Part Four

04

PLANNING FOR HARMONIOUS CITIES

Cities are not just brick and mortar; they represent the dreams, aspirations and hopes of societies. In a way, each city has its own "personality", with its strengths and weaknesses, failures and successes. A city's "soul" is exhibited through its cultural heritage, its traditions and its social fabric. Part 4 argues that the management of a city's human, social, cultural and intellectual assets is as important for harmonious urbanization as the management of its infrastructure, its social amenities and its public spaces. It reflects new and innovative approaches to urban planning and development that engage citizens more directly and that are inclusive and pro-poor. The approaches call for enlightened political leadership, clear long-term political commitments, progressive sectoral and institutional reforms, and mobilization of domestic resources to scale up actions and sustain harmonious urban development. The approaches must also respond to the following emerging priorities and concerns: i) *regional or spatial disparities,* ii) *urban inequalities;* iii) *urban environmental risks and burdens, including climate change;* and iv) *metropolitan expansion or the growth of "city-regions".*

4.1
Inclusive Urban Planning for Harmonious Urban Development

Urban environments, whether growing or shrinking, teeming with youthful energy or accommodating an ageing population, are places of great diversity – diversity that facilitates the development of culture and economic growth, but that also divides populations, often creating entrenched inequalities that stymie efforts to eradicate them.

The pressures of growth, socio-economic inequality and environmental degradation in cities of the developing world present great challenges to good governance and development, but they also present opportunities for new approaches to urban planning and management that advance local assets, focus on social justice and lead to harmonious urban development. Urban planning practices that aim to improve residents' quality of life and engage them in their own well-being are highly context-sensitive, varying from city to city based on political climate, social networks and the goals of cities and people. The essential elements of inclusive urban planning, however, are transferrable. They evolved as a positive response to disengaged, top-down planning practices of the past – *exclusive* urban planning designed to assert the power of the state and the priorities of government over everyday life. Urban planning that focuses exclusively on technical efficiency or ideology and ignores the reality of how people live in cities is not sustainable and can foster exclusion. In order to be effective, urban planning has to place the needs of people at the forefront of practice. On the other hand, lack of effective planning can exacerbate inequalities and promote exclusion in cities. The challenge is to ensure that planning is done with people in mind.

Beyond modernism

Throughout the 20th century, governments attempted to abolish urban inequalities – and the accompanying perceived threats of disease, crime and urban blight – by destroying the environments in which they flourished, razing poor neighbourhoods and relocating their inhabitants, or replacing substandard buildings with tenements and public housing. Grand modernist urban planning schemes to improve cities and reshape societies around common goals and behaviours led to comprehensive planning projects, such as Brasilia, the

master-planned capital of Brazil, and Chandigarh, capital of the Indian states of Punjab and Haryana. Both cities were built in the mid-20th century in previously undeveloped areas, planned by European architects commissioned by national governments. Intentionally designed without reference to the surrounding cultures or social norms, the cities featured large-scale buildings and public spaces organized around utopian notions of order, efficiency and progress.[1] Such projects failed to standardize human behaviour, however, and often prompted outright rebellion, as when residents of Chandigarh ignored rules against expanding shopping areas and allow cows to roam the streets.[2]

Approaches to urban planning and development have changed in recent years with the decentralization of government decision-making and the invigoration of democratic processes in most countries around the world. As local governments have taken on more responsibility for the success of their cities, it has become increasingly important to engage citizens directly, planning for the future by learning from the present and past realities of underserved communities. Not only are inclusive practices mandated by funders such as the World Bank and the Cities Alliance, but they have also become law in countries such as South Africa, where the national Reconstruction Development Programme requires power-sharing and equal representation in all development projects.[3] How well urban planning succeeds in solving issues of uneven spatial development, socio-economic integration and environmental degradation by engaging citizens and focusing on local decision-making depends on a variety of factors, however, including political priorities, local capacity and the empowerment of the most vulnerable urban residents.

Rapid urban growth in the developing world is often associated with the ill effects of urbanization: traffic congestion, poor air quality, crime, overcrowding, and slums. High growth rates put pressure on city administrations to deliver infrastructure, housing and poverty alleviation programmes, but the experience of many major cities that are growing rapidly (at a rate of more than 2.5 per cent per year) shows that bottlenecks in infrastructure, telecommunications, basic services and gender equality can be offset with good governance and visionary urban planning. UN-HABITAT recently analyzed trends and conditions in several rapidly

Public park in Kuala Lumpur
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growing cities of the developing world; the following sections discuss the implications of those trends, and the policy environments in which they have developed.[4]

Political commitment to pro-poor development makes a difference

Urban planning is not just a technical issue – it is also highly political. As urban scholar Peter Marcuse asserts, "cities and places are not 'disordered'; the issue at stake is rather establishing who is ordering the city, for what purposes, in the interest of what".[5]

Realizing that urban planning must be supported by political processes, some countries and cities have developed statutes that make resource allocation more equitable and that ensure urban planning is carried out within the context of larger national frameworks. Urban reforms in Brazil, for example, have been supported by various legislative and political frameworks, including the City Statute of 2001, the National Council of Cities, and the establishment of a Ministry of Cities.[6]

