

CITIES 2030

Ideas and Practices for the Urban Future

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FRAMING OF THE 'CITIES 2030 - IDEAS AND PRACTICES FOR THE URBAN FUTURE' INITIATIVE

The next ten years will be pivotal for the urban future: climate emergency, growing inequality, transformations in technology and work, and continued urbanization together form an immense and urgent set of challenges. *Cities 2030* aims to identify and debate the ideas that need to feed into policy and practice in order to ensure more socially and ecologically progressive cities across the global North and South.

Cities play increasingly central roles in the global economy, in environmental change, social inequality, and political transformation. Urbanization brings enormous challenges as well as exciting opportunities for our global future. By 2030, 60% of the global population will live in cities. Cities are crucial for the Sustainable Development Goals, from water and sanitation for all to affordable energy and safe, resilient places to live. The *New Urban Agenda* positions cities as central to tackling climate change and poverty, and to developing prosperity. In the global North, cities have struggled to emerge from a period of sustained austerity while attempting to develop new economic and ecological directions, and are looking to rebuild outdated infrastructure and rethink public services amidst a set of rapidly emergent and changing technologies.

Cities do not stand still. In the past 30 years, most cities have expanded, on average doubling their land areas. In some cities, they have expanded by ten times. Often, these are smaller cities, or medium sized cities, which sometimes have particular challenges of resource, organisation, institutions, inequality, and ecology. Many of the rapidly growing smaller African cities, for example, are both increasingly unequal and located on environmentally sensitive areas at risk as the climate changes. The same can be said of course for many larger cities, from Jakarta and Mumbai to Miami and New York, all increasingly unequal and at risk environmentally.

How to respond is an urgent question. Existing approaches and models are, perhaps, increasingly inadequate. The same old framings and ideas might be running out of steam. While there is a consensus around the value of people-centred urban development, it is also clear that we need to go far beyond that. Participation and coproduction may be central, but few would argue that these routes alone are the way to tackle the scale of the urban challenge today. The scale of the challenges demand asking fundamental questions about who and what produces and runs cities and for whose benefit. It demands understanding how cities are produced, how land is organised, owned and traded, how the economy in cities and of urbanization is composed, how culture feeds into development priorities, and how all of that needs to change.

In the face of urgent and profound challenges, the urban question needs to be thought anew and the range of existing actors and practices need to be interrogated and imagined differently. This means, for example, grappling simultaneously with seemingly divergent processes, from the role of private

sector organisations building entirely new cities to emerging social economies in marginalised poor neighbourhoods, while centralising an environmental commitment and preparing for transformations in labour markets.

New knowledge sources and forms of practice?

Where do we turn to for inspiration and new pathways? Where are the visions and catalysts for a better urban future? And how do we influence the key stakeholders driving today's cities? *Cities 2030* is a series of events that aims to think boldly about the urban future and what needs to be done. This is the first of them. Our aim is to narrow down the central questions and agendas that need to be prioritised, and the subsequent events will be structured around those themes.

Ideas to practice

By starting with ideas, speakers will not only argue for ways of thinking about and understanding key issues, but will set out an approach and course of action on what needs to change and how. In particular, the focus of *Cities 2030* is on the thorny challenge of transition from ideas to practice. How do we go from where we are to doing things better? What and who is missing from this discussion and how might we make strategic interventions and where?

In addition to the key questions above, areas of reflection might include:

- *How should future demographic growth in cities be accommodated in socially progressive ways? Should densification and expansion be balanced, and if so how?*
- *How do we integrate environment and climate change centrally into how we plan, understand, and live in the city, and what are the economic and social consequences?*
- *What would urban equality look like and how might it be achieved given the economic, cultural and political exclusion, violence and exploitation too often found in cities?*
- *How might urban land, economy and labour transform in the decades ahead, and what changes are necessary now to prepare in ways that include all urban residents?*
- *How can finance be generated and leveraged to the issues, places and people that need it most?*
- *What kinds of data are needed to meet key urban challenges and realise the possibilities, and how might they be best produced?*

The following short interventions present multiple views regarding the (two) issues that matter most in meeting the urban development challenge(s) in the next decade and example(s) from practice.

OR HOW I LEARNED TO STOP WORRYING AND LOVE URBAN FUTURES IN A CHANGED CLIMATE - VANESA CASTÁN BROTO

Dr. Strangelove or How I learned to stop worrying and love the bomb was rereleased in May 2019 to gain universal acclaim again for being a unique satire that encompasses human's existential worries and appetite for self-destruction. As a United States Air Force general orders a nuclear strike attack on the Soviet Union, the institutional apparatus that should protect us descend into hilarious incompetence. Petty politics goes on under the threat of total annihilation. I wonder if Kubrick ever thought that humans would ever build a planetary Doomsday Machine, one which did not mean a one-off existential threat but the slow destruction of the matrix that sustains life starting with the oceans and then slowly creeping up on the crust of the Earth.

