

INTRODUCTORY REPORT TRACK 1 B/C/D:

PLANNING CHALLENGES IN SHIFTING DYNAMICS: REVERSE GROWTH, SLOW-MOTION AND ABRUPT CATASTROPHES

Chair & Rapporteur Team:

Jeffrey Featherstone, Professor, Temple University, USA

Zaklina Gligorijevic, Director of Belgrade Urban Planning Institute, Serbia

Track 1 B/C/D contains a series of papers on three different topics that will be presented on two mornings of the 48th Congress. Sub Track 1B includes papers that address the perplexing issue of shrinking cities. In contrast to most cities that are experiencing significant growth, these cities are losing population. Sub Track 1C addresses cities that are plagued by environmental loss and degradation. Climate change is a key factor for many such cities. Finally, Sub Track 1D evaluates cities that have experienced natural or man-made disasters. While the sub tracks have disparate topics, there are some common themes. In rebuilding cities or adapting to environmental degradation, planners are recommending sustainable solutions. Sustainable development has become the integral strategy. Another is engaging the public. Planners have learned that planning in a vacuum doesn't work unless it has the support of important stakeholders.

Sub-Track 1B: Economic decline and population loss: An opportunity for 'post-growth' pioneers?

There are many elements that cities and regions might blame for their general decline and the one of the common has been a weak economy. The change of the regional, urban and social environment happened in process of economic transition, commonly related to states and societies of the former Eastern Europe, Soviet Union in late XX Century, and later for the Asian, African and South American developing world. These countries might use their experience in time of regional redistribution of powers and wealth or in actual global crisis but developed countries have to face this situation after a long process of continuous development. In both cases planners can contribute to social and economic maintenance and resiliency by sharing lessons learned in previous declining periods and exploring creative strategies for reclaiming and activating either resources or new organization models.

Two papers from this group are showing the dynamics of capital cities in former socialist states of Europe: Belgrade in Serbia, and Romanian cities, including Bucharest. The first was the developed capitol city of the non-standard, non-aligned state, during the last decades of 20th Century that experienced extreme political, economic and cultural sanctions, internal politic instability and even the war in the nineties. Passing the intensive and extreme economic and social transition, over quasi liberal economy, Belgrade planners are nowadays trying to find its way out of the decline positioning it in a system of regional metropolitan cities. The second, Bucharest, as one of the analyzed urban centers in Romania, shows similar trends in population decline but significant economic

development, due to totally different political transition towards the EU membership. The author is analyzing trends and comparing different Romanian regions.

One possible solution for declining regions, recognized in U.S. cities, is urban agriculture. That is a mode to achieve food security and sustainability, but also community resilience, vacant land remediation, and neighborhood development. This model was used as a community-generated urban form in post-industrial urban landscapes as well as a planned policy that needs synergy among community activists, planners, and elected officials. The other shrinking city case was Flint, Michigan, where solutions were found in planning, land use, and different densities.

Another strategy proposed to improve the economic stagnation and the population decline of the Municipality of Tlacotalpan, region Papaloapan, in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, is the heritage based tourism. The trend exists since the early seventies, where the state, region and the city are all losing population due to economic decline.

Two papers showed that regions of Europe also suffer from shrinking phenomena. The peripherally situated provinces of Limburg in the eastern part of the region Flanders (Belgium) and the southeastern corner of the Netherlands present very different dynamics in terms of both economic and population growth. The remedy was found in cross border cooperation in planning, housing, employment policy, by the 'integration' of substantive themes. (Please note that this paper by Author Guy Vloebergh has been moved to track 3 for logistical purposes but is described here due to its content relevance). Saxony-Anhalt is another region in decline, where the responds to the vacancy rate and financial emergencies has been searched for in innovative urban rehabilitation models. In this paper the author presented the process and expected results of the International Urban Redevelopment Saxony-Anhalt project.

The planning experience of Sweden, effectively operating in a rapidly changing environment, was an inspiration for the paper dealing with good practices as lessons for Russian and other transitioning societies. Although the role of planning was never crucial in the growing or shrinking scenario for cities, might be helpful if accordingly adapted for the fast change: of regulations, distribution of powers and responsibilities between levels of authorities, in provision of public amenities, including healthy and sustainable environment. In that sense planners also recognized the need for the individual city marketing strategies to be included in planning documents, in aim to capitalize unique qualities of space in the regional and global investment competition. The paper deals with specificity of the South-Eastern part of Moscow agglomeration, recognizing regional territorial potentials for the specific development offer in the high quality environment.