Political commitment by the top municipal or national leadership often plays a critical role in slum improvement or reduction; in fact, countries that have drastically reversed slum growth rates usually do so after the top leadership has made slum reduction or improvement a national priority.[7] An analysis of the annual expenditures of São Paulo, Brazil, between 1975 and 2000 when the metropolitan area was managed by leaders of different political persuasions, found that the infrastructure investments in the more deprived metropolitan regions of São

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Cairo
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Paulo increased during periods when city leaders professed a pro-poor agenda.[8] The role of political leadership in and commitment to pro-poor urban planning is also evident in the Brazilian city of Curitiba, which is known internationally as a "best practice" in urban planning, as well as in the Colombian capital of Bogota, where former mayor Enrique Peñalosa sought to make socio-economic equity a cornerstone of the city's development in the late 1990s. Similar patterns have emerged in the Indian city of Hyderabad, where, between 1995 and 2004, the greater metropolitan area adopted an infrastructure-led growth model by launching a globally oriented information technology hub. In some cases, pro-poor investments transcend ideology or narrow political interests. In Turkey, for instance, a commitment to modernization through technology and infrastructure development has been espoused by populist, elitist and military governments since the 1970s, when the leadership in Turkey committed itself to a blanket improvement in rural and urban infrastructure, transport and communication.

Political commitment to a pro-poor urban development agenda can also be observed in other highly centralized societies, such as Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia – countries that have been among the most successful in reducing slum growth rates in recent years.[9] Although the infrastructure of Cairo and other Egyptian settlements has been boosted by channeling huge investments in water, sanitation and housing, one key ingredient is missing – people's participation. Even though the delivery of services happens through consultative processes, it has been carefully crafted through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) affiliated with the central government.[10]

Performance monitoring helps ensure sustainable service delivery

The experience of successful cities illustrates the importance of performance monitoring, either from the bottom up or from the top down, of agencies charged with delivering services. Accountability in municipal implementation of infrastructure development is very strict in countries such as China, Viet Nam and Cambodia. In Viet Nam, for instance, the central government has assigned high priority to piped water distribution in urban areas; implementation is the responsibility of provincial water authorities, and in the large cities, of water enterprises attached to local governments. As a result, despite high rates of urban population growth, coverage rates have expanded remarkably in a short time.[11]

Critical to this relationship is the local authority's ability to exercise performance monitoring, which currently remains the responsibility of the central government in most developing

countries. However, many cities, such as Bogota, have adopted bottom-up performance monitoring techniques that are making local authorities more accountable to citizens.

Another strategy for performance monitoring is to enhance citizen participation in planning and decision-making through processes such as participatory budgeting. Among the cities that have adopted participatory budgeting in sectors such as housing, water, sanitation, education, and health, are the Brazilian cities of Porto Alegre and Belo Horizonte. Participatory budgeting is a systematic way of engaging people in discussions at different levels to decide on priorities and budget allocations. Also embraced by this system is results-based monitoring, implemented indirectly by client satisfaction indicators, collected through surveys, or indirectly inferred through rates of participation in budgeting.[12] Cities in Indonesia use surveys, with support from the World Bank, to understand citizens' attitudes towards municipal services.[13] Other cities that rely on citizen participation in monitoring urban performance include Naga City in the Philippines and Bogota in Colombia.[14]

Partnerships between citizens and governments are important for poverty elimination and infrastructure development

Decentralization and participatory governance approaches are becoming more common in various countries, with local authorities and citizens playing a key role in decision-making. Most countries that have followed decentralization policies in recent years have delegated authority to local governments, but they have not necessarily delegated the financial resources and technical capacity to carry out essential improvements. Reciprocal relationships between central and local governments are key to the ability of decentralization programmes to render municipalities effective in infrastructure development and poverty alleviation. Strong links to, and coordination with, national governments and national development targets allow cities to make efficient investments in infrastructure and complement national objectives while realizing local goals.

The virtues of decentralization and a participatory approach notwithstanding, evidence suggests that participatory budgeting and citizen participation can only go so far in addressing the needs of urban populations. Problems associated with these approaches include cooptation of the process by certain favoured groups or individuals and exclusion of the poorest residents from participatory processes, resulting in resources being allocated unequally or to the wrong target groups. These problems can be minimized by providing external oversight and evaluation; ensuring that central governments work closely with local authorities to align local and national objectives; and by fostering self-sufficiency among community members and groups, who can organize to provide important information and ongoing support to relevant development efforts, as well as start their own initiatives. Local political structures must be accountable and transparent if participation is to result in empowerment – the ability of communities to sustain development initiatives that improve their lives.[15]

Citizen participation in the governing of cities offers benefits other than sustainability and bottom-up monitoring – it also allows for cost sharing and sustainability. The Asian cities of Jakarta, Delhi and Hyderabad display an abundance of participatory programmes, where non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and municipalities engage in partnerships for poverty elimination schemes, focusing on housing and primary health care for women and children. One example is the Garda Emas programme in Bogor, Jakarta, which helped to halve the number of urban poor families from 33,000 in 1999 to 16,000 in 2003.[16]

NGO-driven initiatives are also common in Delhi. For instance, an NGO called Asha, which is active in 32 slums in the Yamuna River basin, has forged participation with the government and municipalities to upgrade and regularize slums. Its success also lies in an integrated approach, using health care as an entry point.[17] Such integrated programmes have been proven most successful in bringing women on board.