Invoking *Dr. Strangelove* to think about urban futures in our time may seem irresponsible. However, this example is relevant for two reasons. First, the film is an excellent example of the need for laughter in the face of the impending catastrophe. What could be more worrying than a nuclear disaster? Yet, Kubrick found a way to make people laugh about it. It is a fiction, you may rightly say. But the atomic bomb was not fiction for those who first watched the movie. When I interviewed the North American economist Daniel Bromley about how he faced the environmental crisis, he said something like he had grown up doing 'Duck and Cover' drills at school, and nothing, nothing could be worse than the threat of mindless annihilation by the bomb.

Second, the film portrays humorously the kind of politics that emerges when nobody is too sure of what to do about it. A recent documentary about the film entitled "Stanley Kubrick Considers the Bomb" by Matt Wells, presents Kubrick explaining his anxieties about the historical moment reflected in his movie: "The atomic bomb is as much of an abstraction as you can possibly have (...) It's as abstract as that you know that someday you'll die, and you do an excellent job of denying it, psychologically. I would say, in the minds of most people, it's less interesting than city government." I thought this was very fitting in a time when much hope lies in cities as places where the definitive action will take place. As national commitments to reduce carbon emissions are not nearly sufficient to deliver climate change, many eyes are turned towards all kinds of actors including local governments and communities, to do something else to bridge the extra mile.

But how much else can local governments and urban communities do? For years we have seen a variety of multiscale actions taking place in urban environments turning every stone available to turn. Yet, as the 2014 IPCC report argued, these efforts remain fragmented, and it is difficult to say what impact they will have on the climate. No wonder they are fragmented! They happen in many places, and in many ways- they pertain to different sectors and different ways of looking at what is a low carbon city. They remain fragmented because they cannot be easily aggregated (despite

numerous efforts to bring together a global view, not least the fantastic work at the Yale Data-Driven laboratory and other colleagues who have tried to assess this). They are not calculable as a unit. When we say urban climate action is experimental, it is because it could not possibly be otherwise.

If you ask my opinion, I have always found hope in this fragmented, experimental climate change action and in no way I am waiting for a coordinated, comparable response in which all the cities of the world develop a uniform reaction because that can only mean settling down for the lowest common denominator and disregard the need for ensuring that climate action is fit to the context in which it occurs, aligned with co-benefits and responding to place-based political priorities.

“But we need an unprecedented urban transformation to address the current challenge of climate change”- you may say, perhaps after reading the compelling case made in the 2018 IPCC Special Report on climate change under 1.5 degrees. Indeed, we need it. But who says that transformation can be steered in one single way? Dr. Strangelove offers grounds for inspiration about how such transformation may happen at least in three ways:

First, we have to believe in the power of good ideas to stay. Here, I feel I am channeling my inner Habermas, but with a caveat: the power of good ideas to stay requires them to be materialized in some way. Not only bad ideas look ridiculous when looking at them from a distance, as Dr. Strangelove makes visible, but also, good ideas, once they happen, they seem to be oddly resistant. Consider this little story with a twist:

Over a year ago, on the 30th of November of 2018, Madrid rolled out an ambitious plan to restrict traffic in the city, a flagship programme of the progressive government of Manuela Carmena called Madrid Central. Controversy, however, surrounded the programme. Business leaders, in particular, felt that it threatened shopping to the point that they pressed the municipality to fix the inaugural date after ‘black Friday’ (I am serious!). However, in the run after Christmas, it soon became evident that Madrid Central supported, rather than restricted prosperity in the city. I was immediately reminded of Flyvberg’s now classical analysis of planning in Aalborg, Denmark, where business leaders refused to acknowledge that moving away from cars was a good idea that would benefit them. Madrid Central was nevertheless a big success. Traffic restrictions had barely any impact on the social and economic life of the city and there was not perceptible congestion anywhere else. And the environmental improvements followed. The group Ecologistas en Accion has argued that in less than a year the levels of Nitrogen Dioxide have gone down by 11% in the whole city, and 20% in the restricted area. Yet, Madrid Central remained a big issue in national politics. In May 2019, a new major was elected in Madrid, a conservative, with the slogan ‘Almeida will end Madrid Central.’ This does not only mean that Almeida proposed ending Madrid Central as another measure in his programme, no, this was THE manifesto he ran on. But he actually won and once in power, he discovered that Madrid Central could not be ended as two different courts declaring any measures to curtail Madrid Central illegal. Fast forward to December 2019 and what we find? The City’s Mayor Almeida, presenting his ‘innovative’ climate change policies at the

