ISOCARP

INTRODUCTORY REPORT WORKSHOP 4:

Improving governance for sustainable urban development

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Introduction

Workshop 4 will discuss governance related to sustainable urban development. In particular it will examine the linkages between urban planning and governance and focus on developing countries' cities.

Governance is an important element of making plans and making them work and this workshop will examine good practices as well as unresolved problems of the governance frameworks of urban development and planning.

Urban governance is the complex of relations among actors in the urban arena, who make decisions and take action for urban development. Key principles of good urban governance have been internationally agreed and include participation, civic engagement, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and equity, as well as rule of law. Inclusive decision-making is at the heart of good urban governance and a key strategy to translate principles into practice. It is at the local level that universal norms for good governance meet the messy reality of competing interests and priorities. The tools, procedures and processes used to balance, reconcile and trade-off competing interests must be appropriate and practical to ensure the greatest likelihood for sustainability.

By focusing on the process of urban planning and development, the actors involved, the quality of the decision making and implementation processes, workshop 4 will discuss how urban planning decisions are co-produced and shared across urban actors, and whether processes are open and equitable.

It will also discuss whether improved governance produces a virtuous cycle of inclusion, ownership and collaboration which improves the quality of urban life and the level of implementation and compliance with plans by the population. It will share good practices and recommendations in this respect.

In the complex context of urban development in particular in developing countries, there is a diversity of actors affected by urban development, with wide differences in their ability to

make their voices heard. In addition, practices and procedures are often developing under the influence of powerful interest groups, either traditional or modern, and under the control of weak institutions. As a result, planning processes need often to deal with complex yet not fully developed governance systems, and to bring their contribution to the development of new forms of governance.

Workshop focus and content

The 20 papers submitted cover 5 regions of the world with 8 papers from Africa and 6 from Asia, and North America (1), South America (3) and Europe (2) also represented. Several of the papers presented look at the principles of governance in general terms, and develop case studies to analyse the local situation of governance, in order to draw lessons, provide recommendations or identify good practices and proven results. The approach taken by several of the papers presented has been of comparing situations and contexts, in an attempt of identifying elements of a 'good governance framework' derived from practices and experiences in different places. In others, the authors have focused on specific urban development issues (such as disaster prevention, or urban fringe development) to specifically analyse the governance dimensions, and propose possible improvements. In a few cases the overall architecture of the governance framework and its evolution is presented, to highlight advances and remaining gaps in the coordination of actors, public participation and transparency. Finally, a few authors present good practices, focusing on impacts of better governance and community engagement.

Key issues of governance in the context of sustainable development and developing cities are related to the need to address the phenomena of informality and related exclusion of large shares of the population, and to balance the interests of groups with different access to information, resources and power. Citizen participation and engagement, transparency and accountability, and subsidiarity are all governance principles that can play an important role to ensure the decision-making processes are inclusive and take into account the needs of the people. They also play an important role in the mobilization and appropriate use of financial and other resources.

As many of the papers presented show, the principles of citizen engagement, accountability and subsidiarity, as well as others related to governance, are reflected in many legislations (and in particular in the planning legislation and policies) and have wide recognition, as promoted by the United Nations, by governments and leaders.

However, the way they are practically deployed varies widely in the urban development activities. Also, in many countries, they are only recent innovations, in some instances voluntarily adopted as opposed to legally binding, and many shortcomings are still evident. In particular, governance depends on the level of openness of the government actors, the capacities of the professionals involved, and the level of organization and awareness of the communities.

Workshop structure

The workshop will discuss 4 main themes:

1. Assessing and comparing governance – principles and analytical tools

2. Governance innovations in planning at city and metropolitan scale

3. Citizen participation in urban development

4. Citizen participation and community based development

The first session will present various examples of assessments of urban governance systems in a variety of contexts, and thus provide elements of definition. The papers highlight different governance systems and the role of different actors, within country-specific legislative and socio-economic contexts. They also attempt to provide frameworks for comparison and the identification of gaps, and recommendations for the improvement of governance in terms of decision making and implementation. Examples will be from Kenya and Brazil, Malawi and Kenya. In addition, theoretical presentations discussing challenges and opportunities posed by new social actors and dimensions will be presented (on gender and migrants respectively).

The second session will focus on trends and issues related to the governance of urban transformation at the scale of a city or of a metropolitan area. The cases are about Bangalore and Wuhan, metropolitan planning in China, land subdivision in Kenya, waste management in Kenya as well, improving governance in Bangladesh, and land use management in France and Romania. These cases highlight a number of innovations and options being tested where private-public partnerships play an important role to address urban development issues at scale. They also show different roles played by the local government, and somehow make it clear that space for innovation is available within existing legal frameworks in most contexts, in relation to decision making and to management. The papers draw a mixed assessment of the experience presented and in some cases recommendations are proposed to improve the systems analyzed.

The third session will go more in depth to look at citizen participation and the mechanisms that support it in relation to different types of urban interventions. Papers will look at disaster prevention and management in Rwanda, rehabilitation of a river basin in Kenya, settlements planning in Khartoum. These papers make a strong case for paying more attention to knowledge and interests of communities, and for the adoption of tools and approaches that enable communities to understand their stakes in urban development. Also, 4 in-depth cases of community based development, analyzing the ingredients of success in the specific context, and looking at how improvements in governance contribute to not only urban development but in broader terms social integration, environmental sustainability and conflict resolution. The case of Bangkok (Thailand) in particular highlights benefits from community based development for urban integration and in changing attitudes. In Afghanistan, urban governance and community building link directly to conflict resolution and peace. The case of Portland, with its detailed analysis of the historical determinants of civic engagement, offers a strong case for building communities capacities in the quest for sustainable development. In Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, the governance dimensions of regulating street vending has proven crucial for a sustainable impact.

Inspiring questions

The papers presented in this session present a rich set governance dynamics within urban planning and offer many responses relevant for the conference topic. They also raise additional questions, which could guide further the discussion across the various papers. In particular:

- *Are the principles of good governance providing dividends in terms of sustainable development? And if so, which aspects of sustainability are most enhanced by good governance (social, economic or environmental)?*
- *What are the most widely recognized, adopted and implemented dimensions of good governance in relation to planning? Are there gaps in governance which should receive attention and are not getting it?*
- *How is urban planning contributing to improving urban governance? Is there a trade off between better governance mechanisms and soundness of the planning decisions made?*
- *What are the triggers of governance improvement, what is the role the planner should play, are there key entry points for a planner to improved governance, and how could the improvements be sustained?*