Metropolitan expansion can help alleviate population pressure, but the timing and quality are important

Metropolitan growth can happen spontaneously, or by design. Urban planning helps cities manage growth by design, through preventative or curative strategies; the timing of visioning, forecasting, plan-making, and implementation are all important to the success of city strategies. Using the preventative approach, the city of Curitiba, Brazil, steered its population towards the periphery of the city to decongest the inner core in anticipation of future growth. Cairo, Egypt, on the other hand, built new towns in the desert, as the growth and density of the population concentrated in the city became unmanageable.[18] The Turkish town of Gaziantep, on the Syrian border, envisioned itself as a regional growth centre; it started using controlled expansion at its periphery in the 1970s, before the anticipated in-migration from the eastern part of the country was realized.

Steering growth to wider zones and urban corridors does not always create liveable metropolitan settlements, however, even if interventions are implemented at the right time; the process could, in fact, have negative consequences, with the central city or peripheral towns losing their economic vitality or becoming isolated areas rife with poverty. The desert towns surrounding Cairo, for example, alleviated housing shortages but did little to improve livelihoods or accessibility, as they lack the employment opportunities and public transport facilities that are available in the city centre.[19]

The most crucial element determining functional and equitable metropolitanization is to build the economic and physical infrastructure of settlements simultaneously, while establishing the connectivity of new settlements to the city centre, as well as to other peripheral settlements. Two of the most remarkable examples of this approach include Curitiba and Hyderabad. In Curitiba, land use and transport planning were linked to direct urban growth outward while maintaining

accessibility to the city centre.[20] In Hyderabad, metropolitan growth was channeled in the desired direction via the creation of a high-tech periphery known as "Cyberabad". Industry-driven settlement development is also being implemented in Delhi through NOIDA, the New Okhla Industrial Development Authority.

Planning for mixed use, blending residential buildings, commercial and industrial establishments and industrial parks, creates an organic relationship among space, employment opportunities and population. Creating an economic base for a diverse social fabric also helps minimize social segregation.

Inclusive urban planning for social integration: Reducing socio-economic inequalities in cities

Urban planning guides future action.[21] Often, the kind of guidance that planners provide is technical: estimates and forecasts based on statistical data; projections of a city's future development patterns. But planning happens in communities, with people, too, where decisions about actions for desired futures are made. Planning is value laden and context-sensitive; what works in one place may not in another. Local history, culture and ecology are among the most significant considerations shaping urban planning today. These specificities confirm that there are no recipes for urban harmony or social integration, and that the replication of formulas is not a sustainable solution. While globalization has made it easier than ever for planners to exchange ideas and practices from places around the world, they work within local confines. Not unlike politics, planning is always local.

The planning process can, in itself, help achieve urban harmony and mitigate segregation of the rich and poor. Rather than a reactive and repetitive procedure that focuses only on land use changes, planning as a discipline can stimulate social cohesion by articulating a strategic vision that depicts a common future for a community. Participatory processes, in diverse forms and capacities, can generate a sense of belonging that is not only fertile soil for harmony but also a tool for increasing the chances of the plan being widely accepted and properly implemented. If participatory processes are to be successful, however, they must allow for authentic engagement of all affected by the proposed plan. In diverse urban neighbourhoods with entrenched inequalities, authentic participation – wherein residents have real power in the process, as equal partners or controlling interests – is often difficult for residents to achieve. More often than not, marginalized residents find themselves in tokenistic relationships with decision-makers: they are informed, consulted or even placated, but not powerfully engaged.[22]

Inauthentic or ineffective participation has happened particularly in places where rising urban land values and

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A trader in South Africa
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economic growth goals have prioritized relocating informal settlements or poor neighbourhoods in favour of private development. In the Philippines, for example, residents of informal settlements in the centrally located National Government Centre area in Metro Manila lost their formerly powerful voice of resistance against eviction as increasing land values and decreasing state supports put excessive pressures on available land.[23] In Johannesburg, where collaborative, externally funded city development strategies have attempted to address both economic growth and pro-poor development goals, powerful bureaucratic processes have managed to reorient local priorities after perfunctory participatory activities have ended; citizens in one process had no lasting, authentic place in decision-making, but their interests were instead represented by city leaders for the remainder of the planning process.[24] To reduce socio-economic inequalities, planning processes must overcome social and political barriers to sharing decision-making power with those most critically affected.

Creating harmony out of injustice, building equity anew

Some cities have successfully enabled collaboration among community activists, environmental groups, NGOs, and private sector entrepreneurs and developers to create a new landscape for the pursuit of urban planning. The case of Lima, Peru, is illustrative of informal practices that have been conducive to social and spatial integration. Progressive urban legislation passed in 1961 legalized a large number of the informal neighbourhoods that developed in Lima's periphery. During the severe 1980s economic downturn, the informal economy replaced the withdrawing state to supply production, commerce and welfare, including health and food supply services. In the 1990s, this informal structure allowed low-income residents to access services such as public transportation and information communications technology connectivity. Today, there are visible signs of the gradual integration of the former informal areas into mainstream urban dynamics, to the extent that local researchers even talk about a new middle class emerging in these areas. Shopping centres have been built in the oldest and most consolidated parts of the informal districts to meet the demands of these "new consumers".[25]