COP held in Madrid, speaks with journalists about Madrid's environmental credentials. Mayor Almeida has- apparently- had a change of heart: Now Madrid Central is a flagship programme of the conservative government, one that they are not only proud of endorsing but also one through which they want to demonstrate leadership in international environmental policy. The COP is a forum for negotiation but most of all it is a showcase for projects, ideas and arguments, and one would expect politicians to use the opportunity to cast themselves in the most favourable light possible. But the example above also reflects on the dynamics of urban change. The conditions in which Madrid Central has been implemented- the way this policy has been joined with life in the city- makes it durable. It is a particular entanglement that a single political group cannot change. Instead, these politicians have tried to become a constitutive element of that entanglement, by renaming and underscoring their role on it. This is bad news for those worried about hypocrisy in politics (I am aware that I seem to be talking in between the lines about today's election, but I swear to you that I am not). However, this is good news for those of us who are trying to think how are we going to construct the city yet to come as the example suggests that the careful entanglement of change in urban life may make progressive, environmental action irreversible.

Perhaps Madrid Central is yet another example of the 'pragmatist' turn that Linda Westman and I (2020) have diagnosed in urban climate politics. Or perhaps this is just a condition of life. Once a good idea is working its way through the city it may be difficult to stop it.

Which brings me to my second point. Dr. Strangelove is also funny because against the ridiculous background of high-level politics, one juxtaposes the realities of everyday life. There is plenty of circuses to go around climate change politics, not least the pouting face of Trump and the escape games at the COPs. Yet, many of these gestures are of little or no consequence, because the urban transition depends, most of all, on a massive cultural change that transforms the material basis of the economy. Cultural change is already happening. And while we look at Greta Thunberg to think of what we want to do, we also look at Trump to think of what we do not want to do. I am not talking here about changing behaviors, but about making things unacceptable, about forcing change around us through socio-material relations. Economist Sharif Paget has argued that the major challenge for the oil industry in the US, at the moment, is to find workers. When he interviewed a former worker, she told him:

“I found some work that I really believe in,” she said. “I don't want to go back to the industry.”

All those things that look normal in our cities will eventually become ridiculous and change. I believe this is one of the things that is happening in Mozambican cities, which depend mostly on charcoal. Charcoal not only emits carbon emissions, but it is also associated with respiratory problems and house accidents. There have been campaigns to shift from charcoal to Liquefied Petroleum Gas, but they have been so far unsuccessful. People do not find LPG is a suitable alternative. At least with charcoal, they have a certain control over the supply chain: prices are high, but fluctuations are safe and do not depend on the government's whims. More recently, people

have found that they can do a lot of cooking with electric water heaters. Depending on how it is used, families may find themselves with savings using electricity. Our qualitative research in Maputo shows how people stack up multiple strategies to provide for their needs, and in doing so, they make the best of a bad situation. The very spontaneity and resourcefulness that he finds in urban Africa is maybe not something to celebrate, as they are coping responses to deal with capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy and other evils of the world. However, it is fair to say that in the face of climate change these skills to deal with uncertainty may become handy. Rather than celebrating them, we should learn from them.

Which brings me to the third point, about the chaos of top-down decision-making- full on display in Dr. Strangelove. I was recently reading Gina Ziervogel's account of the drought in Cape Town, and how the term of 'Day Zero'- now synonymous with the drought in that city- became the result of a political struggle, in which the mayor of Cape Town deviated from technocratic recommendations moving into a more emotional terrain where fear (rather than laughter) led to actual reductions in water consumption. Cape Town avoided Day Zero and created awareness about what kind of action was possible. Reading Ziervogel's account, I was reminded of Debra Roberts's own account about her approach to local government that for her follows a particular brand of 'guerrilla street science': a practice-universe in which multiple actors take risks (adopting a Day Zero discourse for example) bringing together various, on-the-ground, experiences. Guerrilla street science is an alternative to putatively objective approaches to action: where lack of knowledge and data constitutes a call to action and not a call to paralysis.

Boykoff and Osnes (2019) have recently argued for the need to laugh at the face of climate change, not only to enable public communication and social learning through direct, affective ways but also to find how to confront hegemonic powers and find alternative avenues for learning. Laughing about low carbon action and sustainable urban design makes it part of our lives. Browne (2015) has explained how fundamental humour is to enable people to talk about their everyday practices and face up to the contradictions in which those practices are embedded. Berlant and Ngai (2017) say that 'comedy has issues' because... "As both an aesthetic mode and a form of life, its action just as likely produces anxiety: risking transgression, flirting with displeasure, or just confusing things in a way that both intensifies and impedes the pleasure."

As a methodology, we are still to see how this can be applied to understand and love our cities. Like in Dr. Strangelove, comedy is a way to face that which we cannot face and find alternative routes to do something about it.

FRAGMENTS, DENSITY AND URBAN EQUALITY - COLIN MCFARLANE

Understanding contemporary cities – and responding to the challenges of growing poverty and inequality – demands that we pay attention to the city of fragments. The fragment city is the situated, everyday city on the often dense urban margins, where bits and pieces of material things are caught up in all kinds of social and political relations. Fragments are the material scraps of infrastructure, housing, services, everyday objects, former commercial enterprises, and more.

