

CHAPTER
09

Principles for a New Urban Agenda

QUICK FACTS

- 1 The emergence of new urban areas and urban extensions in anticipation of demographic growth will by itself cause more emissions than the world has generated in the last century.
- 2 The loss of density in urban areas over the last two decades demonstrates that demographic and spatial expansion go hand in hand. Less dense cities bring higher infrastructure costs, worsen mobility, and destroy agricultural land.
- 3 The dynamics of cities' emerging futures will result in new urban forms and new patterns of well-being for people, new patterns of behaviour and resource use, and new opportunities and risks.
- 4 Despite their increasing economic and demographic significance in both rich and poor countries, the role of cities is neither widely understood nor fully recognized in global official and public debates.

POLICY POINTS

- 1 The public interest must be considered as a fundamental principle by which policies and actions affecting urban areas should be judged.
- 2 Unless a new urban agenda is given prominence in national policies, the future of cities will become more unequal, less productive, more associated with poor living standards, at high-risk from the impacts of climate change.
- 3 It is for Habitat III to map out a path for inclusive emerging futures under the guidance of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- 4 A set of principles that guide major shifts in strategic and policy thinking are presented to ensure that human rights, the rule of law, equitable development and democratic participation are the bastions of the New Urban Agenda.
- 5 The new urban agenda must be based on a set of implementation strategies that move beyond a sector-based approach. Regional specificity must be considered in the formulation of a credible New Urban Agenda which must be problem-oriented, programmatic and practicable.



GLOBALIZATION



URBANIZATION

Facilitated new itineraries of **HOPE** and **ASPIRATIONS**



PEOPLE



MONEY



INNOVATION



IMAGES



IDEAS

Changed people's **expectations**

5 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE **NEW URBAN AGENDA**

- 1 > Urbanization protects and promotes **HUMAN RIGHTS & RULE OF LAW**
- 2 > Ensure equitable urban development
- 3 > Empower civil society, expand democracy
- 4 > Promote environmental sustainability
- 5 > Promote innovation & learning



RISKS



OPPORTUNITIES



MENACES

- > Role of cities poorly understood and not recognized
- > Cities do not feature in global economic discussions (debate/agenda)
- > Urban areas are not identified as part of the solution

HOPE

NEED TO REFRAME THE GLOBAL DEBATE and place urbanization at the center of global/national agenda

STOCKS

FLOWS

- Economic activities
- Infrastructure
- Environmental resource
- Built environment
- Cultural heritage
- Institutions & policies

+/- STOCKS

- Population growth
- Economic activity
- Natural resource
- Money

BALANCE

HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABILITY

FLOWS

BALANCE

STOCKS

- Geography
- Ecology
- Economies
- Culture
- Institutions
- Technologies

SUSTAINABILITY

Cities are the platforms for global and local change in the 21st century. Urban landscapes are the spaces of convergence of economies, cultures, political, and ecological systems. Demographic concentration is both an outcome and incentive for growth, migration, trade, and cultural production. Built environments and natural ecologies have become the infrastructure of 21st century society, shaping encounters, assimilation, resistance, and innovation. With more than 80 per cent of the world's goods and services now produced in urban areas—and 80 per cent of future growth to 2030¹ expected to occur in cities—it is not an exaggeration to assert that the economic and social futures of whole countries, regions, and the world will be made in cities, today's nests of “emerging futures.” “Place is the most important correlate of a person's welfare,” as noted by the World Bank.²

The economic and social futures of whole countries, regions, and the world will be made in cities

Global flows of people, money, innovation, images, and ideas have changed people's expectations about the qualities of their lives and the way they anticipate the future

Individual urban areas fit into what has been called a broader planetary process by which the Earth itself has become urbanized, what is now called “*planetary urbanism*.”³ The process of urbanization has reached all countries and, within countries, has transformed the relationships between countryside and settlements, between rural and urban landscapes, and has created new patterns of interdependency between settlements at all scales.