Cato Manor, in the South African city of Durban, was a similarly peripheral settlement in the early 1900s, but its development trajectory went in a very different direction. Initially cultivated as farmland by Durban's first mayor, Cato Manor gradually became settled by Indian market gardeners, then Africans who built or rented shacks on the land. In 1932, Cato Manor was incorporated into the Durban municipality, making the shack settlements illegal under the *apartheid* government's rules, but the authorities turned a blind eye and people continued to settle in the area. By the mid-1940s, Cato Manor "had become home to a vibrant, mixed-race community displaying racial harmony and mutual understanding".[26] Durban's rapid urban growth increased the pressure on Cato Manor, which soon became engulfed by the

metropolitan region. The community received no recognition or social amenities from the *apartheid* government, but it continued to grow; by 1960, it was a sprawling, mixed-race, informal settlement of more than 120,000 people – home to the poor of the city.

In the early 1960s, the government conducted forced removals in pursuance of its separate development policy. Indians and Africans were moved to separate, peripheral new dormitory townships, far from employment opportunities, public transit, shopping areas and other amenities Cato Manor residents had enjoyed by virtue of living in the city. No urban planning vision supplanted the Cato Manor community, other than an ideological agenda; the 2,000 hectare site sat largely vacant for the next 25 years.

After the collapse of the *apartheid* government in the early 1990s, the redevelopment of Cato Manor emerged as a priority, and the Cato Manor Development Association formed to facilitate and drive the reconstruction of the site. The approach to reconstruction was based on the concept of integrated development, a fairly innovative approach when the project began in 1993.[27] Now tried and tested, the lessons from Cato Manor's redevelopment form the basis of a number of new urban reconstruction initiatives in South Africa. The provision of housing and sustainable urban infrastructure were key elements of the reconstruction initiative, but the planning concept also included an array of parallel and supportive programmes involving the provision of social facilities, including schools, libraries, parks, sports fields, playgrounds, and a community health centre; social and economic development projects; skills development programmes; institutional and community development; and communications tools, including a community newspaper, radio station and web site. A fully participatory planning and development process helped ensure broad-based consensus, and a focus on integrated urban planning created a compact, mixed-use and mixed-income neighbourhood connected to the surrounding urban amenities. The project received recognition as a UN-HABITAT best practice and has been hailed internationally as an example of successful area-based development.

Regional cooperation aids urban harmony

Municipalities compete to attract investment and human capital for economic development. Competition can lead to imbalanced growth, and the success of one municipality could mean stagnation for its neighbours if planning is not coordinated, making partnerships among municipalities especially critical. Inter-municipal planning processes must overcome bureaucratic and political barriers if a region is to create social, economic and environmental harmony.

In the Netherlands, the municipal governments of Wageningen, Ede, Rhenen and Veenendaal, with a combined population of 217,000, realized that spatial issues increasingly exceeded their own municipal boundaries; they decided to join forces to prepare a regional plan. In 2002, the four municipalities formed WERV, a network for inter-municipal

cooperation, which was originally focused on spatial and landscape development around a central green area known as the Binnenveld. The scope of WERV later expanded to cover social affairs, culture, housing, mobility and economics. The region expects strong pressures for urban growth, especially in areas adjacent to main arteries and nodes, but developing a concerted spatial policy for four municipalities in two provinces is not without administrative and political complexity. Continued dialogue has enabled WERV to move forward since its inception. In six years, WERV has been able to put together an economic action plan, integrated housing schemes and two structure scenarios of spatial development for the years 2015 and 2030, which have been accepted by the four local authorities and are used as a framework for decision-making at the municipal level.

The need for inter-municipal coordination is not new. Metropolitan Montevideo, Uruguay, has struggled with intra-city inequalities for more than 50 years. Montevideo, with 1.8 million inhabitants, concentrates two-thirds of Uruguay's population and accounts for 80 per cent of the country's GDP. Uruguay is administratively divided in 19 *Intendencias*, or departments, which are charged with their own land use and urban regulation. The Montevideo metropolitan area covers three departments: Montevideo, Canelones and San José. Montevideo's first master plan was prepared in 1930. Its modernist ideals, like those of Brasilia and Chandigarh, emphasized monumental structures; its main outcome was the construction of a waterfront promenade and the city's main parks. The second master plan, prepared in 1945, introduced concepts such as functional zoning and greenbelts. Within the framework of the 1945 plan, the Montevideo department decided to protect rural areas by halting the release of land for urban use. However, no provisions were made to accept urban growth, such as the increase of density in the existing urban fabric. The scarcity of land triggered a price increase in Montevideo and rampant speculation in the bordering departments of Canelones and San José, which attracted low-income people who could not afford Montevideo prices.

Canelones and San José expanded along connecting axes with very modest housing and virtually no infrastructure. At the same time, Montevideo's middle-class population moved away from downtown areas to modern apartment buildings or detached houses along the east coast, where public investments in infrastructure accommodated the influx. Physical improvements in wealthier areas of Montevideo created a strong divide between it and the outer metropolitan region, which began to function as a "dormitory city" populated by low-income families. The physical and social segregation among the departments worsened during the years of military rule in Uruguay, 1965 to 1972, when inequalities deepened, informal settlements expanded and violence and crime rates soared. The old city centre was so neglected that today, more than 60,000 buildings are vacant or occupied informally by very poor families.