I want to point to two inter-connected themes: density and fragments. My argument is that these two areas are closely connected in what I am calling here ‘fragment urbanism’, and that they present key challenges for urban development in the next decade.

‘Fragment urbanism’ is the changing, multiple and often politicised relations between fragments and densities on the economic margins of the city. It is an expression of inequality and poverty, and legacies of powerful historical injustices: colonialism; structural adjustment; rounds of capitalist urbanisation and disinvestment; cultural politics of race, ethnicity, and so on. Urbanization proceeds not in spite of fragmentation, but through it.

Urbanization also proceeds through patterns of densification, de-densification and re-densification, often across cities and regions, including rural areas. Today, urbanization is spatially transforming on an often astounding scale. As Shlomo Angel and colleagues have shown through population data and satellite maps, in the 25 years leading to 2014, cities on average doubled their geographical areas in ways that planners did not anticipate or prepare for. Some cities in the global South increased their areas by more than 10-fold. Cities are predominantly sprawling rather than densifying; when the population of a city doubles, its urban extent triples (Angel et al, 2016; World Resources Institute, 2019). In the process, new geographies of density, expansions and (dis)connection are forming.

These changing patterns of de/re-densification are expressed in geographies of fragment urbanism. Just as some kinds of ‘green’ and ‘smart’ urban densities are heralded as urban solutions to all kinds of problems, other densities are shunted to the margins. As cities continue to grow and expand, most new residents live in some form of ‘informal neighbourhood’, often taking the form of dense or hyper-dense places that lack security of tenure, decent housing, and adequate infrastructure and services (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2013).

Fragments are provided, maintained and manipulated by all kinds of illicit and sometimes violent groups, and at the same time usually require huge amounts of labour – often by women and the poorest – just to make them operate and reproduce daily life. Fragments are experienced, not as theoretical questions, but as bodily and social problems connected to poor health, dehydration, homes that can be too hot, too cold, too wet, overcrowded, too flimsy and require too much work.

Fragments can exacerbate health problems and are part of the reason why children have to miss school or adults can't pursue livelihoods and other opportunities.

The growing global sanitation crisis is the most important challenge here. The numbers of urban residents living without basic sanitation increased in the fifteen years leading to 2015 by 100 million, and is now estimated at a staggering 667 million, while those without decent water also increased (Murali et al, 2018). At the same time, the demands on the fragmented infrastructures and services that do exist are becoming more intense as cities variously expand and densify (Mattern, 2018).

This struggle with fragments is intimately connected to urban densities. On the one hand, these fragmented provisions barely meet the needs of dense urban communities. Straightforwardly, the equation of provisions to numbers of people falls far short, not because there are 'too many people', as some on the political Right across the globe might wish to suggest, but because of the failure of the state – whether that failure is deliberate or not – to provide good quality basic urban amenities.

On the other hand, it is in dense urban communities that residents and activists often find their greatest resource: a close collection of people through which to organise, repair, fight back, and make demands. Densities are not just a 'problem', but an active resource in the making and remaking of fragmented provisions. In these changing relations of fragments and densities on the economic margins of our increasingly urban world, the present and future of the city are being composed and contested.

It is in the dense, alliance-forming, coalition-building spaces of the city that possibilities for progressive change so often emerge. From Paris and Cairo to Porto Alegre and Hong Kong, density has long been at the centre of revolution and claim-making, challenging and extending the very meaning of citizenship and modern life, from struggles around fragments to movements based on identity politics. Just as fragment as densities always carry with them a geography that shapes their form and experience, so too do these struggles operate spatially in the city. They are claims for and to urban space, whether to the city as a whole or to spaces within it, and often seek to transform the spaces of the city.

We can think here of a set of tactics aimed at addressing fragment urbanism and promoting urban spatial equality. Like fragment urbanism, urban spatial equality takes all kinds of forms in the city, often revolving around – broadly cast – the spatial distribution of provisions, rights, and opportunities. These tactics are made in practice – they are verbs not nouns – operating at different scales from the universal claim to action in the neighbourhood, street or public square. Urban spatial equality is multiple and contingent, from a claim to an act of defence to a form of provisioning or maintenance, to a new imaginary of what urban densities should and might look like.

As cities and urbanization transform, so too does the shape of struggle for urban spatial equality. There is no single model or blueprint, but instead a necessarily makeshift, morphing and often incremental set of shifting tactics. These tactics take on all kinds of forms, from the targeting of

particular sites in the city for political action and claim-making, or the augmenting of urban spaces by civil society groups improving housing and infrastructure in low-income neighbourhoods, or the remaking of spatial ‘leftovers’ from previous rounds of urbanization into new community spaces, or artistic ventures that seek to challenge spatial stigma, or multiple forms of spatial provisioning.