Sub-Track 1C: Environmental change: ‘slow-motion catastrophes’. Needed: fast forward planning

Environmental loss and degradation, significant decline in biodiversity and climate change have all accelerated. These, and desertification, ocean acidification, pollution and sea level rise threaten the resources on which life depends. There needs to be a rapid reversal in the performance of the human habitat, from consuming to producing resources, from wasting to generating energy, from polluting to restoring water resources, from producing to recycling waste.

Sub Track 1C presents four case studies from China, Iran, Kenya, and Serbia. Planners from those countries offer strategies to address slow motion catastrophes.

The first paper addresses the critical question of how planners should address the loss of vital ecological functions stemming from urban development in north China near Tianjin. Issues include the fragmentation of the ecological landscape and urban heat island impacts. Strategies being considered by planners include imposing urban growth boundaries, creating parks, and enhancing river corridors. A key goal is improving landscape connectivity across different urban, suburban, and rural landscapes.

The second paper evaluates the impacts of projected climate change on a coastal community in Iran (Bushehr) and discusses them in the context of vulnerability and resilience. As noted by the author, countries and communities that will suffer the most from climate change have done the least to cause it. Strategies to increase resilience include eliciting “structured scenarios” and implementing active adaptive management. In order to achieve “socio-ecological resilience” the paper explores various opportunities such as reducing the expansion of city edge areas, modifying them to reduced ecological disturbances, and improving diversity.

The third paper from Kenya discusses the importance of water and sanitation in cities undergoing rapid urbanization. Nairobi faces both water shortages and quality problems. The authors advocate additional research to promote the three Rs as a solution – reducing, recycling, and reusing wastewater.

The fourth paper addresses flooding issues that will be exacerbated by climate change and how they can be mitigated in Belgrade Serbia through improved storm water management. The paper discusses making storm water an integrated asset within the urban landscape. The Spatial Development Plan of Serbia provides the policy framework for Serbian cities. An innovative case study of an urban stream in Belgrade provides an example of how decentralized storm water management can be applied in a dense urban setting.

These three papers outline innovative approaches for addressing environmental change and how diminishing ecological functions be can mitigated and perhaps enhanced. The papers also discuss the types of land use patterns and urban operations that can minimize the effects of environmental change or even reverse degradation.

Sub-Track 1D: Disasters natural and manmade: Immediate action and long-term guidance

Droughts and floods, cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcano outbreaks as well as manmade disasters like wars and acts of terror seem to occur with higher frequencies and impact on urban areas and human life. The aftermath of disasters pose extreme challenges to planners requiring ad hoc decision making and drastic prioritizations. Sub Track 1D presents five papers focusing on this topic.

Two papers from China evaluate reconstruction planning and implementation for a community destroyed by the 2008 Earthquake. The first paper examines the overall planning process for Beichuan, which entailed the relocation of the entire town to another site. According to the authors from the Chinese Academy of Urban Planning and Design, the work included several principles and synergies, sustainable development, and a “three-pillar” communication and coordination mechanism. The design, construction, and review involved over 1,000 experts and 300 meetings. Over 50,000 workers participated in the relocation effort. Similar to many activities in China, this was no small effort.

The second paper evaluates public participation in China during the preparation of a post-disaster reconstruction plan for Beichuan. Various techniques such as questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and colloquia were used by planners throughout the process. The paper documents the feasibility and effectiveness of public participation in China.

Another paper from China examines urban public safety in Tianjin and the larger Bohai Rim Megalopolis. Both natural and mad made disasters are covered. The authors advocate integrated disaster management and risk assessment and offer several recommendations, including improved coordination, better coastal area protection and water resources management, and implementation of several regional integration projects, including a regional traffic and communications network.

A very thought provoking paper discusses the challenges to planning for post-conflict cities. Mostar, a historic Bosnian city divided by conflict serves as a case study. By 1994 over 2,000 people were killed in Mostar and the urban infrastructure was shattered. Despite a history of planning, the author notes that planning has played a marginal role in the reconstruction of the city. She advocates for a stronger role for urban planning and outlines recommendations to do so.

A fifth paper evaluates the role of conflict in contemporary Russia and proposes a conflict-based approach to urban planning as the preferred strategy for engaging the multiple stakeholders that exist in Russian cities. This is in contrast to past normative, top-down strategies. The conflict-based approach includes conflict diagnostics, management, and resolution.

The case studies in this tract outline strategies for how planners can act in chaotic situations that demand both ad hoc answers and longer term solutions. They also advocate for a greater role for urban planning in the reconstruction and redevelopment of post-crisis cities. This planning will involve multiple stakeholders and seek to successfully manage conflict. That is a tall order, but one that is essential for putting crisis cities on a solid footing.