The absence of cross-departmental instruments and the lack of empowerment in Montevideo have hindered harmonious development. In 1998, the Montevideo departmental government approved the Montevideo Urban Plan (POT). The plan includes general guidelines for city development and proposes specific local plans, however, the main problem – lack of regional cooperation – remains unresolved. The POT considers the Montevideo department and not its greater metropolitan area, where the poor live and where the lack of infrastructure is most notable. The POT is undergoing revision as the city continues to demand further structural coordination. In 2005, the city took a step towards integration with the creation, at the national level, of a Metropolitan agency. Its mandate is to coordinate and manage urban policy among the three departmental governments. Lack of empowerment in the region has resulted in the new agency having to focus its efforts on building consensus around specific issues such as transport rather than analysing and proposing policies for the integrated and harmonious development of Montevideo.[28]

The importance of leadership in planning for social integration

Clearly, coordinated policy and action are essential for creating harmonious urban development and reducing socio-economic inequalities in cities. Leadership is another vital prerequisite. In Bogota, Colombia, a series of political leaders from Mayor Jaime Castro, who took office in 1992, to Mayor Enrique Peñalosa, who served from 1998 to 2000, helped establish an emphasis on the public good, each making considerable contributions to socio-economic and cultural harmony in the Colombian capital. During his term, Peñalosa presented his fellow citizens with a vision of urban harmony focused on equity – the cornerstone of a great city. Equity translates into the empowerment of citizens by providing them with meaningful and effective access to employment, housing, education, health services, public places, and transit networks.

Significantly, Peñalosa engaged market mechanisms to make a better Bogota. "With the market economy," Peñalosa said, "we are not going to have income equality. But cities can do much to construct quality of life equality".[29] Reordering the city's public policy priorities, he developed a highly efficient bus rapid transit system, restricted automobile use during peak hours, and initiated a 340-kilometer long bicycle network throughout the city. Seeking to recapture Bogota's public realm, Peñalosa's administration revitalized public spaces, enhanced the pedestrian network and provided for convenient access to natural settings and urban parks, particularly in lower-income areas. Moreover, the city built schools, nurseries, and libraries where most needed: the poorest quarters of Bogota. Peñalosa initiated programme to reform urban land use and advanced programs of micro credit and public-private partnerships for small business and local communities.[30] In his aspiration to turn Bogota into a harmonious and just city, Peñalosa deployed urban planning tools and techniques based on public participation and consensus.[31]
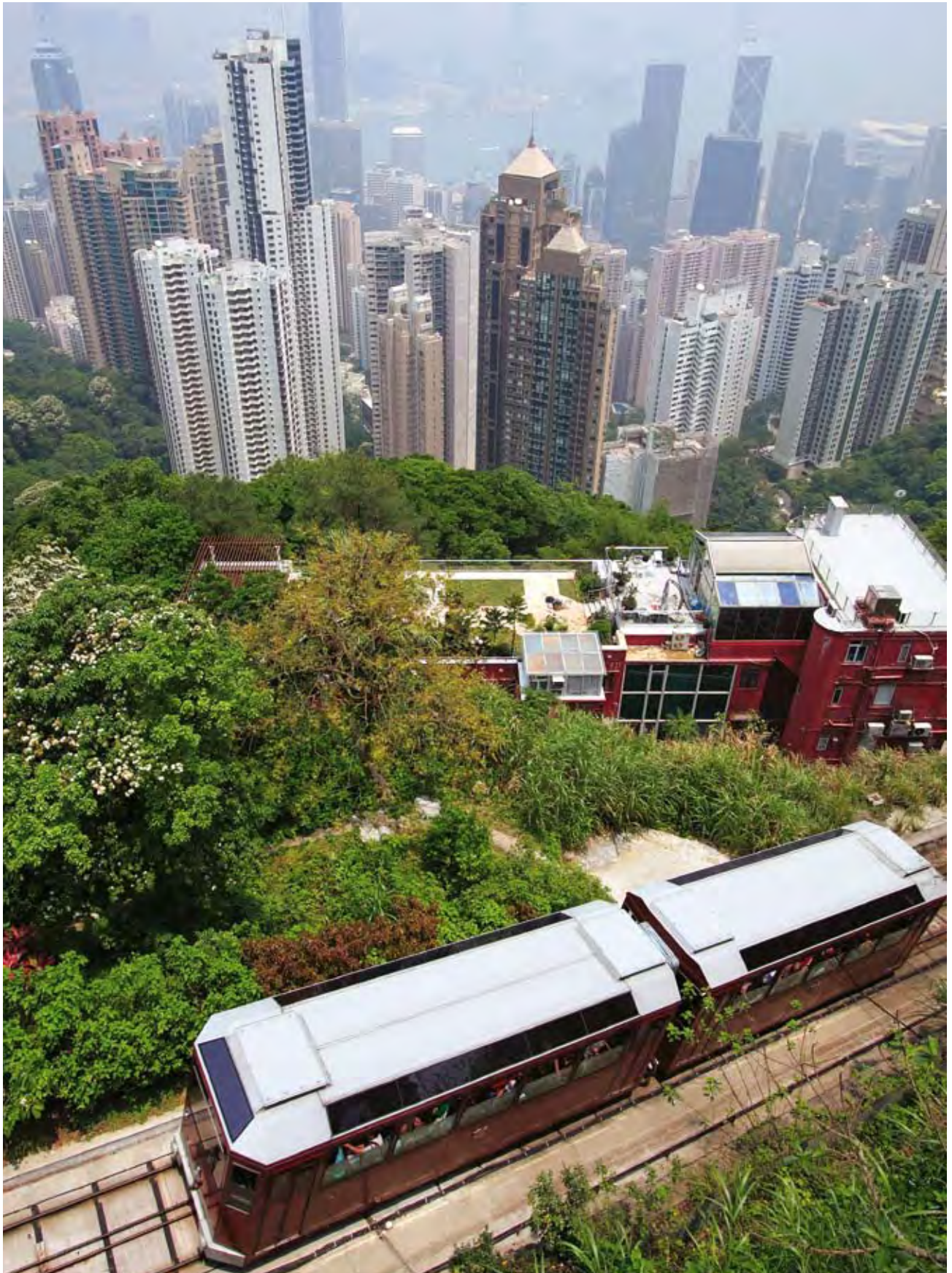
Hong Kong Peak Tram.
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Bogota main square
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Urban planning and the environment: Liveability and urban harmony