That latter form – spatial provisioning – often involves action at the level of the municipality, whether because the municipality has given in to public pressure, or because the municipality itself has come under the control of more progressive political forces. We can point to all kinds of examples here from across the global North and South in recent years: new rent controls freezing housing rents for five years in Berlin; protests that led to creating new bus lanes in Sao Paulo; the introduction of free public transport in Tallin, Estonia; a new sanitation tax to invest in facilities and environment in poorer neighbourhoods in San Fernando, Philippines; continued experiments with, notwithstanding the mixed successes, with participatory budgeting that has led to redistribution to poorer neighborhoods in several cities globally, and so on.

In their different ways, these struggles connect and look to address the inequalities and poverty that accompany fragments and densities of the city. They point to a kind of post-fragment urbanism, in which urban densities are better provided for but also integral to the remaking of the city through participatory practice.

This is a struggle that takes place not only around urban material conditions, but around the imaginaries of the future city. Density has been increasingly positioned as a solution to all kinds of urban challenges. ‘Compact cities’ are viewed from all kinds of groups as more ecologically sustainable, more economically dynamic and innovative, and more socially vibrant and cohesive (eg Glaeser, 2012; Florida, 2017). Meanwhile, a growing body of work has called all of these assumptions into question, showing that higher density formations typically work well for higher-income groups, pushing poorer groups out, and they also often turn out to be ecologically costly in production, consumption, and in their capacity to adapt.

From the viewpoint of the dominant script of urban transformation, the condition of fragment urbanism I’ve briefly discussed is very often the ‘wrong kinds of density’, and too often such neighbourhoods maintain under the shadow of the threat of demolition. The struggle for urban spatial equality, then, connects material fragments, urban densities, and imaginaries of the future city. How these relations are understood and shaped in the next decade, both within particular cities and more generally, will be important for urban poverty, inequalities, and futures.

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POSITIVE CHANGE STARTS AT HOME: ADDRESSING KNOWLEDGE HIERARCHIES TO TRANSFORM URBAN FUTURES AND OUR ABILITY TO “LEAVE NO-ONE BEHIND” - DIANA MITLIN

Introduction

The two issues matter most to me in meeting the urban development challenge(s) in the next decade are the following:

To leave no-one behind

To do this in ways that recognise the importance of democratising the process of leaving no-one behind (with the understanding that this is needed for justice and to be effective)

The numbers in need are overwhelming. While the one billion living in informal settlements may be too pessimistic (not all of these people are being left behind), there are undoubtedly many living in acute need in towns and cities of the global South. There are some positive trends. But there are many negative ones. Many are managing to secure new and better development options; but there are significant numbers who are struggling, and some of those that think they have made it will face new difficulties and struggle again. Then there are those who are not part of the one billion living in informal settlements who are also struggling including populations in the global North. The challenges are considerable.

It is (relatively) easy to talk about what others should do. That role is important. People look to universities for guidance on new policy and programming options. But we also need to talk about our own practice. Changing the way that universities engage with the challenge is, I think, a significant contribution to addressing needs.

Problem analysis

The needs are already intense. Take – for example – the recent work that we (IIED) completed with WRI to analyse equitable access to water and sanitation services in 15 cities in the global South. Even a service that is meant to be relatively well provided (in JMP reports) turned out not to be. The problem, in this case, is complex. It is related to inadequate monitoring due to a misunderstanding of the nature of water and sanitation provision in dense urban settlements. It is also related to, potentially, a lack of water in the piped network and inequitable access to the water that is available. It is also related to, in at least some cases, a failure of supply approaches to deal with the scale and nature of informality including rental housing. And it is related to a reluctance to consider issues of affordability and the lack of adequate affordable access to essential services.

Underpinning this crisis are three trends that have resonance beyond water services.

The trend towards commodification. It is not original to say that we are in danger of understanding the price of everything and the value of nothing but that does not mean this analysis should be ignored. The shift towards commodification is profound. It is differently experienced depending on income levels and opportunities to access assets via savings and loans. The inability of utilities, governments and NGOs to recognise the crisis in water affordability faced by low-income households demonstrates the gulf in how realities are perceived.

The dysfunctionality of division between formality and informality has long been recognised. Academics have made considerable efforts to advance an understanding of informality and to challenge efforts to formalize and/or eradicate informality. However, the inability to transcend the formal and informal interface in its multiplicity of dimensions lives behind the challenge of water provision and many other causes of poverty and inequality including livelihoods and shelter. With respect to water, this specific challenge includes informal rental activities, informal water providers, and utility approaches to supply in informal settlements.

While it is important not to over-react to concerns about water scarcity and consider them disproportionately, it is also necessary not to ignore the actual and potential impact of climate change. Both the adverse effects of climate change and the adverse effects of responses to climate change need to be considered if the challenges of poverty and inequality are to be addressed.

