

INTRODUCTORY REPORT TRACK 3:

INTERNATIONAL PLANNERS' FORUM – UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING URBAN DYNAMICS

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Papers for this track were invited on any relevant topic of spatial planning. Generally however, the papers relate to urban dynamics and focus on transformation processes demonstrated through best practice cases, innovative strategies, new instruments and theory. The papers we will discuss in track 3 are relevant to the congress theme of “Fast Forward” and “Hyper-Dynamism” and to the planning profession at large. A focus is on innovative planning strategies and planning instruments. Research and plans from a broad range of cities and regions worldwide illustrate what obstacles and opportunities urban planners are challenged with today. Some of these most important themes discussed in the papers relate to integrated, strategic planning, analysis and implementing ‘urban design’ (and design competitions) in planning processes. In some papers new instruments for implementation and monitoring spatial policy are presented. Many papers emphasize the growing need for public participation to engage stakeholders in a socially inclusive approach to planning.

In the last two decades urbanisation all over the world has been speeding up, due to globalisation, change of political systems, economic conditions and various other factors. This makes spatial planning even more complex and constitutes a challenge for planners as numerous studies have shown. Flexible and adaptable approaches, involving different stakeholders and considering various concerns must be developed to manage urban dynamics. In the papers submitted, some core questions for the three sessions are: How can we manage the trend to faster urbanization? What instruments and tools exist for managing information to meet the need for empirical data in our fast changing societies? How can we build such data-information systems and how can we maintain them efficiently? Can spatial information systems provide a sound base for decision-making? What methods and strategies for spatial planning are adapted to cope with these trends? What are recommended approaches to creating liveable cities, especially concerning civic engagement? How do we involve citizens in a bottom-up dynamic process? How can we find a balance between more flexibility and more regulated planning? Does ‘urban design’ contribute to improved sustainable and social planning and under what conditions? What is the role of public open space and possibly more public underground space?

Urban dynamics in spatial planning is critical and needs to be given high priority. The papers from about 20 different countries in this track consider this as a starting point for their reflections and case studies. In short, the main theme of all of the papers can be summarized as: How can planners contribute to allowing fast urbanisation to result in a sustainable and liveable world?

The three sessions of track 3 are:

Session 1: Ensuring quality of urban transformations: Innovative participation and place-making

Public open space and also public underground space provide opportunities in dense urban areas and their transformations and are not yet explored sufficiently. Urban public open space has the potential to provide security and to form the spatial backbone of social and cultural city life. Therefore more attention has to be paid to its role in the urban context. Public underground space, especially in combination with infrastructural development, offers new opportunities for functional enhancements and synergies. Improving the quality of public space should be an imperative for all urban developments with the goal of contributing to more liveable urban transformations.

Participation is to be taken into serious consideration in urban transformations. Participation and civic engagement are crucial for successful planning processes and ought to be integrated from the beginning. Participatory urban design blurs the boundaries between various disciplines and different stakeholders. This should lead to more differentiation of future urban developments and to a new vision of the city that suits cultural trends and the needs of the citizens.

Session 2: Strategies and methods for managing urban dynamics

Managing urban dynamics requires specific strategies and methods. For example in some Eastern European countries and Russia the change of the political systems has led to new planning systems that are still being adapted today. The fast change of reality requires new strategies and solutions for implementation in spatial planning. And the growing concentration of the population and its needs cause additional challenges in urbanisation and spatial planning.

The environmental impact of urbanization makes developing strategies for sustainability indispensable. Formerly inflexible and highly regulated, detailed processes and centralized political structures ought to adapt to new cultures and communications. Spatial planning needs to become more stakeholder-oriented within a more flexible planning system with transparent implementation programs and continuous public reporting. Design competitions and visionary approaches will play an important role in developing innovative solutions for the future.

Session 3: Tools and instruments – Organizing and visualizing data

Understanding and managing urban dynamics need specific tools and instruments to manage spatial data. Monitoring of urban operations provides important information, facts and figures of key indicators for spatial development and its impact on the environment. This is becoming increasingly important with an increase in complexity of urban transformations. Collecting spatial data and monitoring planning processes as well as implementation and operation is the starting point of a holistic approach to planning inclusive of feedback cycles.

In addition, urban dynamics needs to be reflected with regards to infrastructure systems. The interdependence of infrastructure networks and urban development needs much further research. Accessibility plays a very important role in urbanisation; infrastructure networks and nodes can be explored for their spatial opportunities. The existing transport technologies and networks should be



re-assessed and re-invented to create more synergies, which would allow spatial capacities to be used more effectively. Technologies ought to be developed in order to improve eco-efficiency.