

INTRODUCTORY REPORT WORKSHOP 3: Concepts and Policies against urban Sprawl: Compact city, eco-city, city greening, and similar concepts - promises only or real successes

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Introduction to the Workshop

Workshop 3 was established in order to include in the conference a review of innovative anti-sprawl concepts and experience, their translation into policies, and their adoption in practice. It considers themes from the global debate concerning how to make urban development more sustainable and the conceptual ideas involved, including those which exhibit considerable promise of success if effectively implemented.

Preliminary Thoughts by Rapporteur and Chair

The workshop provides an important opportunity to review historic experience and planning responses to uncontrolled urban expansion, recognizing limitations to some traditional approaches through case study analysis from many parts of the world. The papers discuss a broad range of planning considerations including cultural, environmental and economic factors affecting urban growth, the effects of legislation, and the importance of scientific and spatial considerations in building compact cities utilising, for example, industrial urban wastelands. The opportunity arises to recognize and endorse those approaches and tools which are proving effective in minimising sprawl, and to question ineffective approaches, while at the same time critically analysing the assumptions inherent in anti-sprawl thinking.

Statements about the Workshop

Workshop 3 has been structured to consider the following 3 themes on consecutive days of the conference:

3.1 Defining “sprawl” as an unintended urban form, clearly distinguishing it from planned de-concentrated forms of urban growth: What are the most relevant concepts and real experiences? Can we formulate a contemporary theory of urban sprawl? Are there convincing examples of progress in avoiding urban sprawl?

Papers describe practical tools evolving from American, Canadian and European smart growth policy, and the influence of culture, markets, residents and political factors on spatial

planning. The practical aspects of inner city area development are considered in a paper from Belgrade, which discusses the implications of such growth from the perspective of the protection of public goods and interests.

Other papers consider frameworks for research on urban containment in the face of factors such as population migration, and the concept of reconciling the brown and green agendas. Topic areas include a description of “internal expansion” as infill development, and how to protect public goods and interests.

Several papers consider specific cultural and economic topics relevant to urban planning and city growth, identifying University and education-related activities as drivers of growth in England and China. Discussion includes consideration of new settlements and mass transit systems and the impact of university campuses as creative hubs important to internal city expansion.

3.2 This workshop includes papers on the historical evidence of successfully implementing and enforcing specific concepts of urban form through strong policies and good management. It includes lessons learned from initially successful policies that proved of limited success in the long run.

Papers from Italy and Slovenia consider urban development lessons learned from observing historic growth in Rome, and cultural factors relevant to urban expansion in Europe today. A paper from Iran considers the lessons from development of traditional Persian cities as a model for eco-city development.

Case studies from Brazil and Serbia describe the application and outcomes of planning strategies designed to directly intervene in city growth.

Several papers, describing examples from Europe and Southeast Asia, include discussion of sustainable development, the development of urban environmental standards for development, and the greening of industrialised and globalised cities. A number of papers at the conference have described an ‘Ecological infrastructure network’ concept.

A paper from China discusses a wide range of economic, social and environmental aspects of current Chinese socio-economic development with respect to the new Chinese Town and Country Planning Act, including issues of public participation and respect for the public will.

3.3 “Internal expansion” approaches and programmes in contrast to outward expansion and sprawl: Urban re-development, brownfield development, densification, and regeneration concepts in practice.

An important perspective in a paper from Germany considers the need for caution with respect to the application of anti-sprawl theory, considering the potential costs of urban consolidation planning in the event that cities move from rapid growth to rapid decline circumstances.

A paper from China frames a concept of 'Urban sprawl risk assessment' to identify sprawl risk areas and the conflicts which may emerge between urban processes and other landscape processes. The paper considers the effects of development pressures using Chinese examples from the Three Gorges Reservoir area and emigration from the earthquake-stricken areas in Sichuan Province, where cities have exhibited rapid expansion of urban space.

Several papers consider the overlap between science and planning in so-called 'Brown-fields' development which recycles former industrial waste land within cities and minimises urban expansion. In several parts of the world brownfields has evolved from an initial public health protection measure to an important strategic planning approach which may directly and rapidly address urban sprawl. The approach of reutilising derelict inner urban space is providing governments and the private sector with direct control over the mixture of environmental, social and economic factors which affect urban quality of life.

"Inspiring Ideas" for the Workshop

The workshop includes a valuable cross-section of topics including historic analysis, consideration of successful and problematic case studies on urban sprawl; discussions on research and the definitions and future implications of anti-sprawl planning; practical tools for minimising sprawl despite important cultural, demographic and economic factors affecting urban expansion; and the relationship between anti-sprawl policies, city greening and environmental sustainability. The workshop identifies genuine successes, and the challenges to minimising sprawl, exhibiting worthwhile attributes such as:

- Informed and effective leadership in developing and applying proven planning methodologies
- policies to recognise and balance economic, social, and environmental considerations, and
- public and private sector utilisation of innovative tools based on science and planning theory.