

48TH ISOCARP CONGRESS PERM / RUSSIA 10-13 SEPTEMBER 2012 FAST FORWARD – PLANNING IN A (HYPER) DYNAMIC URBAN CONTEXT

December 2012

SUMMARY REPORT . TRACK 1 A2

RAPID URBANIZATION . DON'T POSTPONE AT HIGH SPEEDS: SOCIAL INCLUSION, CULTURAL & ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION

Kavas Kapadia and Peter Kibinda (Chair and Rapporteur Team)

INTRODUCTION

Out of the twenty-three papers selected in this track, twenty-one were presented in person and one in absentia during the course of the congress. The authors came from fifteen countries. The presented papers reflected the cumulative concerns of the speakers for a wide range of topics, as listed below and their causes and consequences on the planning process and in many cases the remedial actions for the same. The common thread thru the entire proceedings was the high level of concern for a better approach to planning and development issues.

The papers were organized into the following major sub sections:

- Social justice, ecology and livability;
- Social inclusion and appropriate housing; and
- Cultural heritage conservation.

Authors from across the globe made presentations highlighting their respective observations. In many cases the discussions that followed further helped to clarify the issues addressed by the speakers. Delegates could get a first hand information on the strategic approach / planning interventions in a foreign context with all its similarities and differences as perceived by themselves in their own context. The papers presented, in the context of High-Speed Urban Change evoked response ranging from the very usual to the highly unusual/desirable, the dichotomy of intent of the planning practice and the socio political and cultural issues, and the misfit between the plan and the ground reality.

THE CONTEXT: RAPID URBANISATION

Most papers, if not all take off from the pressing problem of an accelerated pace of growth in the region. The role and the position of the respective Governments in modulating the planning process is a good reference point. In cases of countries such as Singapore the laid out procedure for tackling the planning process seems to be far more streamlined than, for example in the case of Delhi where the low income residents must constantly compromise their existence with the implementing agencies. The questions of land (miss-)management, sustainability, institutional framework, planning reforms appear in abundance in many references, One of the most intense being the case study from Khartoum, Sudan, where the state government seems to have taken bold initiatives to resolve the problem of large scale squatting.. On the other hand, quite incompatible in terms of scale or intensity of the problem but similar in spirit is the case of the Urban Land Development Authority of

Queensland – a typical example of how even a once powerful institution can crumble without governmental support . The fact that rapid urban development can become a threat to the National heritage is the theme strongly brought home in the paper from Greece. The inability of the planning profession to realize the danger faced by the sprawling growth to heritage must be arrested in time . In the papers the issue of rapid urban development is studied from the refreshingly different socio cultural and the public art point of view. All in all there is a convergence on the idea that hyper dynamic growth need not bind the planner's imagination or straight jacket the planning process.

SOCIAL JUSTICE, ECOLOGY AND LIVABILITY

Issues of ecology and social justice were well presented in the context of the planning policies ,one such paper being from Indonesia's green city development programme, emphasizing on the greening of the islands ,the other case being from China on the topic of the health of the lakes as being the threshold of holding capacity for planning. The paper from Kenya again picked up the same theme but at the scale of the built environment and Architecture. Livability was discussed in a highly urban context, that of high rise apartment life by evaluating the resident responses in multistoried complex in China. In another study from Turkey ,the case of an urban river rehabilitation was the highpoint of people's involvement in the planning process. Livability issues were sharply brought out by two studies from India namely the fringe of Mumbai metropolis where the advancing urbanization renders the rural hinterland highly vulnerable to the vagaries of economic uncertainty. The other case from Delhi sympathizes with the exploitation and marginalization of housing for the economically weak population in a highly dynamic backdrop.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND APPROPRIATE HOUSING

This theme found favor with case studies from Dubai and Ukrain. The first case interestingly brought out the paradox of planning in a rich country with a highly misplaced sense of tradition and culture when the local population is less than 20% and planning profession less than 40 years old. Despite a host of expatriate architects working overtime to reinvent the idea of 'sustainability' in a very highly contrived scenario, the large body of the Asian migrants are laborers who would perhaps be never entitled to the citizenship of this country. The debate that followed was very interesting in that it was pointed out that the whole process of 'extravagant' planning being executed in Dubai seemed to be going directionless. The Ukeranian example on the other hand focused on the need to conserve the energy systems in the deteriorating housing stock since it still holds move value for surviving the harsh Russian winter as opposed to tearing them down in the favour of new housing which is currently impossible to provide .The issue of provision of 'social' housing in an entirely different context,that of Australia,Queensland and that of low income group of Delhi was presented earlier.

CULTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION.

This theme found expression in several papers ,leading the way was the case of Greece. The theme of heritage conservation was strongly advocated to be made effective right up to the level of the UN charter to be strictly followed. The case from Singapore presented how the new development could dovetail into brownfield development and yet be sensitive to the existing heritage. The paper (and the short film) from Kazan ,Russia was actually about economic transformation of the region but with a strong thrust on the cultural conservation of the area. Each of the above explained the planning interventions to achieve the laid down objectives in the best

possible manner. Conservation of historic district in three towns of China was similarly presented. The most interesting examples in this category came from Carnisselande, the Netherlands and Turkey. The first paper went beyond the confines of traditional planning in presenting the success story of incorporating Public art in planning for the sheer joy and introduction of new terms as 'the elastic perspective' in planning. Since the process was supported by the cultural council it was a good example as how the planning agencies could cut across lines to come together for the greater public good. The case from Turkey brought out yet again how the property sharks do not think twice before using heritage as a bait to lure newer customers for housing projects.

EMERGING KEY ISSUES

In the cumulative assessment of the papers ,the following observations emerge:

- 1 While the problems appear to be common in nature, the solutions necessarily need to be typically different.
- 2 The institutional reach of the planning mechanism becomes more affective and penetrative if the stakeholders are involved in the process.
- 3 While the planning parameters must address the socio cultural traits of the plan explicitly ,these aspects must not be allowed to become the selling point of the plan.
- 4 The concept of conservation-of natural as well as manmade resources- is not a matter of choice but rather integral to the spirit of planning.

CONCLUSION

The range of papers suggests that planning is indeed going through hard times. Especially in the regions where there is a dynamic growth witnessed. Discounting the Governmental support and planning practices that are firmly in place only in a few countries ,majority of the cases indicated different levels of failure and desperate attempts to get the planning profession on board. All developing countries grapple with the problems of resource crunch, burgeoning population and weak institutional support to solve ever growing urban problems. And yet there is hope.