There are some things that we do not know. But there is much that we know that is not acted on. None of the underlying problems identified above are new, and even outcomes that are not well understood in academic circles are understood to be problematic at the local level. These are challenges that have been recognised both by academics and by residents and their organizations. However, insufficient action has been taken.

This agenda goes beyond what is “urban” but there are some specific urban dynamics that we should engage around. First, urban development – especially in larger cities – is contested and we need to recognise this. There are well organized citizen groups although in many urban contexts grassroots organizations are fragmented, partial and under-capacitated. Second, urban development has substantive public investment to manage the costs of agglomeration. This public investment is an opportunity to ensure more equitable patterns of development, although it also reflects the inability of current state structures and processes to ensure that private companies compensate the public for all the costs of their production activities. Poverty and inequality are a product of market relations, rather than a result of being “left behind” by capitalist patterns of development. Third, urban development is dynamic involving significant numbers of new and continuing social interactions (and relations) and considerable heterogeneity.

Opportunity analysis

The above challenges all need to be addressed. But in addition to substantive work on “leaving no-one behind”, we need to think more about the ways in which academics act on these issues including how they interface with organized residents pressing for transformative change. A much more multi-faceted and agile engagement offers the change to strengthen alliances and the practice of alliance building. It feels that these engagements are in their infancy at present.

This is not to say that all work on “leave no-one behind” should be with citizens groups that are themselves disadvantaged, or that there is one way to do this. I think that there is a considerable role for critical scholarship that identifies contradictions in the approach of governments (including how they exacerbate inequalities) and this kind of research may be very risks for local people and particularly for those with a low social status. I also think that there is a role for a critical scholarship on the challenges within social justice organizations (the “iron law of oligarchy” revisited).

However, in addition to this work, which is consistent with long-standing practices within academia, there is a need for new approaches to transform academic and professional practice, and coproduce the knowledge required to “leave no-one behind”.

At present I think there is a plethora of individual efforts but – arguably - no community of practice. This must include but extend beyond academic professional groups that have been more active in operational issues (eg. planning, architecture, urban design). By individual efforts I am thinking about the KNOW programme, the AAPS SDI planning studios, GDI’s own teaching programme with SDI which is now being replicated in Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

In the invitation to this gathering, you challenge participants to engage with the “thorny challenge of transition from ideas to practice.” Here are my responses to the specific questions that you raise.

How do we go from where we are to doing things better? We need to build that community of practice. Notably we need a more inclusive and engaged process to define a civic university fit for the 21st century, and effective in contributing to the “leave no-one behind” agenda.

What and who is missing from this discussion and how might we make strategic interventions and where? We need to engage a range of grassroot groups and networks to develop new practices, to test those and existing practices, and to identify new ways of producing knowledge and being knowledge producers. We need to encourage an emerging generation of scholars to reconcile the immediate pressures they face with a interest in building up longer term engagements.

NAVIGATING COMMENSURABILITY AND INCOMMENSURABILITY WITHIN AND ACROSS THE URBAN AGENDA - SUE PARNELL

In meeting the almost overwhelming urban development challenge(s) of poverty, inequality, health and ecosystem collapse, as well as responding to climate change and other risk reduction imperatives over the next decade we will need to generate fresh ideas to overcome the mess we are in and do much much more to scale up urban innovation in practice right across every part of the urban world.

Acting individually and collectively, locally, nationally and globally, as scholars, professionals, activists, investors and government ‘we’ will need to make radical interventions that alter the way cities are conceived and how they function. ‘We’ will have to work much faster than we do now to keep up with urban growth and to make the essential changes across the urban system to ensure liveability and equity. ‘We’ will have to act decisively and creatively in very different places from the cities that are currently at the forefront of urban innovation and investment. And, while ‘we’ need to ensure that urban transformation brings together urban stakeholders, it is imperative that ‘we’ draw in new players to contribute to remaking the urban planet.

Defining the collective ‘we’ that will assume at least partial responsibility for forging and fostering interventions in around a global urban agenda is an urgent priority, for the absence of collective reflection and shared responsibility for urban leadership means that while individual neighbourhoods or single cities may see significant improvements (for example against the 2030 aspirations), collectively cities will drift rudderless into the future in ways that will likely entrench elite interests, fail to combat ecological degeneration and generally compound rather than ameliorate global and national challenges. The lack of shared urban values, evidence and intelligence moreover corrodes the identification and impact of what is sensible, viable or desirable action for urban change in the present configuration of the world’s human, economic and natural resources, power relations and social and cultural practices.

