



ISOCARP

International ISOCARP Congress
Nairobi, Kenya, 19-23 September 2010
Introductory Report Workshop 1:
Effective policy-making for sustainable urbanisation

INTRODUCTORY REPORT WORKSHOP 1:

Effective policy-making for sustainable urbanisation

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Introduction

One of the common mistakes made worldwide is the use as synonyms “sustainable development” and “environmental responsibility”. Of course environmental concerns are critical to comprehensive sustainable development and climate change, sea levels, greenhouse gasses and clean air and water are critical issues which need to be addressed. But the broader definition of sustainable development includes not only environmental responsibility but also economic responsibility and social/cultural responsibility.

Local economic development officials are likely to be involved in economic responsibility. Housing activists and education advocates typically focus on social/cultural responsibility. Environmentalists ranging from the scientist to the Greenpeace protester work to direct the public’s attention on environmental responsibility.

But when attention is myopically focused on only one of the elements of sustainable development, efforts will be counter-productive at best and destructive at worst. Almost alone among professionals, it is the planner whose practice must address all three components of sustainable development.

Further, while no corner of the globe can be unconcerned about sustainable development, it is in cities where the interface among the three sustainable development components is most apparent. It is in cities where the tools and techniques of simultaneously and cooperatively addressing the three sustainable development components will be developed.

Workshop focus

Twenty-two papers from twelve countries and all six inhabited continents are represented in Workshop 1, including six from the host continent of Africa. The defined focus for Workshop 1 is effective policy for sustainable urbanisation. Various authors viewed this description as an umbrella concept under which a wide variety of perspectives and case studies are presented. Although not specifically spelled out in the call for papers, the submissions tend to fall within the three elements of sustainable development.

Environmental

Six papers are firmly in the environmental responsibility aspect of sustainable development. From China are two papers, one dealing with the current theory and practice of planning for the low-carbon city, the second a case study of the incorporation of low carbon practice into the Master Plan for the city of Wuhan.

One of the most potentially devastating impacts of climate change is the impact on sea levels and by extension the survivability of coastal cities. Two European papers address this issue, one focusing on possible strategies for sustainable urban development on Mediterranean coasts and the other the conflicting economic/ecological and public safety issues of coastal cities using the Dutch coast, Belgian coast and New Orleans in the US as examples.

The final two papers address specific environmental strategies – specifically the redevelopment of Brownfield sites and renewable energy efforts in Cape Town, South Africa.

Economic

Six other papers are primarily about economic issues of sustainable urbanism. Sustainable cities obviously need infrastructure improvements – but those improvements have to be paid for. One paper looks at the use of Public-Private Partnerships for the funding of infrastructure projects in the US. From Argentina comes an analysis of land value capture instruments as a revenue source for the restoration of both public spaces and heritage buildings. A third paper investigates the lessons to be learned from a wide range of financing instruments and raises the question of which of these tools would be most useful in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In most large cities in the developing world the informal sector is a key element of the local economy. Two papers look at the informal sector, one seeing them as an important contributor to economic flexibility and the other looking at ways of making more sustainable land use of the areas occupied by the informal sector.

The sixth paper in this category uses the office market in Oporto in Portugal to consider the economic theory of land rents and surplus value to better understand how land price values can add to urban sustainability.

Social/Cultural

Three of the Workshop 1 papers look at social/cultural aspects of sustainable urbanism. A paper from Turkey looks at two cities as case study examples and raises concerns about the sustainability of the historic environment in the context of neoliberal urbanism.

Peruvian housing policies are considered in a second paper. While these policies seem to have advanced a more sustainable urban form, there may be unintended consequences on the availability of affordable housing.

Housing is also the subject of a paper looking at two other Latin American cities – Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires. Innovative housing programs in both cities have been successful in the



development of low income housing but the author concludes that more time may be necessary before a final conclusion can be reached as to the effectiveness in the long run.

Policy Papers

The final seven papers in Workshop 1 are more specifically policy in focus rather than addressing a single element of the sustainable development equation. Four of these policy-oriented papers are from host country Kenya. The first examines the challenges of a regional planning strategy around the rapidly growing Nairobi metropolitan region. A second Kenyan paper argues the importance of regional planning in Africa including, perhaps, across national boundaries. In a different twist on the regional planning concept one paper posits that there needs to be significant strengthening of rural-urban links for the sustainability of the city. And the fourth Kenyan paper among the policy papers explores the importance of good governance and public participation in urban project implementation.

Two papers from China use the case study approach to address issues of particular importance to that country's rapidly growing economy and population. One deals with utilizing patterns of labour migration as a tool for balanced urbanisation, particularly in third tier Chinese cities. The other reflects on the relationship between current urban design approaches and longer term urban sustainability.

Inspiring Questions

As with the best of papers, while there are suggested answers/solutions offered in this superb collection of papers, they also raise additional important questions:

- *What are the situations when environmental responses are in conflict with the co-equal economic and social/cultural components of sustainable development?*
- *How is the planner's role in effective policy making affected by good governance practices?*
- *What should be the planner's position when "effective policy" for the short term is bad policy for the long term?*
- *Are there a set of criteria for judging the transferability of good policies for urban sustainability from one national/economic/political context to another?*
- *Are "sustainable urbanism" and "sustainable development" the same thing? If not, what are the differences and how should they affect public policy?*
- *Is "Effective Public Policy" for urban sustainability the same as "Efficient Public Policy"? And if not, should effectiveness or efficiency get the highest priority?*