

INTRODUCTORY REPORT TRACK 1A1:

RAPID URBANIZATION. STEERING HIGH-SPEED GROWTH TOWARDS LOW-CARBON, ECO-EFFICIENT LIVEABILITY

Chair and Rapporteur Team:

Oscar Bragos, Professor, Rosario National University, USA

Kai Wang, Vice President, China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, P.R. China

High speed urbanization processes as they are manifested in various regions are rather different. They vary according differences in economic development, political and social organization, planning culture and other factors. Nevertheless, local and regional governments are concerned about topics that are common regardless of the solutions adopted. Among urban planners, a shared view is that currently, local authorities must deal with the processes of urban growth by focusing on three key issues of cities' management:

- Inclusion (developing opportunities for individual and collective development);
- Sustainability (responsible handling of the natural and built environment); and
- Mobility (accessibility to all urban sectors)

Cities become more complex and traditional planning methods are often insufficient to deal with fast growth. At present, the questions that involve local authorities have to do (or should have to do) with the principles of contemporary city planning and management:

- Encourage a sustainable development, by promoting the protection of the environment, the scenery and the cultural heritage associated with them.
- Guarantee a rational use of the resources (water, energy, land).
- Promote the social cohesion, by facilitating the access to housing and by improving the urban and rural environment.
- Guarantee inner equity (in cities and regions regarding urban services).

To discuss the contemporary city and current fast urbanization processes is to discuss which urban model best fits the specific conditions of each city and region and best meets the demands of its population according to the above-mentioned principles. A sustainable urban model based on new ways of organizing residential areas, on mass public transportation and on a rational use of urban land is needed. All this within the concept of "develop while conserve" and in tune with the speeds required.

Also, to discuss the contemporary city and current fast urbanization processes is to discuss how these processes can be managed; which new instruments local authorities have in order to deal with private entrepreneurs and social organizations' demands, since each of them has specific requirements for urban land. New methods and new tools are needed in order to join together public and private sectors in the task of building a new city and improving the urban living conditions.

Last but not least, to discuss the contemporary city and different urbanization processes is to discuss how low-income communities can be included to benefit from urban life in the same way as medium and higher-income do; and to accomplish this local authorities and urban planners need new and more integrated policies and new instruments for innovative approaches.

All these topics are considered in the papers we will discuss in Track 1A1. They focus on effects of fast urban growth; the challenges of this rapid growth and how they can be successfully overcome; also examples of plans and projects in a fast urban growth context are presented. In fact, they discuss the various urban models: the effects of an extensive model and the reconsideration of a compact city model. Papers from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America illustrate the different ways of rapid urban growth and how policies and plans are adopted. We will engage in fruitful discussions and aim to update and adapt urban planners' practices to current city management demands.

The papers submitted to this Track will be discussed in three sessions:

- Reports from the frontiers: understanding models of expansion and the effects of swift urban growth
- Institutional framework, planning policies and instruments for integrated planning in hyper dynamic situations
- The quality challenge: sustainable place-making and sustainable urban transport despite of "turbo-planning"

Session 1: Reports from the frontiers: understanding models of expansion and the effects of swift urban growth

In this first session we have three groups of papers. In the first we find with papers that address the patterns and impacts of rapid urban development and spatial expansions. These significant growths occurring in developing states, such as China, Iran, India, etc., poses a diverse range of challenges to the local governments, the most evident of all are overcrowdings and un-sustainability.

A second group of papers present experiences of planning new towns as a policy to decentralize great cities in Asian countries. The detailed presentation of these examples of new towns points out its effects in controlling over-concentration and in releasing the pressure of city centre.

The third group contains papers devoted to methodological approaches and simulating models to study different topics of urban changes. Cases from Africa and Europe illustrate the main concepts included in these papers.

Session 2: Institutional framework, planning policies and instruments for integrated planning in hyper dynamic situations

In this session we have a group of papers that analyses urban design strategies as a way to improve urban neighbourhoods, streets and public spaces in towns and cities. These studies are illustrated with examples of Asian cities. The papers discuss proposals of urban design-based zoning standards and of strategies for future development.

Other group of papers point out a wide array of strategies and instruments devised by planners to help alleviate the negative outcomes of fast urbanization and promote sustainability while maintaining growth. Experiences of implementing new instruments such as participatory budget are presented. Cases from Latin America, Europe and Asia are analysed, taking into account the adjustments in the organizational basis.

Finally, other group of papers points out proposals for improving urban economy and urban quality of life. They advocate planning for a sustainable development and present cases from Africa and Asia. Proposals to improve urban planning are suggested in these papers.

Session 3: The quality challenge: sustainable place-making and sustainable urban transport despite of “turbo-planning”

In this session we have papers which discuss the key roles that mobility infrastructure played in the process of urban growth, taking into account the impacts of rapid urban growth in public transportation, the effects of rail transport on land use patterns and the challenges of transportation planning and management. The studies are related with African and Asian cities.

The other papers focus on the role of public spaces in urban planning, considering different aspects of this main topic: the role of public spaces and inner mobility in urban upgrading; citizen participation in improving their neighbourhoods; landscape design and new approaches to study urban spaces. Cases from European, African and Asian cities will be presented. One of these papers illustrates about land values changes in rapid urban growth.