The call to define urban thought and practice leadership may sound naïve. On the one hand efforts to galvanise a coherent and disciplined urban science have struggled to gain traction, unable to harness the disparate notoriously territorial and even adversarial urban academic communities of architects, planners, finance, data analytics, sociology, public health or engineering into a shared platform. Nevertheless, the recognition of the need to get everyone to muck in, to get all hands on deck, to push for greater collective action sees ongoing efforts to mobilise an urban science and to solidify urban science/ policy interfaces and it underpinned the coming together around the urban SDG . That conviction – that the urban condition matters – continues to motivate calls for common action across varied forums.

Faced with partial evidence about what cities could contribute and how they might be impacted by big forces of global change there was (and still is) little resistance to the idea that scaling up and scaling out the frontiers of urban action are prerequisites for human survival. As a result cities are now pivotal to big development discussions and to ideas about global change, such as the SDGs. But, the problem is that the successful insertion of 'the urban' into the wider policy milieu was premised on the argument that an urban agenda needed to be produced and not on the a carefully constructed and considered position about why and how cities are important. What is needed now is clarification of what that agenda is and any preliminary document spelling out the urban priorities for the next decade cannot be produced by committee.

The danger of lack of specificity is exemplified in the rather chaotic New Urban Agenda as much as it is in the long wish lists of collectively generated participatory urban processes run in cities and towns across the world. These loose, wordy and internally contradictory positions highlight the dangers of a simplistic dependence on an unfiltered elevation of a lofty but unfunded, unprioritized, unworkable if superficially legitimate and consensual urban development agenda. Failure to distil the muddle that characterises urban policy positions (whether community based, city development strategies, national urban policy plans or global targets) that are consensus driven and inclusive does nobody any favours, making a different mode of generating global urban policy aspirations essential.

The first steps to presenting and debating the urban agenda must include robust reflection on the current realities / needs of cities and an assessment of the likely trajectories of change and preconditions (fiscal, institutional etc) of how urban change might advance most effectively. Priorities for urban action and not the ad hoc presentation of laudable but incommensurate, uneven and incomplete aspirations can then be presented for wider consultation/ revision and they may then even be rejected. But this has to be a better way than the failed open consultations associate with urban multi-lateralism over the last little while.

Issues for deliberation in refining/setting the urban agenda leading up to and post 2030 would, in my view want to include:

A clear sense of the instruments of urban reform that can and should function in parallel in every city and town – for example improvements in existing operations to run local government planning and service delivery; new innovations that cross nature based solutions, technological innovation and enhanced social protection.

A stronger acknowledgment that locally credible and globally compatible urban data must be robust and public accessible and free and that large scale investment to achieve this is in the common (global) interest and should be supported as such.

The installation and funding of durable academic, bureaucratic and political processes designed to identify and mediate conflicting and at times contradictory urban priorities.

A more nuanced understanding of the temporality of interventions that can shift city trajectories – not just beyond one election cycle but over really long term planning horizons.

A more mature understanding of the role of different urban change makers – and how they can work together. Crucially in this is a realistic understanding of the role (powers, functions and resources) of local government as the convening point in networked governance.

There successful examples of practice in that/those area(s)?not really.

THE SPIRIT OF THE POSSIBLE (IN THE FACE OF INEQUALITY AND THE PLANET'S DESTRUCTION) - HANNA RUSZCZYK

Background

“In all societies, long-standing forms of inequality persist while gaps are opening in new aspects of life” according to the UNDP¹. The 2019 Human Development Report focuses on understanding the dimensions of inequality most important to people’s well-being.

“While many believe inequality is critically important, there is much less agreement on why it matters and what to do about it. We need to ...have a deeper understanding of how inequality will change given the economic, social and environmental transformations that are unfolding worldwide. Only then can we design the policy options that could effectively tackle it.”

- Pedro Conceição, Director of the Human Development Report Office at UNDP².

Inequality: globally, internationally, nationally and locally. The global elite minority have much in common and the precarious urban majority increasingly have similarities that cross national boundaries and culture. The fight to have a liveable life is being waged throughout the world. Meanwhile, national governments are more concerned with trying to contain and manage their disposable populations. In October 2019, I conducted fieldwork in Bangladesh. This country and the south Asia region are heavily impacted by a vortex of natural hazards (cyclones, flooding and salinity of water), rampant economic development focusing on low paying jobs for 160 million people, where bodies as labour are the basis for national policy leading to environmental degradation. All of which is overshadowed by increasingly devastating climate change impacts.

There are two issues that matter most for me in meeting the urban development challenge(s) in the next decade. The first issue is the confluence of climate crisis, livelihood strategies, food security and movements of people to cities. Addressing complex interaction between everyday concerns such as precarious income generation and environmental degradation. There is unstoppable migration to cities throughout the world because the rural setting is difficult. There is little hope for a ‘good future’ in rural areas. Ask anyone who lives in rural areas of the global south. Cities are the site for aspirations to be fulfilled, cities provide more choices and possibly personal wealth creation. The reality includes lives that will be hard but will have better ‘facilities’ including

¹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/2019-human-development-report-focus-inequality> accessed 31 October 2019

² Ibid

opportunities for education and access to healthcare. Often, the urban poor cannot earn enough to allow them to be lifted out of poverty. Rather they are a bit better off. Living a life that has a bit more than the bare minimum but opportunities for the next generation.

