

The Quick Internet Discussion

Global Strategies for an Urban Future

Analysis of the Responses

**Jos Maseland
Research and Reporting Section
Policy Analysis, Synthesis and Dialogue Branch
United Nations Human Settlement programme, UN-Habitat
January 2002**

ANALYSIS OF THE QID RESPONSES

0.1 Introduction

Between 12 and 17 November 2002, UN-Habitat organized a Quick Internet Discussion (QID) on the theme *Global Strategies for an Urban Future*. To facilitate the discussion, three premises were provided with three questions each for the participants to respond to. The QID recorded well over 600 registrants, about half of which engaged in the QID, while the remainder joined the discussion as observers.

The responses came from literally all over the world and from a very broad range of disciplines. This inevitably led to an equally wide variety of opposing and concurring individual views on the issues put before the participants. In view of this broad variation in responses, it has been impossible to reflect all individual replies in both the summary and the analysis. The latter therefore rather focused on categories of responses where there was a degree thematic convergence among the views and proposals for action. Although the analysis has attempted to maximize the inclusion of opponents and proponents alike, by necessity it could not reflect the entire spectrum of answers and views. We hope, however, that those contributors whose responses have not been reflected in the analysis will understand that their views have nevertheless been noted and recorded.

We would like to thank all contributors for the time and efforts given to the QID. It has been your accumulated commitment and enthusiasm that has made this electronic discussion a success.

0.2 Executive summary

Condensing the wide range of opinions expressed during the Quick Internet Discussion (QID) in a concise executive summary is not possible. On just about every issue brought before the participants the reactions reflected the true global participation in the discussion through responses that covered just about every aspect of the spectrum possible. Nevertheless, the discussion pointed, despite varying individual viewpoints, at a number of perhaps not consensus areas, but at least large numbers of contributors agreeing on particular principles and themes regarding global urban issues, as well as the nature of the type of action required to steer current trends and conditions into more sustainable, equitable and effective patterns.

Most participants in the discussion see a global urban majority and the related phenomenon of urbanization as inevitable, if not desirable. They largely concur on the fact that cities exist because they more effectively provide security, opportunity and services than rural settings. Given current global political, economic and capital-flow trends, the participants largely agreed that any country that does not build itself a strong urban network has little chance of effectively participating in global economic growth or development and is likely to remain a depressed backwater. Investment and information flows and the exercise of power have in the past mainly taken place through cities and are

likely to continue to do so in the future and networking into the global financial and economic infrastructure is a prerequisite for urban (and therefore national) prosperity.

Some of the contributors were looking at urban problems as unintended side effects of the real forces shaping cities. They expressed the opinion that fixing problems of global inequity, rural and urban poverty, environmental degradation etc represents the desired new urban ethic. Circumstances that limit the solving of these issues may be the constraints within which cities will grow or stabilize. But pretending that cities are anything other than desirable engines of economic growth, innovation and development was generally considered a shortsighted viewpoint. Through their economies of scale cities are a means of providing products and services more cheaply and more effectively than in the countryside. But cities are also directly associated with global levels of environmental degradation that are taking highly undesirable proportions. As such, many still see cities as the great environmental culprit, rather than the necessary effective absorbers of massive global demographic growth they constitute.

However, it is neither cities nor imbalances between rural and urban areas that are at the core of the environmental sustainability issue. Rather, demographic growth is the unsustainable factor. The need for concentrating human masses in urban areas is simply unavoidable, despite high prices perhaps to be paid in environmental terms, human misery or otherwise. While cities in their present form, under the currently dominating global development model, and with prevailing politico-economic approaches may not be the most efficient and eco-friendly means of accommodating the urban transition underway, current realities make cities one of the few realistically remaining options to provide living environments for increasing numbers of people, even though poverty, inequity and exclusion are increasingly becoming day-to-day realities associated with the global urban transition.

But all realities can be changed. Cities, at each point in history have been able to be or become whatever people wanted them to be. They have - over and over - proven to be an amazing catalyst for human development, largely responding to the different needs of each period in time. Humankind has been able to forge whatever adjustments were required at any point in time. And we can still do so. For this to happen, we need to create the political will and learn how to live as an urban species, rather than a rural one living in higher densities. We need to learn how to live in close proximity and better express the solidarity that high densities demand while accepting and allowing for human difference. We need to find ways of dealing with the consequences of our inevitably continuing demographic growth in a sustainable manner and turn cities into places we can enjoy living in. It needs a broader view of nature's limitations and the accumulated urban *and* rural environmental impacts. We need to pay greater attention to the social sectors, while it is critical to include all actors in an equitable way into decision-making processes and foster governance forms that balance all competing interests.

The premise of day one not only provoked responses to what a new urban ethos should be. Some contributors strongly questioned the very need for and desirability of an urban ethos, because peace, justice, democracy, welfare, prosperity, etc are global values rather

than just urban ones. The majority, however, agreed that there is a correlation between the global urban transition and the need for developing new mental concepts that would help the transformation of undesirable urban development-related trends towards long-term viable urban living environments. But rather than a new urban ethos, it was expressed that we need a new development ethos – an ethos based on new ways of thinking that holistically view the urban *and* rural domains.

Some believe that cities have become dysfunctional in organizational, social, political and/or environmental terms. Others take the position that our approaches to the urban condition are misguided but that cities are not dysfunctional. However, any degree of dysfunction that exists and persists without being adequately addressed is seen to create deeper problems that will ultimately become inherent.

Many feel that there is something intrinsically wrong in how our societies generate classifications on the basis of socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, religious and other group characteristics. Such classifications are believed to be at the root of most problems in social encounters and inevitably lead to the exclusion of population segments. Creating social and psychological urban environments that are conducive to equitable, non-excluding development is seen as one of the most challenging and urgent tasks facing governments today. With increasing globalization, traditional bonds of human behaviour, such as ethnic ties, linguistic affinity, cultural affiliation etc. have become ever less influential. Many believe that under the impacts of globalization urban populations are searching for new ways of social and psychological support for relating to one another. Growing regionalization and localization is thus explained as the attempts of people to find a new footing to counteract the social, cultural and psychological shocks inherent to globalization.

Yet others find it presumptuous to think that we can create an urban environment in which people do ‘as they are expected’ because our lives are dictated by markets that view people as mere consuming entities. Urban planning too is seen to revolve around how to consume, rather than the most important aspect of city life: sharing. Spatial social interaction should not be primarily for commercial reasons, but rather for interchanging thoughts and ideas and learning how to create a social and psychological urban environment that fosters inclusive and cooperative thought and behaviour. Several contributors noted that increasing urban densities and diversities dictate special measures that have remained largely unacknowledged. This omission creates the conditions for strife, polarisation and social division and is seen by many as contributing to urban dysfunction.

Urban problems are also perceived as brought about by a reality beyond individuals. Urban collective and individual actors, societal rules and policies are the elements that define the city as a living entity for human settlement, whose aim is performing specific functions necessary for co-habitation. In this framework, urban problems (exclusion, poverty, violence, pollution, etc.) could be seen as the consequences of forms of urban management that prevent cities from performing properly. But we must not forget that from their very beginning cities were built to include and, therefore, exclude as well. To

include development and security, while excluding threats or enemies. Cities by their historical nature are an object of possession, aggression and demolition. Some contributors see that as the reason why fear is an integral part of the city, and an effective reason to attract ever-more violence.

The overwhelming majority of contributors felt that what is perceived as urban dysfunction is largely the outcome of bad urban governance practices, be it structural, administrative lack of local capacity, capability and skills, or be it lack of general opportunity for broad popular participation in decision-making. Many agreed that poor urban governance could largely be overcome by more participatory political and administrative systems. Good urban governance is seen as one of the major inroads to providing solutions for urban problems, if implemented carefully.

