated market processes, can deliver more sustainable settlements.

4. *Planning with Partners*

New Urban Planning is a means of negotiating where and how development happens. It is about planning with all sectors of the community with a stake in the place – not only governments, but also private sector organisations, voluntary agencies and civil society. *New Urban Planning* fosters voluntary collaboration amongst all these actors. Planning that responds to and works with, not manages or directs, the initiatives of non-governmental actors, will produce better outcomes. This is a departure from the notion that planning is the impartial arbiter of public interest. *New Urban Planning* is less an instrument of government, and more a process of good governance, to deliver quality and inclusiveness in decision-making. *New Urban Planning* is always seeking new and better ways of making city development more participatory, because demand driven planning is more dynamic and more effective; public pressure is the engine of performance. In order to plan with partners, planning must be made accountable to the public, with all activities open to public scrutiny through oversight by mechanisms such as public hearings, integrity pacts and so on.

5. *Subsidiarity*

The subsidiarity principle should be paramount in deciding where roles and responsibilities are lodged in *New Urban Planning*. National governments have important roles in setting national urban development policies and fostering national (and international) infrastructure networks that will guide development patterns. However, there needs to be decentralization,

with local governments playing a leading role, and empowerment of community-based organisations on matters that can be determined at neighbourhood level. Integration of policy across scales again creates efficiency and effectiveness. Policies and plans must address implementation in a rigorous manner – or fail.

6. *Market Responsiveness*

New Urban Planning understands market demand, particularly in land and property markets, and is aware of the dynamics and potential of the informal sectors. It is responsive, but not reactive. For example, plans backed by public investment can create confidence in areas where assets are threatened by weak demand and disinvestment. *New Urban Planning* is about creating opportunities, anticipating development impacts and being able to reduce risks of unintended outcomes and undesirable externalities. The market will respond to plans that are credible.

7. *Access to Land*

A supply of land in safe and accessible locations to meet the needs of all sectors of society, is fundamental to achieving efficient and equitable settlements. Traditional town planning too often under-estimated needs, particularly of the poor. Consequently the least advantaged sectors of urban society lack security, and often live in hazardous locations. Equitable systems of land ownership and land management need to underpin *New Urban Planning*. Plans must recognize the reality of existing slums and informal settlements, and the rights of their residents, and foster strategies that facilitate upgrading.

8. *Appropriate Tools*

Control of development should be strategic, affordable and effective, sensitive to the needs of the poor while conserving essential ecological resources, rather than attempting to micro-manage land use change and small-scale development. Thoroughgoing land use control is probably only affordable in wealthy economies with highly developed legal systems and a plentiful supply of trained professionals. *New Urban Planning* recognizes that rigid urban containment is not a feasible, equitable or affordable policy in conditions of rapid urbanization. Land use controls should never be used as a pretext for forced evictions of the urban poor in long-established communities.

9. *Pro-poor and Inclusive*

New Urban Planning is inclusive and pro-poor. It recognizes diversity and promotes equality. Plans can and should be driven by the objectives and priorities as expressed by all groups in the city. Planning is about finding ways to reconcile the priorities of diverse groups, now and in the future. Particular attention needs to be given to those whose voice has often not been heard in conventional public policy-making – e.g. the old, children, those with disabilities, women, ethnic minorities, the homeless, those with low incomes etc. All have an equal right to the city and a right to be consulted, especially about developments that will affect them. In the past, area-based approaches have been shown to benefit mainly the better off: *New Urban Planning* retains the effectiveness of the area-focus, but directly confronts the need for equity.

10. *Cultural Variation*

Cultures of governance and the resources that can be invested in governance vary between different countries. Interpretation of the principles of *New Urban Planning* will inevitably be influenced by such differences. *New Urban Planning* allows for a variety of outcomes according to cultural priorities and preferences: this contrasts with the uniformity imposed by the old master planning model. Outdated legal regimes and traditional bureaucratic cultures, as well as shortages of skilled personnel and of responsive institutions are barriers to realizing

the benefits from the practice of *New Urban Planning*. An increase in capacity building would be good value for money. This should include skill development for sub-professionals and for community-based organizations and training of politicians.

New Urban Planning is smart planning because it is a responsive learning system. It embraces the need for skills, expertise, an entrepreneurial and citizen-focused culture and evidence-based policy-making. It reasserts the importance of combining long-term awareness and short-term practical actions. It updates to a 21st century context, the insight of the founders of the planning profession that planning is about 'Folk-Work-Place'. However, it rejects the technocratic model of social change and professionalism which for too long defined the practice of 'old' urban planning.

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Comments and responses to this Paper are welcome. They will be collated and reported to the World Planning Congress. Please send them to Yehya Mohamed Serag at: yehya.serag@student.kuleuven.be