Bogota is notable not only for its effective leadership and forward-thinking planning decisions, but also for the environmental benefits that have resulted from the city's planning efforts. The development of the pedestrian and bicycle network – which includes the longest continuous pedestrian corridor in the world, the 17-kilometer "Alameda Porvenir" – has facilitated an increase in the percentage of trips in the city made by bicycle, from less than 0.4 per cent to almost 4 per cent.[32] Residents' mode shifting, or switching from higher- to lower-polluting modes of travel, is one reason Bogota's environmental agency cites for reduced levels of ambient air pollution in the city following the development of the comprehensive TransMilenio mass-transit system in 2000. One study found that levels of sulfur dioxide in the air had decreased by 44 per cent one year after the TransMilenio system began operation. Levels of all other monitored air pollutants – particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, and ozone – also decreased significantly just one year after the implementation of the improved mass transit system.[33] Bogota's successes illustrate that large developing-country cities with challenging economic and social conditions can make significant improvements in residents'

quality of life through responsible urban planning and visionary leadership.

Equitable urban planning follows naturally from environmental improvement, beginning with bringing every part of a city in line with international standards for improved water, sanitation, housing durability, and sufficient living space. But creating harmonious cities requires much more than eliminating slums – it requires a concerted effort to protect populations from environmental hazards, ensure adequate and affordable service delivery, conserve energy usage by switching to clean fuels from polluting sources such as coal, and reduce cities' environmental footprint and impact on areas beyond their borders. Such environmental quality efforts are an important component of the city development strategies supported by the Cities Alliance, which advocates for the integration of a variety of environmental quality measures directly into city planning processes, rather than leaving them to be added on at the end.[34] Improving the urban environment for all, practicing integrated spatial development and committing to social equity in planning are urban planning goals and strategies that are instrumental to creating harmonious cities around the world.

Planning with women in mind

Increasing evidence points to the fact that women and men experience the city differently: women in many cities face barriers to accessing urban public spaces and housing; they also face institutional barriers that prevent them from decision-making in local government and planning institutions.

Policymakers and urban planners often fail to make gender-sensitive decisions, owing in part to the dearth of research on women's and men's needs and priorities in cities. Lack of gender-sensitive urban planning can result in *de facto* segregated public spaces – spaces that hinder women's safety or make it difficult for them to carry out their multiple roles as caregivers, workers, providers of basic services, and community leaders.

If planning is about creating places and spaces that function well for everyone, then it is imperative that city planners take women's concerns into account. A survey by the Royal Town Planning Institute found that the top concerns of women in the United Kingdom were: personal safety; environmental justice; access and mobility; affordable housing; and public toilets and other local facilities, such as shops, community facilities for children and the elderly, schools, meeting places, parks, leisure facilities, and playgrounds. Low-income women in developing countries have to contend with other issues, such as lack of access to water in poor neighbourhoods, inappropriate or unaffordable transport, insecure tenure, and poor sanitation, all of which severely impact women's health and pose additional burdens on their time.

One way of ensuring that women's concerns are reflected in urban planning is to encourage greater participation by women in local government and planning institutions. In the 1980s, locally elected women within the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) felt the need to create a forum to promote the idea of gender equality in elected assemblies. A CEMR survey in 1999 revealed that in 15 countries of the European Union, only one out of five local elected representatives was a woman. Some countries, such as Sweden, had better female representation than others. However, since then, several countries have introduced laws and quotas aimed at making local government institutions and structures more inclusive. Following are some examples:

- A law passed in France in the year 2000 requires that municipalities with populations of more than 3,500 present an equal number of male and female candidates for election.
- Since 1999, the Norwegian Statistics Office has published a gender equality index that allows for the classification of cities according to six indicators: kindergarten coverage for children; percentage of female municipal council members; education levels of women and men; number of women per 100 men aged 20 to 39; labour force participation of women and men; and incomes of men and women.

- Every year, the Greater London Authority organizes the Capital Woman conference, which is specifically planned to provide the Mayor of London with an opportunity to consult with the women of London and to launch the annual *State of London's Women* report.

- In Italy, gender-based budgeting experiments are underway in the provinces of Modena, Siena and Genoa.

