

# GLOBAL REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

E-Newsletter  
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## The Global Report on Human Settlements

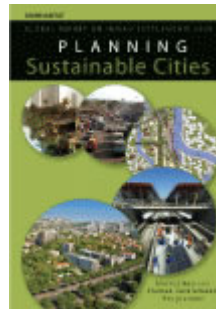


Prepared under a mandate of the United Nations General Assembly, the Global Report on Human Settlements provides the most up to date assessment of urban conditions and trends globally. It is an essential reference tool for researchers, academics, planners, public authorities and civil society organizations around the world.

## Latest Issue: Planning Sustainable Cities (2009)

### Elements of a Revised Role for Urban Planning

There are quite a number of specific aspects of a new role for urban planning, relating to both the planning process (procedural) and content of plans (substantive), as well as to the fundamental objectives and values of planning.



- **The guiding values of planning:** Planning systems need to shift away from their original objectives. This will imply shifting away from objectives that relate to aesthetics, global positioning, replicating western lifestyles, to the far more demanding objectives of achieving inclusive, productive, equitable and sustainable cities. It is necessary to recognize that such values are unlikely to be universal. Unless planning values closely articulate the values of the society in which it is taking place, urban planning is unlikely to be socially and institutionally embedded to the extent required to be effective.
- **Shifts in the form of plans:** In the mid-20th century, many thought that the best way to undertake urban development was to prepare a plan, which then was expected to be followed by all those 'producing' the city. However, over time, it has been realized that planning agencies usually lacked sufficient power and/or stability to exercise such control over all the agencies involved in urban development. Instead, plan-makers have had to give more attention to the way other agencies operate, and recognize the limits of their ability to predict future development trajectories. Essentially, the purpose of planning is not just to produce planning documents, but to set in motion processes which will improve the quality of life of urban residents.
- **Shifts in planning processes:** There is also the recognition that planners are not the only professionals to be involved in planning. A wide range of related professionals, stakeholders and communities also need to be involved. Experience has shown the value of participatory approaches in planning. It is important to recognize that planning is inevitably political, and is usually at the heart of conflicts over land and resources. A central role for planning is the mediation of these conflicts.
- **Shifts in urban form:** There is some agreement that an equitable and sustainable city will have the following spatial features: higher densities but low rise; mixed land uses; public-transport based; spatial integration; a defined and protected open space system; and an urban edge to prevent sprawl. This spatial model may be far easier to achieve in developed countries. In developing countries, municipal governments may not have the capacity to bring about compliance with these ideas. However, achieving these principles in different contexts remains a worthwhile goal.
- **'Urban modernism' as a problematic built form model:** Most cities in the world have in part, been shaped by early 20th century urban modernist thinking. Currently, this takes the form of mega-projects delivering commodified versions of waterfronts, theme-parks, as well as retail and leisure centres. This image of a desirable city is usually strongly promoted by property developers; and in developing countries, by politicians who believe that this demonstrates an ability to modernize. However, this model of built form cannot produce cities that are environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive. In fact, it excludes the poor and encourages unsustainable consumption patterns.
- **Planning with, and for informality:** Informality will shape the bulk of new urbanization in Africa and Asia. A central challenge for planning is devising ways of supporting, protecting and including the poor and the informal in urban areas, while at the same time being careful not to destroy their livelihoods and shelter with excessively stringent legal and

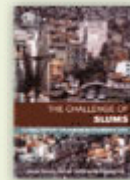
## PAST ISSUES



Enhancing Urban Safety and Security - Global Report on Human Settlements 2007



Financing Urban Shelter - Global Report on Human Settlements 2005



The Challenge of Slums - Global Report on Human Settlements 2003



Cities in A Globalizing World - Global Report on Human Settlements 2001

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process requirements.

- **Revisiting both directive and regulatory aspects of the planning system:** Experience from various parts of the world shows that it is often not too difficult to change the nature of directive plans, but far more difficult to change the regulatory system, as this usually affects people's rights in land. Besides, politicians are often reluctant to change the regulatory system for various reasons. Consequently, the regulatory system often contradicts the directive plan, making the latter impossible to implement. Changes to land-use management systems are necessary and include: allowing for a greater mix of land-uses and urban forms; permitting more flexible land-use categorizations that include informal settlements; and allowing for performance-based criteria rather than use-based criteria for approving land-use change.
- **Planning and institutional integration:** As urban governments become more complex and specialized, there has been growing awareness of the need to achieve sectoral integration within government and between levels of government. One potential role of planning is to provide a mechanism for sectoral integration. Such a role is also important in terms of plan production and implementation, as it encourages planners to work together with other urban professionals and benefit from their areas of expertise.
- **Planning scales:** Planning at the urban or local scale cannot operate in isolation from planning at the regional, national or even supra-national scales. Certain urban problems can only be dealt with at the regional or national scale. Given that cities now extend well beyond their municipal boundaries, achieving coordination across scales and the correct allocation of legal powers and functions at the various levels is important for urban planning.

The above text was extracted from 'Planning Sustainable Cities: Policy Directions', the Abridged Edition of the Global Report on Human Settlements 2009. To download the Global Report on Human Settlements 2009, its Abridged Edition and numerous background studies, please visit [www.unhabitat.org/grhs](http://www.unhabitat.org/grhs).

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## Next Issue:

### **(1) Cities and Climate Change (2011)**

This report will review current conditions and trends with respect to the links between cities and climate change, and how cities can mitigate and adapt to the related impacts. The report will be organized as follows:

1. Urbanization and the Challenge of Climate Change
2. Urban Areas and Multifaceted Governance of Climate Change
3. The Contribution of Urban Areas to Climate Change
4. The Impacts of Climate Change on Urban Areas
5. Climate Change Mitigation Responses in Urban Areas
6. Climate Change Adaptation Responses in Urban Areas
7. Conclusion: Linkages between Climate Change Responses and Policy Directions
8. Statistical Annex

### **(2) Sustainable Urban Transport (2013)**

The report will review key trends, practices and policies on sustainable mobility and transportation patterns from cities around the world. It will also provide insights on how to improve the working and living conditions of urban populations by meeting their transport needs in an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable manner.