But the empowerment process is not just a matter of administrative changes in legislation. It should also be cultivated *within* people to enable them to work together and to take collective action, to develop a common vision and to achieve collective goals. To this end, empowerment programs should be adopted to maximize individual and group capacities to contribute in the creation of collective action towards needs satisfaction, realization of human rights, and equitable development. Achieving this comes down to leadership, vision, societal signals on acceptable behaviour, and forging opportunities to interact, learn and share.

Such changes require alterations in social and psychological urban mechanisms and a new positive thinking among its inhabitants. The creation of positive thinking requires long-term education on social equality, tolerance, ecological ethics and popular inclusiveness in addressing urban problems. But a new urban or development ethos would be difficult to achieve under prevailing negative and anti-urban notions - an unfortunate side effect of the global sustainable development debate. The global perception is still largely negative towards cities and urban conglomerates, often based on a skewed understanding of what cities really are. Although cities do not automatically and necessarily offer equal opportunities and while urbanization does not spontaneously reduce pressure on environmental resources inside and outside urban areas, cities *do* have a significant role to play in global sustainability. A new image of cities should be forged that is less biased, more complete and that provides a realistic view of the possibilities that cities entail, if only because our future is inevitably an urban one.

Nearly all contributors felt that, in order to start addressing the problems associated with the global urban transition, it is essential to worldwide stimulate the formulation of urban policies, or, at least, assure the incorporation of strong urban elements in all national macro-level policies. Some contributors challenged whether it is necessary to have a specific national urban policy given the fact that in most countries the rural-urban boundary is increasingly blurred. But even if this line of reasoning is supported, it would be useful to have a national development policy in which rural and urban sectors can be identified as separate, albeit mutually interactive and interconnected components. Given that most countries do have an agrarian or rural development policy, an urban counterpart would appear to make sense.

But any policy is doomed to fail if the political, social and economic conditions surrounding it are not conducive to its implementation. Good governance is seen as the *sine qua non* in policy development and implementation, while for policies to be successful they must further be based on democratic principles, equity, flexible fiscal mechanisms; civic engagement; and decentralized, transparent and participatory governance.

Most contributors expressed that any national urban policy must assure environmental, social and economic sustainability. Some felt that lack of attention to the *combination* these three aspects of sustainability is at the basis of many of today's urban problems, causing expanding cities to degenerate into spatial structures without the essential supporting economic and social structures. This is particularly the case with urban informal settlements in which all too often the poor and disenfranchised are *de facto* decision-makers regarding where and how cities grow, leaving few realist intervention options for municipal governments in the wake of such spontaneous urban developments.

Urban planning and regulations derived from urban policies can be powerful instruments to achieve sustainable development. Municipal authorities around the world have already shown - when given the power through national guidelines or policy - that they have the ability, political will and popular support to enforce and improve their sustainability records. But national urban policies will not produce solutions unless a number of pre-conditions are simultaneously fulfilled:

- Local self-government, capacity and capability;
- local level-managed revenue generation and budgets;
- partnerships among the public, private, community and civil organizations sectors;
- flexible and local action-oriented cultures;
- effective coordination between and among all levels of public authority;
- a focus on people, as they are the most important factor to be taken into account; and
- Strong poverty alleviation and broad popular inclusion as a public responsibility for more efficient use of human capital.

To overcome the barriers to economic, social and environmental sustainability of the global urban condition, we have at our disposal 7,000 years of accumulated knowledge about cities. Combined with unprecedented access to methodologies, technologies and knowledge, it is now perhaps time for the global community to create the political will that helps us combine in our urban and rural areas the best of each domain, rather than the worst. With the viability of our very living environment at stake, we should forge a new thinking and line of action that future historians can refer to as “the 21st Century Renaissance”.

Analysis of Day 1 (12 November 2001): Our Urban Future

1.0 The Premise

Cities are the future. Cities, as the prevailing habitat for humanity, embody the same socio-economic, environmental and political issues that infuse the debate over sustainable development. With their superior infrastructure, cities are the main venue for all development, inviting specialization, diversification and agglomeration necessary for efficient production and consumption. The density of cities makes it more economical to deliver basic goods and services to large numbers of people. Cities, with their economies of scale and their wider variety of employment possibilities, extricate large numbers of people from an impoverished future on rural lands - offering them better livelihood opportunities while reducing pressures on the natural environment.

In the 21st century, cities will be the fundamental structures defining nations and, indeed, the global economy. Yet, there prevails an anti-urban bias that inhibits clear thinking about cities as an effective setting for solving a myriad of major global problems. In fact, the anti-urban bias may be responsible for many "intractable" urban problems. Very few countries, for example, have a national economic development policy that includes an explicit comprehensive urban component. Almost all countries, on the other hand, have policies on rural development.

Given the inevitability of urbanization - between 1950 and 2050 the global population will have shifted from 65 percent rural to 65 percent urban - the institutionalised rural thinking that has guided most urban development policies in the 20th century must give way to *homo urbanus* and an urban ethos¹⁾ that will result in more liveable cities and sustainable hinterlands.

1) Definition of Ethos: the characteristic spirit and beliefs of a society

1.1 What would a new urban ethos be?

The premise provoked not only responses to the question what a new urban ethos should be. It sparked also comments on the need for and desirability of a new urban ethos and whether global urbanization is advantageous. The alleged anti-urban bias provoked both strong opposing and supporting reactions, varying from outright denial of its existence - with arguments that the reality is completely the opposite and that there is an anti-rural rather than an anti-urban bias - to partial or full endorsement that urban issues would be easier to address with a new urban or a new development ethos that replaces the perceived anti-urban bias with a more positive outlook on cities.

Some contributors, although accepting the realities of the urban transition, propose to resist global urbanization by such interventions as setting limits to the growth or size of urban areas and the creation of urban models. Such notions are, perhaps, not entirely realistic because they imply attempts to curb or even reverse the urban transition. In the entire history of humankind there is not a shred of evidence of the possibilities for sustained reduction - let alone reversal - of the urban transition.

Some argued against the relevance of a new urban ethos, questioning both the aim and sense of seeking such a concept. They do not see any need for a new urban ethos since, etc. are global rather than just urban objectives. Others view giving way to *homo urbanus* as a dangerous concept as they feel that doing so might imply endorsement of the highly

unsustainable practices of the current global urban transition and related production and consumption practices.

The majority, however, agreed that there is some kind of correlation between the global urban transition and the need for developing new mental concepts that would help the transformation of undesirable urban development trends towards long-term viable urban living environments. Developing a new urban ethos is by many seen as the quest for a kind of 'new urban dweller'; one that does not necessarily emphasize individualism and consumption, but rather one that fosters the concepts of citizenship, sharing, community and cohabitation, while accepting individual differences

One contributor pointed out that we already have a new urban ethos in the *Habitat Agenda* that emphasizes the need for adequate shelter for all, broad popular participation, partnership, good and transparent governance, urbanity, conviviality, civic pride, and, most necessarily, decentralization and capacity-building. This new urban ethos, although endorsed by all UN Members States, is still very far from being implemented in most countries and the aim should be to first realize this urban ethos.

Most contributors accept as inevitable that we are heading for a global urban future. They acknowledge that, given current global population trends, sustainability is simply not possible without an urban environment that absorbs demographic growth. In that sense they see the urban transition as highly desirable. At the same time, they realize that although urban environments offer distinct advantages that we need to reinforce, they also present a host of problems that urgently need to be solved. Urbanization should not happen as the inevitable outcome of people struggling to improve their living conditions, but rather as the deliberate manifestation of governance and policies geared to improving the living environment of all.