- The City of Montreal established the Women and the City programme in 1990, which has succeeded in making women's safety, particularly on public transport, a high priority. Women, who represent more than 60 per cent of public transport passengers in Montreal, are allowed to get off between two bus stops in order to arrive closer to their destination.

- Finland's Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has founded a databank comprising indicators that monitor gender equality at the local and regional levels. And in the Metropolitan Region of Helsinki, persons travelling with babies on the public transport system can do so for free. The policy has helped encourage mothers, as well as fathers traveling with their children, to use public transport.

- Barcelona has a long-standing commitment to women's equality; it hosts an office that promotes women in decision-making and municipal management and is also the host of the European Union-funded programme and network on women's equality in selected European and Latin American cities.

- The Seoul Metropolitan government supports and implements a range of initiatives that promote gender equality and improve the welfare of women and children.

- The city of San Francisco is implementing the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women at the local level even though the United States is not a signatory to the UN Convention.

- The Philippines has introduced legislation on the Gender and Development (GAD) Budget, which mandates all government agencies and instruments to allocate a minimum of 5 per cent of their total budget to GAD programmes and projects.

- In some cities, such as Mumbai, Mexico City and Tokyo, women-only compartments have been designated on commuter trains to prevent sexual harassment of women by male commuters.

- In Vienna, the Municipal Department of Promotion and Coordination of Women's Issues has developed and tested approaches and standards for city-wide implementation of gender mainstreaming in all areas, including design of public spaces, housing and street lighting.

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Women and children crossing a road in London
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Sources: Royal Town Planning Institute, 2007; Council of European Municipalities and Regions, 2005. UN-HABITAT Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme, n.d.

Searching for the soul of the city

Cities are not just brick and mortar; they represent the dreams, aspirations and hopes of societies. Each city has its own "personality", its strengths and weaknesses, failures and successes. The city's "soul" is exhibited through its cultural heritage, its social fabric, its intellectual and creative assets, its vibrancy and its distinct identity. Cities that lack "soul" are characterized by a conscious or unconscious desire to obliterate memories and to destroy the "spirit of the place".

A city with soul reflects its own heritage and ethos. It has an urban rhythm that is faithful to its inhabitants, while integrating universal values that make it vibrant and liveable. Such as city is not only sustainable, but as the British sociologist Charles Landry describes it, is a "balance between chaos and order", which is necessary to sustain innovation, creativity and enterprise.

A city may have good infrastructure and amenities but if it is marked by fear or divisiveness, or if its human, social, cultural and intellectual assets are not allowed to flourish, then it begins to decline or perish. Such cities tend to lack cultural and social diversity. These "apartheid cities", where neighbourhoods are physically separated by race or social class, are characterized by lack of social interactions and conviviality as people retreat into their gated communities or dense slums. These cities also tend to have few public spaces where people of all social classes and backgrounds can interact freely.

There are other cities that have good physical infrastructure and amenities, but lack vibrancy and diversity. They are focused primarily on function and utility. These cities are often developed using a blueprint of what a minority elite desires and aspires for, and do not reflect the collective desires or shared legacies of the majority of their inhabitants. The urban design does not take into consideration the local context, history, climate or social fabric of the city. Urban fragmentation and segregation are prevalent in these cities as new real estate developments cater to the needs of only the upwardly mobile minority.

"Cities with soul" are cities whose spirit resides in the collective memories of their people, their (tangible and intangible) cultural heritage and common vision. Their streets and neighbourhoods are heterogeneous and multifunctional; their unique and distinctive nature is an expression of their soul.

But how does one measure a city's soul? One way is to measure its level of "liveability". Surveys that determine a city's "liveability use indicators such as air quality, affordability, public transport and

The Grand Mosque in Djenne in Mali.
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economic viability to rate cities. The Economist Intelligence Unit, for instance, has consistently rated Canadian and Australian cities, such as Vancouver and Melbourne, as among the most liveable places in the world for their low crime rates, highly developed infrastructure and recreational facilities. The Mercer Quality of Living Survey, on the other hand, rates European cities, such as Zurich, Vienna and Geneva, for offering the best quality of life, using indicators such as political stability, banking services, air pollution levels, public services and climate.

Some researchers have also made a case for rating cities for their ability to attract the "creative classes" – highly educated and well-paid workers in technology, entertainment, journalism, finance, high-end manufacturing and the arts, who share a common ethos valuing creativity, individuality, difference and merit. The Creativity Index, developed by urban researcher Richard Florida, for instance, rates San Francisco, Austin, Boston, San Diego and Seattle highly for being among the most open and diverse large metropolitan areas in the United States – qualities that help these cities to attract intelligent, creative people whose ideas and inventions help fuel the local economy.

These surveys often respond to the needs of a globalizing world, where cities are becoming regional, international or global hubs of commerce and trade or competing to become so. The pressure to demolish old historic buildings and neighbourhoods that do not add value to the needs of a globalizing economy is, therefore, greater than ever. The pressure to change the face – and sometimes the spirit – of cities is becoming more intense in many parts of the world.