“Do we really have the will to change the lives of the poor, or do we need them to provide both a market for goods and a reserve army of cheap labour and votes? How do we go beyond our slogans of smart cities, caring cities, healthy cities etc and turn these into lived, sustainable realities for the poor?”³

In the face of impending massive climate and ecological catastrophe where multiple crises created by our global petrochemical based economy and extractive capitalism, systemic change is necessary. Rapid transformation of the cityscape is highlighting tensions between ensuring food security of countries and industrial production where higher incomes are given in cities. There are too many people in cities. How do we feed and provide a liveable life in cities that includes jobs that pay a liveable wage for all residents? Whose vision and version of the city matters?

The second issue for the next urban decade is financing equitable infrastructure in cities which are now being created or expanding throughout our world. Local authorities are (or at least should be) at the front line in the battle to provide basic infrastructure for their residents. This includes water access, sanitation and solid waste management. Roads are being addressed. At times, people co-finance roads, other times, the government provides them as gifts or compensation for voting. Roads are visible manifestations of ‘progress’ and ‘modernization’. Decentralisation is needed to explore new visions and strategies for provision of basic life around infrastructure. New visions of engaging national governments, international policy discourse and showcasing local best practices is desperately needed. In the 1990s there was discussion of sustainable development. How do we re-think partnerships that can be developed or empowered to deliver action. In the 2000s, a sectoral approach to climate change, development, humanitarian sector and disaster risk reduction was created. Now we are needing to tear down siloed approach to thinking and problem solving. Inter-disciplinary and co-production of knowledge and use of resources has become the mantra in the late 2010s. We need to reconceptualize financing tools for municipalities and communities.

A successful example of practice is from Bangladesh and the research, policy and practice organization called the International Center for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD). It is a self-financing research institute of the Independent University of Bangladesh which has a range of roles. They represent the interests of the poor and provide a forum for less economically developed countries that do not have the capacity to voice their views in an international arena. In international negotiations for climate change, ICCCAD is very visible. ICCCAD hosts researchers

³ <http://www.centreforsustainablecities.ac.uk/news/urban-inequality-delhi-india-johannesburg-southafrica/> accessed 3 November 2019, written by Geci Karuri-Sebina and David Everatt

from different countries and supports their efforts to understand Bangladesh and the intersection of development and climate change. ICCCAD provides concrete policy advice to the government. They organise two annual events that that create an agenda for change. The first is an annual National Urban Resilience conference where they showcase best practices arising from local authorities and or international NGOs. The second annual event is called Gobeshona⁴ which focuses on research arising from Bangladesh.

⁴ Research in Bangali

**27-28 FEBRUARY 2020, PROGRAMME FOR CITIES
2030: IDEAS AND PRACTICES FOR THE URBAN
FUTURE**

Durham University
Collingwood College, Rooms Penthouse A and B

Thursday, February 27th

Lunch 12.30-1.30 in Penthouse A

Session 1, 1.30-3pm (Chair: Joe Williams)

Diana Mitlin **Positive change starts at home: addressing knowledge hierarchies to transform urban futures and our ability to “leave no-one behind”**

Sue Parnell **Navigating commensurability and incommensurability within and across the urban agenda**

Caroline Knowles **Unbundling Urban Accumulations of Excessive Wealth**

Andres Luque-Ayala **Data/Digital Epistemologies and the City: Race, Nature, and Technology**

3-3.30, Coffee/tea in Penthouse A

Session 2, 3.30-5

David Satterthwaite **Building the interface between grassroots organizations and development assistance agencies**

Leonie Newhouse **Rightlessness**

Diane Archer **Towards inclusive, healthy and resilient cities – when difficult decisions are required**

Drinks from 5.30, then dinner 7-10

Friday, February 28th
8:30-9 Coffee/tea

Session 3, 9am-10.30am (Chair: Sarah Knuth)

Vanessa Caston-Broto **Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Urban Futures in a Changed Climate**

Hanna Ruszczyk **The spirit of the possible (in the face of inequality and the planet's destruction)**

Colin McFarlane **Fragments, Density and Urban Equality**

10.30-11 Coffee/tea

Session 4, 11-1

Small group work and feedback on the following two questions:

Question 1: Looking back over the discussions we've had, and the issues that have come up (and perhaps issues that haven't been raised), what for you are the key issues that most urgently need to be placed on the urban agenda (research, policy, practice)?

Question 2: Where can we bring ideas into actionable spaces? What can be practically achieved?

1-1.45 lunch

Session 5, 1.45-3
Conclusion and next steps