It was also pointed out that an urban ethos does not have to be an entirely *new* concept, but that it should rather consist of the wide dissemination of new thinking about global development, and global urban development in particular. This would imply a gradual process that begins with the public at large, awakening their understanding of the urgency of addressing the issues, with a view to influencing policy- and decision-makers who effect urban development and the utilization of resources. Rather than an urban ethos, some see this as working towards a new 'development ethos' that recognises and embraces both rural and urban areas; that transcends the limitations of sectoral thinking; and that builds on the comparative advantages of both the rural and urban domains while minimizing conflicts and tensions that limit human development.

But given the inevitability of a global urban future, such a new urban or development ethos would be difficult to achieve under prevailing negative and anti-urban notions - an unfortunate side effect of the global sustainable development debate. The global perception is still largely negative towards cities and urban conglomerates. This is often based on a skewed understanding of what cities really are. Admittedly, cities do not automatically and necessarily offer equal opportunities, and urbanization does not spontaneously reduce pressure on environmental resources inside and outside urban areas. But, cities have a significant role to play in global sustainability and a new image

of cities should be forged that is less biased, more complete and that provides a realistic view of the possibilities that cities entail, if only because our future is an urban one – whether we like it or not.

For cities to meet current and future expectations of their inhabitants, the adoption of a realistic urban philosophy is a *sine qua non*. But beyond offering concepts of basic survival, the new urban ethos must embrace and nurture the notion of liveable cities. This century will see urban areas becoming increasingly complex and competitive, while good urban governance will become more and more difficult. City managers will have to spend more time, money and effort to assure minimum services and amenities. There is increasing threat of urban insecurity, crime, social fragmentation and a steady decrease in liveability. For the anti-urban bias to be overcome, urban projects must be seen to avoid corruption, be participatory and inclusive, and non-threatening to local culture and individual differences. It must benefit the poor and the environment, while delivering lasting benefits that will not be swamped by the inevitable flows of sustained urban growth. The urban-rural nexus needs to be carefully examined, not seeing one another as parasites, but rather as partners whereby the benefits of growth are clearly and fairly distributed. It is a matter of urgency to develop a comprehensive philosophical view of urbanization that places equal priority on social, economic, cultural and environmental sustainability to enable the urban and rural populations of the world to thrive.

Many contributors expressed their views on key elements of such a new urban or development ethos, vision or philosophy. It needs to provide an integrated, common vision of urban *and* rural. It must offer the dynamism and flexibility to meet changing challenges while catering for individual and group difference. It should develop concepts of good citizenship, sharing, community, solidarity and foster inclusion that creates urban bonding through affinities and commonality of interests.

We have at our disposal 7,000 years of accumulated knowledge about what works and what does not work in cities, about what is civilized and what is not. Combined with unprecedented access to methodologies, technologies and knowledge, it is now time for the global community to create the political will that makes all this knowledge and expertise work *for* us, rather than *against* us. Or, in other words, we must combine in our urban and rural areas the best of each domain, rather than the worst. This means, perhaps, reviewing and redefining the “civil” aspect of our global civilization. With the viability of the living environment of the global majority at stake, we should forge a new thinking that - by future historians - will be referred to as “the 21st Century Renaissance”.

1.2 What are major obstacles in making the global transition to an urban ethos?

A wide range of perceived obstacles to the successful global transition to a new urban and development ethos emerged from the discussion:

- psychological and thought barriers at both the individual and group levels;
- behavioural and social barriers;
- political and structural barriers;

- policy barriers; and
- economic barriers

Conflicts between traditional and global thought: People have been entrenched into a traditional thinking that views the rural sector as more important. This is perfectly understandable, as humankind began and largely remained rural society until very recently. In many developing countries, rural populations still constitute the majority. At least, ... for another two decades or so. Few people comprehend the historical relevance and the complexity of cities. Cities are the most intricate human invention of all times. But with the majority of the global population shaped by rural or quasi-urban environments and entrenched in rural modes of thinking, it is not surprising that our cities create seemingly insurmountable problems. This is moreover the case as most of the global political and economic forces are controlled by national governments and trans-national corporations, rather than local governments, civic society, or the local economic enterprise that together constitute our very urban areas.

Political and structural obstacles: The concepts of the nation is not a natural reason and base of economic creation and development. But nations control, organize and master the fate of their cities. Our very perceptions of cities is grounded in our collective need for security, stability, continuity and preservation, and based on these inherited power relations. Globally, speaking, this is largely an inheritance of power relations established in colonial times and the global economic system and power distribution builds on the spatial polarization and, fragmentation established centuries ago. Along these lines, and as the historical confluence of economic and political forces, rather than by design, the world economy, has created a *de facto* global neo-feudalism that divides the world into economic sectors, whereby a largely rural South provides the inputs for opulent over-consumption in the North.

In this context, the views of two contributors are particularly interesting as they point at global political and economic reasons for an anti-urban bias, at least, in terms of aid flows to the cities in developing countries where the need for assistance is most dire:

In the 1970s, the bulk of international assistance concentrated on directly or indirectly improving urban development and infrastructure. This was based on the 'trickle-down' hypothesis that such investments would lead to economic growth that should eventually reach the urban and rural poor. Urban projects were also perceived to affect a greater number of people and developing country governments themselves were calling predominantly for urban projects. By the 1990s, urban-focused work and analysis had sunk into disrepute in favour of assistance that was increasingly oriented towards agricultural and rural assistance, because:

(a) It was perceived that urban improvements were largely being appropriated by the middle classes and not proceeding to the poor. Nevertheless, the rural poor were increasingly being attracted to cities despite lack of employment possibilities and the urban situation worsened noticeably;

(b) High-profile urban infrastructure projects were prime targets for corruption and pork barrelling;

(c) Poverty measurements repeatedly showed the worst figures in rural areas and poverty alleviation became the dominant aid paradigm in the 1990s and directed primarily towards rural areas;

(d) The newly emerging large cities of Asia did not collapse under their growth as expected, but rather proved very successful and soon became economic competitors to the cities in the highly industrialized countries. The latter, incidentally, are the large international assistance donors. There was a strong economic incentive for the West to spend in rural areas, where the results were likely to be complementary to Western development; and

(e) There was a general move away from modernism and towards relativism as a philosophy. The Western way of life, which largely proceeded through cities, became synonymous with the destruction of local cultures and environments.

The process by which urban growth ultimately benefits Western societies needs to be carefully documented and compared with the present situation in developing countries where the benefits have proved intangible. In the end, however, the issue of competition with the West cannot be solved, and ultimately all countries will have to take responsibility for their own urban areas without the benefit of aid.

Economic barriers: A high number of contributors see the capitalist market economy that creates and widens the gap between rich and poor as a main barrier. Capitalism is unrivalled in its capacity to generate material growth, but often at the expense of other domains such as the biosphere, social reform, equity etc. The immense problems of poverty and exclusion, combined with the continuing growth of human numbers are two faces of the main problem. The market economy is favouring a global rich minority at the expense of reforms that would benefit low-income and vulnerable groups, both in highly industrialized countries and in developing countries.

Policy barriers: Very few countries have a national economic development policy that includes an explicit comprehensive urban component. Almost all countries, on the other hand, have policies on rural development. The current public policy is generally characterized by the dual restrictive parameters of scarce local-level resources and lack of emphasis on essential environmental and social development issues in the erroneous belief that industrial development should be cultivated and implemented before the other two. A dominating global industrial civilization that creates rapid technological and commercial change while overlooking essential social change has become the major force shaping our urban transition. Only the formulation of effective policies that take into account real needs, rather than those of the global economy, may have a chance of overcoming this domination

1.3 What should the role of the United Nations be in the process of transition?

Opinions about the role of the United Nations in the process of transition are very diverse. The responsibilities of the UN are highly complex – perhaps too complex to be achieved under the current structure of the UN system and the weight of the issues. Thus, it is crucial for the UN to develop a better internal system of coordination and communication between its agencies to effectively take on its roles. The UN should

promote advocacy for new institutional frameworks that focus on the urban dimension and that can become catalysts in the global urban transition. Many UN agencies also still have a prevailing rural ethos. This has clear consequences on the way funds are distributed between the rural and urban activities of each respective agency. Allocation of funding and other key decisions should recognize the importance of the current urban transition and its impacts on cities in developing countries. A start should be made with the development of a new urban and development ethos within all UN organizations, states and cities; to promote a new educational ideal and to better inform urban policy-making worldwide through stronger linkages between knowledge and decision-making.