Western-style modernity is also threatening the historic environment and some of the cultural assets of cities. The emphasis on new things, clean lines and modern design is intense; older buildings, especially those in need of repair and rehabilitation and those in the inner core or central business districts of cities, are considered to have low economic potential. The problem with this "one size fits all" approach to urban design is that many cities are starting to look alike, which makes them less interesting. As a recent article in Spiegel Online noted, these cities epitomize boredom "with their non-descript architecture, cookie-cutter shopping malls and corporate-franchised culture, they exude a dull vibe that can be found anywhere around the world".

Yet, it is not only development and the demand for "progress" that threaten to erase a great deal of a city's historical and cultural assets. Poverty, neglect, decay and intense overuse cause rapid deterioration of many historic buildings and old neighbourhoods. This phenomenon has been observed, for example, in Mumbai, Havana, Luanda, Cairo, and historic cities such as Ahmadabad and Lamu town. Fortunately, efforts are under way in most of these cities to restore their historical legacy; in Havana, for instance, the Cuban government declared the city's historic centre as a top priority area for conservation in 1993.

In some cities, modernization is often done in the name of tourism. Yet in the process of modernizing a city to attract tourists, the very qualities that make these cities attractive tourist destinations are inadvertently sacrificed. Fortunately, many governments and local authorities are realizing that loss of cultural heritage has huge environmental and economic costs. In 1995, for

instance, plans to build a highway near the ancient Giza Pyramids in Egypt were thwarted after the government realized that the highway would have seriously damaged this famous archaeological site.

The challenge facing many cities is how to improve infrastructure, reduce poverty, promote economic growth and create a healthy living environment without destroying the cultural fabric of society. Zanzibar town offers some lessons in this regard. When Tanzania liberalized its economy in the early 1990s, the town was under pressure to become more tourist-friendly and to rehabilitate the old historic Stone Town that incorporates elements from African, Arab and Indian cultures. UNESCO, which declared Zanzibar's Stone Town as a World Heritage Site in 2000, has described the town's rehabilitated narrow winding alleys, unique architecture and bustling bazaars as "an outstanding material manifestation of cultural fusion". Rehabilitation of historic buildings has also increased the town's tourism potential.

The soul of the city is not static; it needs to be nurtured over time, preserved and maintained. The small city of Allegheny in Pennsylvania revived the city's cultural and environmental assets in the 1970s by forming community and neighbourhood organizations that led preservation efforts and created new cultural institutions, with the support of the government and private foundations. The city of Budapest rehabilitated historical districts through social and cultural-led programmes as a way of bringing more social harmony to the city.

Many European cities have used more integrated approaches to urban regeneration programmes, and a large number of cities are placing culture at the heart of regeneration and urban renewal. These cities see their future through a lens that values the present while looking to the past to enhance the urban experience. They have managed to "shed the skin without losing the soul" because they understand that people and the quality of their lives and livelihoods are fundamental assets that need to be nurtured. They also understand that a city's heritage is reflected in its diverse ethnic communities that are in themselves an important economic asset.

New urban renewal programmes utilize revitalization as a way to improve not only the physical, but also the non-physical elements of urban space through creative means that advance the "quality of place" concept or promote what has been termed as "cultural infrastructure". Many urban revitalization programmes recognize the importance of the arts as a means of regenerating communities in order to develop community cohesion and identity, and eventually to foster interconnected identities among different communities. These programmes are often combined with greening initiatives and landscape art to improve the sense of place of urban streets and neighbourhoods.

The preservation of the built heritage through the conservation, renewal or revitalization of historic centres, traditional urban cores and buildings has the potential of providing cities with a distinctive physiognomy that can be marketed to promote economic development and tourism. Studies have also shown that the preservation of the built heritage creates social solidarity and civic pride among inhabitants, thereby promoting social cohesion.

However, as cities are increasingly transformed into heterogeneous, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies, the protection and enhancement of the built heritage requires new strategies and thinking on ways of creating distinctive place-identity solutions for better cultural, social and ethnic integration and inclusion. These place-identity solutions can be created by constructing new public spaces that promote social and community interactions as a way to complement (rather than confront) the local built heritage. Cities can provide culturally diverse social groups and individuals with a "spatial membership" and a possibility to integrate their own values, identity and history into the social and physical fabric of cities. These cities accentuate notions of multi-culturalism and complexity, overlapping (instead of separating) local layers of identity as a way of being inclusive.

Successful examples of the mix of old and new urban spaces where innovative designs are employed are the Spanish cities of Barcelona, Seville, Bilbao and Valencia that simultaneously express the specificity of the place and the links with the world beyond. These cities not only create new forms of cultural locality, they also promote urban economic development.

Sources: Dammert, & Borja, 2004; Florida, 2002; Landry, 2002; ISOCARP, 2008; Leger, 2008, Moreno, 1993; Langenbach 2007; Friedmann, 2007; Dragicevic, 2007; Spring, 2008; Gospodini, 2002; Di Cicco, 2006; UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Follath & Spörl, 2007; "Economist.com, 2007; Mercer Quality of Living Global City Rankings, 2008.

NOTES

1   Shatkin, 2002.
2   Brolin, 1972.
3   Lyons, Smuts & Stephens, 2001.
4   This chapter draws largely from Bazoglu, 2007, and from a framework document for the World Urban Forum 2008 prepared for UN-HABITAT by the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), based in The Hague, Netherlands.
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6   Fernandes, 2007.
7   UN-HABITAT, 2006a.
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13 World Bank, 2005.
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16 Ibid.
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