



The Sydney Declaration: Planning for Sustainability of Expanding Cities

July 10, 2014

Preamble

Urban expansion is accelerating with projections that cities will accommodate more than 70% for global population by 2050. The growth of urban areas will be dominated by vertical expansion of mega cities and horizontal expansion in surrounding areas, into peri-urban zones. It is not fully appreciated that what occurs in peri-urban areas affects both the urban area and surrounding rural communities. The urbanisation process presents unprecedented complex environmental, social, economic and political challenges. Although there are diverse local conditions and scales, the problems of expanding cities have similarities worldwide.

A number of issues and challenges, including governance, were addressed at the Peri-urban 2014 International Conference (www.periurban14.org) in Sydney, Australia from July 8-10, 2014. The conference was attended by over 150 policy makers, researchers, planners, government officials, NGOs, private sector specialists and community groups from 16 countries. The conference concluded that peri-urban development as a consequence of urbanisation is inevitable, and that it requires special and urgent policy and governance attention to meet the challenges of water, energy, food, environment and liveability of cities we face now and into the future.

Challenges

1. The rate and complexity of urban expansion often results in ad-hoc and fragmented policy and planning with inequitable investment across the effected landscapes and unsustainable development.
2. Vertical expansion of housing cannot alone meet the demand for urban expansion, and so there will be continued pressure on non-urbanised lands.
3. Given their transitional status and rapidity of change, peri-urban areas face unique challenges. In particular, there is a need to address multi-dimensions of poverty in emergent urban societies.
4. Unless governments take immediate actions to address the resulting challenges, current and future generations will suffer massive escalating economic costs, ecological degradation, political disruption and cultural dislocation.

Policy and Planning Actions

1. Governments must address the complex challenges posed by expanding cities as an essential element of UN Post 2015 sustainable development and poverty alleviation goals. We welcome the recent inclusion of a specifically urban goal in the draft list and urge further work to ensure it has practicable and appropriate content.
2. All levels of government need to work with the private sector and communities to develop integrated strategies and plans, based on local engagement and transparent decision making.
3. Global and local investments in built and ecological infrastructure and services should be directed to ensure equity between people occupying urban and peri-urban landscapes.
4. Regional planning strategies and processes should be based on trans-disciplinary research and integrate perspectives from natural and social sciences, economics, government, industry and community.
5. National and international indices of "liveability" and "sustainability" should be developed to guide future urban planning strategies and measure effectiveness of urban development.

Knowledge and Capacity Building Actions

1. Governments and knowledge providers must come together to generate, maintain and enhance knowledge bases on ecological, socio-economic, political and cultural dimensions to build baseline conditions and test future development scenarios.
2. The education and planning sectors must address the shortcomings of existing planning processes and management by developing innovative curricula and delivery mechanisms for professional and community actors.
3. Governments, R&D bodies, NGOs and donors are urged to make significant investments in research and development to support and integrate hard evidence into sound decision making.
4. Emerging tools and techniques need to be customised and implemented to tackle these challenges. There should be an integrated approach, for example, the 'Circles of Sustainability' method used by the United Nations Global Compact Cities Programme, Metropolis and other organizations.



More information: Prof. B. Maheshwari, b.maheshwari@uws.edu.au , +61 2 4570 1235