One commentator believes that the UN has no role to play: The UN merely wishes to become another layer of taxing, transferring wealth from the successful to political hacks.

Analysis of Day Two (13 November 2001): Dimensions of Thought and Behaviour

2.0 The Premise

The city is more than a physical object; it is a state of mind. The urban experience alters how people see themselves and others around them. It presents them with opportunities for new relationships, networks and associations -- main ingredients of the social capital needed to create a functional behavioural landscape. The fields of anthropology, psychology and sociology have only begun to fathom the web of relationships that serves to organize and control the city.

When the world was predominantly rural, a myriad of isolated experiences shaped local cultures, each elaborating on simple rules of survival that often emphasized exclusivity. The imperatives of commerce and the density of strangers indicate that urban life is more inclusive as well as more universal, posing similar behavioural challenges everywhere. Through the process of urbanization, localized cultures and the city meet to create hybrid communities that must adapt to their new habitat or risk disintegration.

The physical symptoms of urban failure arise from an unsuccessful marriage between cultural expectation and urban reality. When local culture is transferred to an urban setting, expectations may obscure or clarify the realities of city life. Urban sustainability goes far beyond the essentials of classical economics or of politics and policies. It is the civic character of a city that determines its fate. The most sustainable cities are those where individual patterns of thought and behaviour reflect an implicit responsibility for the welfare of strangers in a wholesale repudiation of fear and exclusion.

2.1 How to create a social and psychological urban environment that nurtures inclusive thought and behaviour?

Many contributors recognized the current urban transition as an inevitable step in human development and a means of effectively absorbing global demographic growth. Concentration of human masses in urban densities is seen as very much part of the history and future of humankind and conducive to human development. The fact that this process has its inherent flaws – and considerable flaws in the view of some – should not be a reason to reject urbanization as undesirable, but should rather provoke a call for urgent action to address the shortcomings. Some believe that cities have become dysfunctional in organizational, social, political and/or environmental terms. Others take the position that there is something wrong with our approaches to the urban condition, but that cities are not dysfunctional. However, any dysfunction that exists, persists and is not adequately addressed is seen to create deeper problems that will ultimately become inherent.

Many feel that there is something intrinsically wrong in how our societies generate classifications on the basis of socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, religious and other group characteristics. Such classifications are believed to be at the root of most problems in social encounters and inevitably lead to the exclusion of population segments. In this context, one contributor drew a parallel between contemporary cities and ‘dark age’ societies through which people are separated in those ‘inside and those outside the city walls’, promoting inequitable access to development.

Creating social and psychological urban environments that are conducive to equitable development is seen as one of the most challenging and urgent tasks facing governments today. With increasing globalization, traditional bonds of human behaviour, such as ethnic ties, linguistic affinity, cultural affiliation etc. have become less influential. Many believe that one impact of globalization is that urban populations are feeling increasingly insecure and are searching for new ways of social and psychological support for relating to each other. Growing regionalization and localization is thus explained as the attempts of people to find a new footing to counteract the social, cultural and psychological shocks inherent to globalization.

The views of the contributors on the causes of perceived or real urban dysfunction can roughly be divided into four thematic categories:

- socio-economic causes
- human behavioural causes
- administrative and political causes
- misconceptions of spatial organization and urban form

A common thread through the responses is that if leaders and decision-makers either use or tolerate discrimination, protection of vested interests, restriction of civil liberties, exploitation and social division for political expediency, then societies will reflect these traits. Equally, cultures that place a high value on consumerism and little on social development cannot expect inclusive societies to develop.

Socio-economic causes of urban dysfunction

Several contributors expressed the notion that it would be useless to try to provide solutions to the ills of the cities in general terms and that it would be more reasonable to analyse what emerges from urban methodology rather than urban pathology. Socio-economic and political forces have an ever-greater dominance on the urban condition and on the objectives and roles of urban planning in relation to the management of urban change. Difficulties have emerged in establishing positive relationships between socio-economic approaches to urban structures and creative planning approaches, when it is clear that these relationships are a necessary step in attempts to resolve urban problems. In this context, one contributor compared cities to problem children: “There are no natural problem children; there are only problem families that produce problem children.” With a consumer society that puts success and money as the key to happiness, the unachievable becomes the necessary and frustration sets in for many. A world ruled by market values makes the production of goods and services a measurement of the quality of life. Urban areas, with their large degree of opportunity and at the same time high degree of competition and exclusion are manifestations of socio-economic and political systems that effectively serve to disfranchise the global majority in order to provide benefits and advancements for a minority.

Some find it presumptuous to think that we can create an environment in which people do as they are expected. Real estate and other markets that see people as mere consuming entities largely dictate urban planning. Urban planning revolves around how to consume, rather than the most important aspect of city life: sharing. Even as absolute strangers we

share the common space of the city. Spatial social interaction should not be primarily for commercial reasons, but rather for interchanging thoughts and ideas and learning how to create a social and psychological urban environment that fosters inclusive and cooperative thought and behaviour. If we do neither know our neighbours and their culture, nor understand their history and behaviour, we cannot but fear them.

Several contributors who are more accepting of a role of cities as production and consumption entities feel that the speed and character of urban developments pose a particular challenge. Cities, as production entities for public and private urban goods and services, change consumption, expenditure and savings/investment patterns of societies and governments alike. In many cases, particularly in less-developed countries, these patterns change much faster than societies can adjust. Additionally, many feel that improvements in administrative capabilities of governments are lagging in following urban innovation. But urban innovation will continue as a process inherent to open societies. Add to this the increase in urbanization resulting from a continuous shrinkage of both social and job opportunities in rural areas the outcome can only be increases in urban informal-sectors, generating socio-economic fragmentation and dualism within cities. Such a situation often leads to economic stagnation, unemployment, poverty, corruption and urban violence. Unemployment and poverty create burdens, especially on marginalized people in developing countries, resulting in insecurity, despair, oppression and aggressive attitudes. Some contributors, however, felt rather the opposite: the global homogenisation of the human group and its competitive nature constitute a unique option of building quality of life. But it is an often-missed opportunity, annulling the potential to innovate at the local level.

One contributor saw a dialectical development misconception: If, by definition, all developing economic life depends on urban economies, and the very process of economic life creates cities, it follows that urban problems are a combination of economic, social and cultural problems. The above distinction drawn between urban problems and socio-economic conditions follows a general and fatal misconception of the social production of space and its relevance and interdependence to socio-economic conditions.

In trying to create a social and psychological urban environment that nurtures inclusive thought and behaviour, we need to take into consideration the process of urbanism - defined as a way of life associated with urban densities or the tendency for people to live increasingly urban life styles. Although urban areas, particularly the larger ones, unquestionably constitute centres of change in attitudes, behaviour patterns, and values modified by the urban environment, some observers assert that the massive movement of populations from rural areas is causing a reduction in urbanism. An example is that with the impact of economic recession, the effects of structural adjustment and declining food security, urban agriculture is now widespread and economically significant in many urban areas of the developing nations. In some, it has even become a critical variable in survival and sustainability. However, others argued that the process of ruralization of cities is not a consequence of mass rural-to-urban migration, but rather a response to economic fluctuations, as the many of those cultivating crops and rearing livestock in

urban areas originate from poor households that are fully entrenched in the urban economy.

