

INTRODUCTORY REPORT WORKSHOP 6: Patterns between Sprawling and Compact City Forms: Urban densities, housing and community formation, and social implications

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In the papers presented here we find a wide range of projects, researches and approaches. All of them have the goal to establish a sustainable environment.

One major question arises in this workshop:

In urbanised countries like in the Western ones the threat of urban sprawl is different from the threat in urbanising countries like China. In urbanising countries the development of sprawl is mostly considered to be illegal. The sprawl developments in Europe, the Netherlands and in the USA were mostly very legal and even planned. The notion of the effects of sprawl on the environment and on sustainability can be very helpful for developing countries.

Eight papers are presented by Chinese authors and concern the Chinese development of the urban environment. The Chinese task is huge; urbanisation will increase by 25% from now until 2035, from 45% now to 70%.

Compared with Europe (75%) and the USA (80%) this is still a result not expected to be the final one, but it shows the enormous task the Chinese have to overcome.

It is very impressive to see the sustainable notion in these presentations, and we look forward to a very interesting discussion on the proposals and developments presented.

The approaches in the Middle East differ and culturally show a completely other world. For instance the solution to sacrifice personal freedom in Iran is the opposite of the current Western solution where people are made responsible for solving the lack of space themselves and the introduction of new forms of development with the inhabitants in the bad areas of the big cities.

The papers elaborated by a team of Chinese and other authors show an open communication on the subject and the two presentations on the city relation between Wuhan and Arnhem show a balance in the exchange of knowledge and experiences. The difference in scale is significant but also of great interest to European city development.

Topics

We can find five levels or themes in this workshop and try to cover the most interesting items here.

Planning

The cases of Delhi and Riga show a lot of space where it is not expected in the city. Searching the gaps is a solution.

Divya Chopra explores a bottom-up approach to discover the gaps in Delhi.

Planning into the air

High rises are considered to solve the density problem in Tel Aviv. This is a confronting paper as they are considered very dangerous in the development of Guadalajara, Mexico.

We can also expect this to be an item in the Chinese development. In one paper on Eco-cities, a density of 600 persons/ha is mentioned. It can only exist in the sky, can't it?

Planning in the sea

In the Seychelles a new island is created to avoid urban sprawl. This can be seen as a possible solution, but on the other hand it influences the local ecological infrastructure.

Ecological Infrastructure

The papers on Ecological Infrastructure - EI - are all Chinese since this subject is unavoidable considering the urgent urban expansion which is going on in China. However, the theme itself is no guarantee for sustainability and is presented in very different ways here. The notion how to find the leading structure for urbanisation is to be discussed.

Social

Looking for local initiatives as a starting point is the leading impulse for the redevelopment in Rotterdam. In Belgium two cases are compared in this aspect, Liege and Ghent, where we find urban development projects to be new instruments in urban regeneration.

In Portugal a debate on the closed condominiums is going on as this is considered a new phenomenon. However, in the USA and Europe we can find a lot of so-called gated communities where the same questions arise. It is good to continue this debate in China where the commune, the big family houses, the Hutongs in Beijing and the Li Longs in Wuhan and Shanghai have the same structure. Here these are felt to be very secure, an aspect to be considered to become more important in a densifying urban environment.

Fringe development

In several presentations the sprawl effect of the fringes is studied in China. It is noted that this is mostly illegal and not planned. The building of cheap houses also for rent seems to be possible but the scale and density are completely different compared to i.e. European standards.

Government

Most obvious is the search for tools to guide the building densification process where most land in the city is privately owned. Also important is to consider the role and responsibility of the government on local and national scales.

Economy

Only two papers consider new economic features to be important in a different approach of renewal. In Wuhan the stimulation and development of creative industry is seen as a motor in redevelopment. This is related to the development of Arnhem where this is also present. In The Netherlands this creative scene is also more active. In cities like Rotterdam it is a motor in the development of backward areas.

China

China is on its way to ecological civilization. Growth in gaps is not sufficient as the task is to urbanise from 45% now to 70% in 2035. Iran has 65%, Europe 75%. The Chinese approach in town planning shown by YU Kongjian is also useful in other regions worldwide.

The EI planning becomes leading but leads to the following questions:

Is sprawl maybe a solution in some EI situations? Or can a compact city survive in EI terms?

The paper of HE Yong gives a prohibited zone of 43.7% of the Beijing area, but the zone is spread as it is the suitable location zone.

Questions and Considerations

The impression is clear that one is trying to find the balance in ecological infrastructures, their future, the effect of urbanisation, the need for better and bigger houses etc.

The answer is not clear and we can try to put this question forward and connect it to the different cultures participating in the workshop.

Other themes are:

Location of poor and rich, economy is important for both. The gaps to be found are often caused by cleaning poor areas. Due to political power they can be empty for years. Cities like Los Angeles show a slow movement of the gap area depending on the economic development of the city. Poor people fill the gap area temporarily as it is cheap to live there and as it is near the economy they need.

In considering this gap as space for development the question whether to demolish or to re-use is an important one. It is important to consider the impact of cultural heritage in the



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redevelopment of former industrial areas. With the changing economy from an industrial to a creative one a lot of space will become vacant. In China there will be stages depending on local developments. This can differ a lot all over the country.

The last item of importance in this workshop is the importance of local initiatives and how to deal with them professionally.