Human behavioural causes of urban dysfunction

The city is not only a physical object but also a state of mind that covers many interactive social and economic aspects. It is within our cities that we are more conscious of each other's existence and feel that our prosperity and security depends on other people's behaviour. But given the magnitude of the challenges that human settlements pose, society must, as also re-emphasized by The Habitat II Conference, value and take advantage of the wisdom, knowledge and skills of *all* individuals rather than those of a global minority.

Several contributors noted that increasing urban densities and diversities dictate special measures that have remained largely unacknowledged. Substantial inflows of people not representative of locally prevailing mixes can cause cultural shocks for existing populations and newcomers alike, leading to apprehension, misunderstandings and mutual fear. This creates the conditions for strife, polarisation and social division and is seen by many as contributing to urban dysfunction.

Urban problems are also perceived as brought about by a reality beyond individuals. Individuals' behaviour and orientation are deeply affected by social and formal rules, by collective and other individual actors' decisions and interaction, as well as by urban policies. Urban collective and individual actors, societal rules and policies are the elements that define the city as a living entity for human settlement, whose aim is performing specific functions necessary for co-habitation. In this framework, urban problems (exclusion, poverty, violence, pollution, etc.) could be seen as the consequences of forms of urban management that prevent cities from properly performing. Inclusion and exclusion are two sides of the same coin. Inclusive thought and behaviour can only exist with its opposite exclusion. But from their very beginning, cities were built to include and exclude. To include development and security, while excluding threats or enemies. Cities are by their historical nature an object of possession, aggression and demolition. That is the reason, why fear is a part of the city, and an effective reason to attract ever-more violence.

The objective of urban societies, however, should be the realization of human potential rather than creating inclusion and exclusion. Starting with a change of paradigm that includes new dimensions of human development intangible to the ones actually used, cities should become places where we recognize and value the subjectivity of the collective.

Administrative and political causes of urban dysfunction

The overwhelming majority of contributors felt that urban dysfunction is largely the outcome of urban governance practices, be it structural, administrative lack of local capacity, capability and skills, or be it lack of general opportunities for wide popular participation in decision-making processes.

Many agreed that urban dysfunction could be overcome by the introduction of participatory political and administrative systems in each locality. To achieve that goal, governance structures at the local level need to be reviewed. Good urban governance is seen as one of the major inroads to providing solutions for urban problems, if implemented carefully. Focusing on the empowerment of people to participate in urban decision-making as it affects their lives as individuals, families and societies is the primary issue. Through such processes, people would be able to regain a feeling of belonging, security and empowerment. Each community should have an easily accessible mechanism based, for instance, on religious, cultural or other affiliation through which popular concerns can be expressed and administratively addressed, while representatives should report back through these mechanisms.

But the empowerment process is not just a matter of administrative changes in legislation. It should also be cultivated *within* people to enable them to work together and to take collective action, develop a common vision and to achieve collective goals. To this end, empowerment programs should be adopted to maximize individual and group capacities to contribute in the creation of collective action towards needs satisfaction, realization of human rights and equitable development. Achieving this comes down to leadership, vision, societal signals on acceptable behaviour, and forging opportunities to interact, learn and share.

Some felt this implies that we need leaders who listen and are interested in the energies that live in urban populations rather than being concerned with their individual political future. There is a great need to pay attention and listen to those in our societies who have been marginalized and we need to learn from our mistakes rather than repeating them before we mistake oblivion for the future.

To address the above concerns and views, many submissions focused on a number of basic administrative principles that should be applied to each locality:

- government administrations must become more representative of the population;
- groups and individuals must become more involved in decisions towards shaping their territory according to their own sense of identity and development;
- all significant decisions must be taken at the local level, within parameters set by the appropriate regional or national level while mediating differences for the common good;
- procedures and strategies must be formulated to determine how decisions should be implemented and their impacts measured for feedback;
- participatory processes must become part of a social education framework; and
- government policies at all levels must be consistent and complementary with the above aims, guaranteeing satisfaction of basic needs, social security, and equity.

Such changes cannot be implemented overnight and require change in social and psychological urban mechanisms based on new positive thinking among its inhabitants. The creation of positive thinking requires long-term education on social equality, tolerance, ecological ethics and popular inclusiveness in addressing urban problems.

Although the existence of representative governance structures at the local level, is considered crucial to ensure both fiscal equity and an equitable level of services for all, some believe that participation can also be taken too far and that too much local autonomy will be counterproductive. They argue that basic services such as, for instance, health and education should neither be locally financed nor dependent on the wealth of local populations as that would create inequity on the basis of socio-economic status among neighbourhoods.

Several contributors believe we can find solutions in strengthening institutional structures and mechanisms and creating appropriate capacities among urban social educators. Many see education as one of the keys to achieving harmonized urban conditions. Education that concentrates on the explanation of cultural, social and other difference and understanding of the role of difference in development would provide knowledge so that we can learn from rather than fear one another.

Some contributors pointed at historic urban governance structures to provide examples of the need for effective urban communication. The forum of the ancient polis was a public place for meetings where the philosophers could discuss and elaborate on a theory and citizen could express opinions. It was the forum where the life of the city took place, where major events were debated, where political changes, breaking news, and various speeches could burst all of a sudden, bringing crowds together. Today's meaning of the word forum is different in form rather than in essence. Modern information and communication technology can make a big difference and may bring an enormous change to the economic, political and cultural spheres of the city if utilized correctly. It is a matter of how the potential of ITC is used whether we can turn it into a powerful tool for improving the quality of urban and rural life. Inclusive thought and behaviour can be nurtured by promoting learning and access to communication, since the information age plays an important part in changing the role of the city of the future.

Misconceptions in socio-spatial organization as causes of urban dysfunction

A number of contributors related socio-economic and political systems and urban issues to a context of and interaction with spatial elements and systems:

The experience of the urban condition is defined by the experience of a multiplicity of spatiality that are both fragments and complete wholes of the same. Cities are a condensation of social relationships, of overexposure and isolation, of freedom and anomie, of ambition and difference, of clear and controlled spaces *versus* the plurality and unregulated experience of life with others. These contradictions end up comprising the modern emptiness of public and private experiences.

In modern cities, there is a gap between the *ideal* ordered spaces articulated by logico-mathematical categories or mental spaces from the *real* spaces supported by daily social practices. Spatial practices take place under specific social relations among ethnic, gender, class and community factors. Any of these conditions generates a process of distance as a defensive barrier against threatening experiences of urban crowds. It implies that the appropriation of space is given by the manner in which it is occupied by objects

(streets, houses), activities, and social groups. Therefore, the production of territoriality is bounded with forms of solidarity – the urban forms of solidarity or the shared feeling of belonging to a place that opens up a new world of possibilities.

The city builds its space on representations and the objectification of wants, desires and aspirations waiting to be fulfilled. However, the current uncontrolled processes of urbanization in the developing world show how opportunity can become a trap. Marginalization, dis-recognition and the expansive gap of inequality in access to health and education facilities, employment, satisfaction of basic needs, and the creation of sub-urban dwellers are the life conditions for urban migrants.

The importance of space is widely neglected and underestimated. Space is not just a container where social, cultural and economic processes are taking place, rather we have to regard and understand space in a dialectical relationship to socio-economic behaviour. It is as much an outcome of our social conditions as it is a basis and a framework for them. Just like our body is a spatial and material entity, we have to regard our society as a collective body. We have to appreciate and recognize the role of space in human interaction and the formation of collective consciousness. Because space is so deeply related to security and freedom, to crime and injustice, aggression and lethargy, fear and exclusion, we have to *address* space; *develop* it; and *shape* it as a positive and valuable anchor of social life. Space has to be addressed from below, from local culture and tradition, utilizing local initiatives, people taking responsibility and taking care, using their ingenuous creativity and creating neighbourhood environments. Sustainable cities, presented here as inclusive cities, that combat fear and exclusion and 'care for the other', can only be achieved through the full participation of the people.

2.2 Are urban problems symptoms of something deeper or inherently dysfunctional in our socio-economic and political systems?

Many contributors supported the view that urban problems are the symptoms of deeper issues. They largely fall into four thematic categories socio-economic, human behavioural and/or administrative and political causes.

Socio-economic issues

Current socio-economic and political systems are tending towards individual satisfaction rather than the traditional spirit of societal sharing. This individualism, reinforced by anonymous urban life styles, caused developmental inequalities and the current deep-rooted poverty that, in turn, spurred breakdowns of normal human behaviour, traditions and good behavioural norms, especially among the youth.

The existence of inequalities reinforces inadequate living conditions of the poor - either in psychological and/or material terms. The perception of the poor of being worse-off than other sectors of society affects their self-esteem with multiplier effects. It has compelled many poor persons to invest in luxurious goods at the expense of basic goods, in order to follow sophisticated trends of the better off. All too frequently it motivates poor people to resort to violence as a means of obtaining products that they desire. The

better off, in their turn, use their influence to further increase inequality, by shifting public investments to the areas of the city where they live.

Human behavioural issues

Urban problems are symptomatic of an urgent need for psychosocial development. The emerging global urban society has to build, invent, transmit and understand new forms of relationships at every level of its organisation. Many contributors feel that urban issues can largely be solved by going back to a holistic view of societies, people and focusing on the individuals within. Letting the people involved in the problem be a part in finding the solution. Creativity and involvement not only solves problems but also finds solutions to the creation of problems.

Urban problems are symptoms of something missing and urban dwellers are prisoners to appearances by: (a) believing that dysfunction is functional; accepting transparent propaganda that nobody believes but everybody accepts; (b) by accepting that life is inherently distrustful and that our societies have serious socio-economic-political shortcomings; allowing societal difference to separate people, rather than to bring them together to live in communities for people's commonness; and (c) accepting that the urban society with its unintended circumstances for many is a prison that breeds dysfunction.

Administrative and political reasons

Most contributors ascribe urban dysfunction to sheer administrative and governance shortcomings, be it based in lack of political will, the outcome of lack of capacity and competence, or lack of leadership skills at the local level.

Urban dysfunction arises from hierarchical governance practices that are out of touch with the governed and from the progressive abandonment by government of its responsibilities in favour of the trans-national few. This has led to deep imperfections in social, political and economic systems, that are, in turn, the consequences of individual thinking. Interdisciplinary examination of humankind and city are necessary and mankind should be ready to a very sluggish motion to the solution of urban problems.

Urban problems are defined and translated into life-threatening situations. At the most mundane level, the inability of many urban governments to provide basic urban services shows that they lack the capacity and resources to cope with the challenges posed by increasing urban populations. Urban problems are also symptoms of wrong policies, and of social imbalances expressed in a widening gap between rich and poor.

Originally the city was created to be a safe place against the risky environment outside its walls. The crisis of modernity has brought about the end of the idea of the city as a safe place. Nowadays the quality of the urban environment seems to be determined by the leadership concept in managing the complexity of problems that the quality improvement of a contemporary city requires; a complexity in which the traditional approach of spatial planning is now tied to the new themes of environmental policy, migration issues, governance issues and issues related to dealing with multi-cultural urban environments.

Intercultural and interdisciplinary approaches to urban problems and potentials are crucial to understand the thought and behaviour building our urban future.

2.3 What role should the United Nations play in promoting more functional urban life?

Many contributors believe that the United Nations as an organization should be strengthened to allow for more effective, catalyst interventions in undesirable developments, while promoting more preferable courses of global development. They see a high moral role for the UN in promoting a new worldview, premised on mutual understanding between peoples, cultures and regions and to help build a peaceful and sustainable world. Some believe that, although it appears logical to split UN activities over sectoral agencies, the outcomes of its activities tend to be limited because of sectoral division, rather than holistically addressing the complexity of the world's multi-dimensional human and social needs. Some also believe that the UN should be more of a practical laboratory than a think tank, producing non-technical publications for the use by all.

The following are considered key areas for United Nations interventions:

- promotion of global peace and curtailment of aggressive political and economic powers by strengthening UN powers as a trans-national, global government;
- setting of norms, assuring that declarations and agreements are implemented by Governments and assuring global adherence to human rights;
- creating a knowledge base and a repository of human experience, expertise and best practices towards solutions to basic human problems and building effective and accessible information dissemination mechanisms;
- promoting education of all sorts, including the provision of training and information on urban management;
- Promoting and monitoring constructive communication processes based on representative participation, mutual trust, advocacy, and social institutional and operational education through campaigns in rural and urban areas alike;
- Preserving cultural continuity;
- Building a united place for people - not nations - to explore more humane societies based on models of inclusive thought and behaviour.
- Enhancing the system of accountability for international funds disbursement to public, private for profit or not for profit intermediaries to help the poor and prevent mismanagement and corruption;
- Increase the investment in popular empower, combat corruption and inequality; and
- Increasing the global focus on the future generation.

Several contributors hold the view that the United Nations cannot realistically expect to play a significant role at the individual city level as that is the function of local government. However, the UN is seen as potentially effective in five key areas:

(a) reinforcing human rights, civil liberties, equality of opportunity, acceptance and cherishing of diversity, and dialogue among cultures;

(b) reinforcing the global obligations of urban areas, so that they take these into account in their land-use planning, use of resources, treatment of the environment, interaction with other regions and nations, etc.

(c) identifying urban areas or nations that fail in the above and help ensure that appropriate parties initiate corrective measures;

(d) initiating research, educational and demonstration activities where it is appropriate for a global organisation to do so, and to help mobilize resources for urban areas that have the will to improve urban life, but lack the means; and

(e) assisting urban areas that receive an influx of people (refugees, migrant workers, the rural poor) at a rate and mix of cultures that is beyond their ability to cope.

Analysis of Day Three (14 November 2001): National Urban Policy

The Premise

A country's global success rests on its cities' shoulders. In a rapidly urbanizing world, it is the city that increasingly contains the social, economic and political details of a country. Evidence shows that cities are critical to every facet of national human development. Accordingly, a nation must attend to the basic needs of its cities to ensure a constantly improving quality of life countrywide.

Central government by itself, however, cannot effectively apprehend the immediate micro-realities and needs of all citizens within its national borders. Moreover, it can respond neither fast nor flexibly to local issues and crises. Nonetheless, national government is central to sustainable urban development and is still the fittest agent of worthwhile economic and social change.

Certainly, governments negotiate the rules of international engagement that may influence any city's economic future. But governments - provincial and state, as well as national - also pass the legislation that determines who has control over local assets. Governments are the watchdogs that can ensure that environmental standards are being met and ecosystems are not being dismantled, that local services are not arbitrarily withheld from the poor, that citizens have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them, that safety nets are in place in case of emergency and that norms of integrity are properly upheld by local officials.

One of the most urgent tasks facing governments everywhere is the formulation of a coherent set of policies that enables cities to take their place at the centre of national economic and social development.

3.1 What should be the key provisions of a model national urban policy?

Given the potential of the urban condition to generate complex issues, problems and even degrees of dysfunction, nearly all contributors felt that it is *essential* to worldwide stimulate the formulation of urban policies, or, at least, assure the incorporation of strong urban elements in all national macro-level policies. Urban policies or the urban components in other policies should include all major aspects that impact on the functions of the urban domain. The views of proponents of formulating urban policies large fall in three categories:

- (a) recommendations regarding themes to be covered by national urban policies;
- (b) recommendations on the roles of national governments and local authorities; and
- (c) recommendations on the roles of civil society in formulating and implementing urban policies.

One can argue whether it is necessary to have a specific national urban policy given the fact that in most countries the rural-urban boundary is increasingly blurred. But even if this line of reasoning is supported, it would be useful to have a national development policy in which rural and urban sectors can be identified as separate, albeit mutually interactive and interconnected components. Given that most countries do have an agrarian or rural development policy, an urban counterpart would appear to make sense. From the contributions it became clear that, wherever an urban policy is being developed, it should not be developed in a vacuum but be closely related to - if not integrated with -

national macro economic and rural development policies, as well as being interwoven with any other local, national, regional and international policies adopted by the country.

Nevertheless, any policy is doomed to fail if the political, social and economic conditions surrounding it are not conducive to its effective implementation. Many contributors felt that good governance is a *sine qua non* in policy development and implementation while for policies to be successful they must be based on democratic principles, equitability, flexible fiscal mechanisms; civic engagement; and decentralized, transparent and participatory governance. Several contributors added to this a need for redefining the role of government by developing new concepts of leadership that will take governance beyond merely a national watchdog function. Rather, governments should provide moral leadership in addressing major urban issues at all levels.

Most contributors, one way or the other, expressed that any national urban policy must assure environmental, social and economic sustainability. Some felt that lack of attention to sustainability is at the basis of many of today's urban problems, causing expanding cities to degenerate into spatial structures without essential supporting economic and social structures. Some gave the example of urban informal settlements through which all too often the poor and disenfranchised are the *de facto* decision-makers of where and how cities grow, leaving few realist intervention options for municipal governments in the wake of such spontaneous urban development.

Many also feel that, although cities worldwide have emerged as flamboyant entities in demographic, economic, political and social terms, national governments are failing to put urban affairs high enough on their agenda. One contributor explained this phenomenon in many developing countries as the result of conflicts between urban political synergies and regimes in power. As a result, development planning for overall development of states tends to ignore the urban aspects; sometimes to the extent that countries have done away with their Ministry of Urban Development altogether.

Town planning and other regulations as contained in an urban policy *can* be powerful instruments to achieve sustainable development. Municipal authorities around the world have already shown - when given the power through national guidelines or policy - that they have the ability, political will and popular support to enforce and improve their sustainability records. For instance, worldwide many municipalities have gone beyond minimum national requirements for Local Agendas 21 and made considerable inroads to improving urban environments beyond the levels demanded from them. Frequently, such local activities are based on a clear institutional plan grounded in nationally defined rules of engagement to make strategies work and to adjust them to both the local and national needs and expectations. National oversight and stimulation, as would be contained in national urban policies, help create platforms for local adaptability that take the diverse challenges of individual cities into account, but within a coherent and consistent national framework. It has been proven in many instances that if national urban and other macro policies are sufficiently elastic to direct macro aspects of development, but flexible enough to allow for local adaptation, the local level can respond with surprisingly effective action.

Key elements of urban policies

Urban policies should foremost reflect the needs of the people and support a good quality of life for all. Preoccupation with optimal city sizes and normative notions of ideal-type urban hierarchies as in the debates of the 1970s is rather unhelpful and fruitless and should not be the aim of national urban policies. Sustainability of the urban condition, however, would be one of the key elements suited for elaboration in urban policy. Cities can only exist as part of sustainable societies and cities must be recognised as parts of wider systems, avoiding dichotomous thinking that reduces policy to discrete and mutually exclusive 'urban' and 'rural'. Peri-urban areas – the continuum between the often-perceived polarities urban and rural - are increasingly important functionally, economically and environmentally. Such areas are highly dynamic and changeable. This need not be problematic from a policy perspective, provided again that policy focuses on processes and concepts, rather than becoming obsessed with measurement and formalistic agendas. Urban policy would also be the instrument to plan and develop urban hierarchies, avoiding duplication of functions and unnecessary competition among cities for functions and investments. In this light, the national urban policy would be a macro instrument that regulates, guides and prescribes national development in a holistic manner, rather than interfering with local level micro management.

The importance and meaning of urban policies must by necessity vary greatly in different countries. Developed countries tend to focus more on post-industrialization issues, while developing countries generally have the propensity to converge on growth and resource exploration. Based on benchmarking, general principles of urban policy can be established, although this does certainly not lead to standard 'cure all' solutions for individual cities. Nevertheless, urban policy formulated at the national level should highlight at least the following four characteristics:

- **Diversity:** Whatever the size and numbers of cities in a country, the urban plan should strengthen individual cities' features and hierarchically differentiate them from national or international peers.
- **Dynamics:** Urban policy must improve cities' capacities to face future challenges and opportunities through the planning and exploiting competitive economic advantages, prudent resource allocation policies, flexible migrant policies etc.
- **Harmony:** As the most energetic habitat clusters, cities enjoy a reputation of civilization, advancement, innovation, fashion, wealth accumulation etc. These significant achievements must be made to attribute to harmony, both external and internal.
- **Creativity:** Cities must capture and capitalize on their individual history, culture or economy without turning this into a blanket excuse for either conservation or resistance to innovation.

One contributor drew the attention to the multiple-level requirements for national urban policies. At the national level, key provisions of the urban policy should be urban production and poverty reduction. At the subnational regional level, key provision should be the use of regional resources for sustainable development to create viable city regions with due consideration to the hinterland. At the city level, urban management and good governance, including the management of urban infrastructure and services, should be the

primary aim. At the village level, urbanization potentials should be used for development, while rural resources should only prudently be made available for urban consumption. At the community level, local empowerment, grassroots planning and integration and synthesis with higher-level spatial units and authorities must be the key priority.

Despite the above recommendations, national urban policies alone will not produce all solutions. A differentiated and flexible national urban policy requires for its successful implementation also a number of pre-conditions:

- self-government;
- local level institutional capacity and capability;
- local level-managed revenue generation and budgets;
- local government partnerships with private, community and civil organizations sectors;
- flexible and action-oriented cultures among local authorities;
- effective coordination between and among all levels of public authority;
- National guidelines and a framework for planning and decision-making to lead the process of policy design, while the implementation is fully delegated to the local level;
- A focus on people, as they are the most important factor to be taken into account; and
- Strong poverty alleviation efforts and broad popular inclusion as a public responsibility with strategy development for more efficient use of human capital.

Given the above pre-conditions, specific provisions must be made for national guidelines towards:

- Integration and coordination of the national urban policy with other macro policies;
- Effective social and political organization, including a national urban hierarchy that assigns roles to cities on the basis of city size, core function and location and that prevents unnecessary internal competition;
- Welfare, health and education management on the basis of national spatial and socio-economic strategies;
- Economic development, including guidelines on locational links between investment, human resources and education, linking production and consumption with envisaged spatial forms;
- Poverty reduction, employment and income-generation;
- Urban upgrading and slum reduction;
- Crime and violence management;
- Social and physical infrastructure development;
- Environmental management;
- Disaster and other prevention and mitigation strategies; and
- Tourism development.

The Role of National Government in Urban Policy

National governments should support cities in formulating local economic development policies and programmes, with special attention on employment generation for marginalized population groups and long-time sustainable development.

Several contributors saw the role of central government largely as a law provider, including fiscal policy, for stimulating empowerment and equity for cities to functionally work in harmony with the national state. They feel that national legislation elements must:

- ensure democratic municipal structures;
- encourage cooperation within and among urban areas;
- ensure fiscal self-determination for local governments consistent with their responsibilities;
- provide incentives for compact forms of human settlement that avoid wasteful use of urban land and related high infrastructure costs;
- foster healthy and balanced growth of independent but cooperating city networks and metropolitan regions;
- prescribe an urban hierarchy, whereby city and regional governments can take strategic and democratic decisions concerning their development and goals within a nationally determined framework; and
- facilitate multi-cultural urban societies that help prevent exclusion and impoverishment and protect the physical environment.

The Role of Civil Society in Urban Policy

Many contributors argued that only collaborative partnerships among all actors from society could create national urban policies tailored to urban needs. When looking at remedies to urban problems, segregation of tasks, wrong classification of problems and in many cases ignorance of such major problems as poverty, alienation and lack of the integration of the urban poor in the entire urban functioning are at the root of the problem.

All stakeholders should participate actively in the formulation and implementation of a coherent national urban policy designed to realize equitable socio-economic development and reduction of urban poverty. Given the rapidly rising numbers of marginalized population segments worldwide, the marginalized themselves must become part of the solution and be empowered to participate in the formulation of an all-inclusive policy that will be implemented by democratic institutions and focus on integrated human settlements development.

Considering the dramatic increase in migratory flows and global population growth no city should be left alone to perform its functions. A coordinated strategy of networks of cities (globally, regionally or nationally) would help in creating the organization for cooperative activities. It is necessary to re-launch the idea of cities as the (living) technology for correct human settlement and, at the same time, considering all the cities of a given region under a comprehensive strategy aimed at meeting the unrelenting demand for city life and consequently for overall development.

Dialogue can create utmost flexibility in planning and developing in any city. In the past, abstract models of urban policy have often led to inappropriate results, especially if applied over long periods of time without reflecting upon them. Our cities need supportive attention, commensurate to the importance have for society and the physical, social, economic and political structures they include. This includes developing goals and generating reliability in a participatory way vis-a-vis urban planning and investment.

3.2 Through what mechanisms and institutions will national urban policy be implemented?

Some contributors stated that the mechanisms and institutions through which a national urban policy can be implemented are rather straightforward if the policy can be clearly formulated, but that it is necessary to have sufficient management and financial capability before urban policies can lead to effective implementation. Most believe that the institutions for the implementation of the national urban policy should be the existing branches and channels of government and administration, but with a radically changed outlook on matters of global urban sustainability.

It was generally believed that regulating the diverse and heterogeneous issues of cities from the national level is a common systemic contradiction. National urban policy has to become aware of the mechanisms, institutions and levels of economic and other development and become the facilitator for people and regions. It has to be a policy of and for decentralized interests. Within this context, nations' triple mechanism of policy implementation - the legislative, judicial and executive powers - need constant reform and adaptation to changing realities and have to be deployed in a democratic and equitable manner.

Participative governance structures are one of the suggested mechanisms that may help institutionalise decentralization and local level effectiveness of national urban policies if it involves the national planning agency in conjunction with the local level authorities and community organizations. Popular consultations and participation in the formulation of national urban policies should be adopted, while the implementation should be through partnerships of actors whose roles and contributions will vary from time to time as dictated by the local contexts.

The tools and institutions are (and should be) multiple. Beginning with policies that put the mandate to administer development policies in the hands of national governments (given that in developing nations this is often not occurring) due to the increasing role of unrestrained market forces and the transfer of a many decision making instruments to realms outside national spheres. These policies should direct development rather than leaving it up to a free reign that only benefits a few or benefits only certain domains of growth and distribution. National policies should install or recuperate the State's capacity to act as guidance for and a distributor of well being for urbanizing areas and its dwellers.

At the same time, they should create the tools for equitable and efficient sub-national or local actions that lets cities act on their daily running of the administration of cities, participation policies at the local level and even the aspects of strategic planning that fall

within the realm of urban administration. Policy instruments should best fit the domain of each policy setting and application body and not act as competing or overlapping tools. That is, policy should adapt to the real action that each level of government can operate in.

Central government should provide guidelines to local governments for the broad scope of development, working within international norms as defined, among others, in the Habitat Agenda. Essential requirements should be made clear and guidelines regarding which developments should be postponed until the whole region or a country reaches that "must developed" level. Implementation of guidelines depends upon local authorities and resources available. A development program in which local governments share the ideas and resources is the backbone. A local government at provincial level should launch a cooperation program among its cities. A certain city after getting developed to a "defined level" or "necessary level" should share its skills and resources with another less developed city of province. It is exactly the notion of cooperation, vertically and horizontally, among and within cities that is an essential pre-requisite for the implementation of national urban policies. A coherent national urban policy aiming at sustainable development and democracy can be implemented by collaborative planning, participation and coordination of joint efforts on the part of government, civil society, private sector and international organizations. The role of public institutions should be improved through capacity building, whilst private sector interventions should be encouraged, as well as that of various NGOs. Stronger vertical coordination between central and local governments in planning, programming and budgeting would place more emphasis on strengthening local capabilities for urban management including the formulating and implementing of urban development programmes and managing urban areas. Achieving the communality of interests between the key actors is very important, thus the development goals should always be stated in a way that reinforce and initiate both the organic and the mechanical solidarity of the local organized society.

There is no lack of knowledge internationally on mechanisms for implementing policies. The problem is lack of appropriate level of packaging of mechanisms. Urban managers should know that the best resources are citizens and their abilities, not just physical assets.

Poor management of urban data and lack of coordination and collaboration between national/provincial/public institutions are parts of the main obstacles. Most countries do not have at the state and provincial level a strong institution that can integrate data and facilitate dialogue and coordination among ministries, local authorities and private sector.

Associations of municipalities must be strengthened to enable them to take a lead position in guiding policy formulation processes at local level and to defend the interests of local governments *vis-à-vis* central governments, e.g. ensuring that more government revenue goes directly to municipalities.

One contributor pointed at inter-level blockages that hinder free urban economic development. Housing institutions (international and national) and their mechanisms have

blocked further possibilities of economic growth when limiting loans and grants to the basic needs of housing without further provision of a supplementary space for economic production at the family level. The same can be said for most of the planning regulations, that do not provide spaces for micro-enterprises, which are the basis of job creation and the only ground for economic development of most cities. These mechanisms should be complemented with access to micro credits, training and networking in other spheres of economic development outside of the poor communities; the rest might come along with time.

3.3 How can the United Nations promote the integration of national urban and economic development policies?

From the responses received to this question it became clear that worldwide there exists a perhaps somewhat erroneous understanding of what the United Nations is, what its functions are and where the limitations lie. As an organization of national governments, the role of United Nations is by definition limited since it deals in principle only with national governments. Nevertheless, its mission can be significant in the sense that it provides a platform where governments meet on an equal basis and the UN, as an institution, can lobby and put pressure on governments to encourage other forms of economic development.

Many contributors believe the UN should act as a global force of cohesion, a peacekeeper and a watchdog for ethical behaviour, taking up the causes of the under-privileged and disenfranchised, while creating an environment that is conducive to human development and to the eradication of poverty. Most suggestions as to the role of the UN in propagating the worldwide formulation of national urban policies are posed in this sense:

The UN can help stimulate constructive thinking and dialogue in all sectors - building upon its continuing moral authority as international peacekeeper and upon the substantial body of international law to which its member states have subscribed.

Since the urban century has already commenced, it is critical for UN bodies to act as a catalyst and play a more proactive role in towards activities and thoughts on global strategies for future development while promoting global harmonization of national policies. This should take the form of promoting integration of the economic, social and environmental variables of national urban policies and progressively expanding the understanding of the implications at all levels of society and in all contexts of development. Good governance is the missing link between poverty reduction and growth.

Others largely see the UN in technical assistance, expertise provision and advisory roles. The United Nations should:

- Provide advisory services to governments, local authorities and the private sector and continue to promote the connection of national poverty eradication programmes to international economic and financial policies.

- Foster urban innovation and good practice by making available information about successful urban policies and programs from which others can learn.
- Support capacity building and provide mechanisms for central and local governments to share resources and skills rather than competing for them.
- Encourage development models based on knowledge, innovation and creativity and look at sustainable urban development as a business opportunity.
- Help build extensive national data collections. National urban strategies need to be based on research and data collection for informed decision-making at all levels.

The UN should take on the role as an International Observatory of local associations' and neighbourhoods' committees achievements for national urban and economic development policies through its regional or national offices.