This dynamic transformation of nations through the growth of cities is occurring in a *world of accelerated mobility*: of people, knowledge, goods and services, and culture. Improved infrastructure, the availability of information about distant locations, and the turmoil of local conflicts and natural disasters have contributed to growing international flows of migrants: from Mali to Bordeaux, from Ecuador to Barcelona, from the Philippines to Dubai, from Poland to London, and from Guatemala to Los Angeles.⁴ “Geographies of poverty” are no longer contained within national boundaries, even within the dynamics of rural-urban migration, as households are able to multiply sometimes tenfold their incomes through international migration. Globalization and urbanization have together facilitated new and longer itineraries of hope and aspiration. Growing flows of remittances, approaching billions of US dollars from the Middle East to Asia, from Europe to Africa, and from the US to Latin America alone every year, have transformed relationships between residence, employment, and citizenship. Earnings from employment in New York and Abu Dhabi are transformed into roofs in Puebla and toasters in Dhaka.

Cross-border migratory flows have added to urban population growth and created a new urban

diversity within many cities around the world going far beyond the multi-ethnic character of urban areas only a generation ago. Chinese in Dublin, Sri Lankans in Naples, Mexicans in Charlotte or Tajiks in Omaha, US, and many more examples suggest that cities keep attracting wider ranges of diverse peoples, identities, cultures, and networks. Whether they like it, or are ready for it, or not, cities are becoming “fractals,” with parts taking on the characteristics of the whole.⁵ Many of the Western cities now are more reluctant, or less able, to take in all these newcomers.

If the 1990s was a decade of globalization, the early 15 years of the 21st century already demonstrate that as part of that change, *cities have become sites of structural transformation*. The convergence of economic, cultural, demographic, technological, and increasingly political changes have connected urban areas at all scales while also profoundly changing their features. Global flows of people, money, innovation, images, and ideas have changed people's expectations about the qualities of their lives and the way they anticipate the future.⁶ Whether expressed through the Arab Spring, new political movements in Spain or Greece, or the Occupy movement, the 21st century has ushered in a debate about systemic inequalities and the way they affect the distribution of present and future opportunities: What are the opportunities? Where and how can they be seized? What will be the consequences?

Considering the world as a whole, welfare has improved enormously over the last two generations. Life expectancy, incomes, literacy, and access of girls to education have changed remarkably. However, beneath this global perspective lie significant and compelling regional differences, with tremendous economic growth in East Asia while Africa features dangerously low incomes and poor health conditions. The outbreak of Ebola fever and the need for a broad-based response has highlighted the great risks that deprivation can bring on local, national and worldwide scales. This suggests the need for a detailed assessment of progress and for improved data systems if no one is to be left behind.⁷ Against this background, some *cities appear as sites of opportunity, but others of growing risk*.

Not surprisingly, these worldwide phenomena have also resulted in new local pressures, eliciting new ways of thinking and renewed efforts to find solutions



A girl with a sign stating the "social wealth inequality" during the Jobs, Justice and Climate rally on July, 2015 in Toronto, Canada.

Source: Arindambanerjee / Shutterstock.com

to urgent problems, while sometimes generating a broad range of unwanted side effects and consequences. For both migrants and long-time urban residents, cities offer potential for social improvement, yet every day residents see the contrasts of slums alongside the walls of gated communities and the construction of shopping malls where most local residents cannot afford the goods on display, when at all admitted onto the premises. Taking the city and global levels together, the unanswered question is whether changes in climate, the economy, demography, and culture provide a horizon of hope or instead one of menace?⁸

It is not surprising that these forces generate major challenges to the political order and the prospects for democracy. Occupying the same geographical space does not imply equal access to opportunity or equal rights, even in democracies. Political controversies are becoming increasingly strident in many regions as countries face multi-national societies with the strong probability of increased immigration in the future. Similarly, debates over membership in regional blocs mask a much wider and profound discussion of the degree of "acceptable difference" for which a country is ready.

These debates stand in stark contrast to the assumedly universal principles of equality and social justice. In reality, such principles take on specific political and cultural meanings, in particular places, where local socio-political and cultural institutions will re-interpret and adapt them to reflect local interests, power patterns, and traditions. Such local institutions, with attendant behaviours and attitudes, are themselves the legacies of historical processes, often inflicting high costs on society while also affecting the way external forces are co-opted,

modified, and mainstreamed within local cultural and social systems.

The convergence of these processes has transformed global urban dynamics. We now face new challenges of recognition, understanding, and management. These challenges are all part of structural transformation and of the "emerging futures" that give its central theme to this Report. What are acceptable principles for sustainable urbanization? What objectives should be considered for the New Urban Agenda that will help shape those emerging futures? What types of experience and analysis are most helpful when framing sound principles for policy and action?

If these challenges are taken beyond simply understanding, to the arena of problem solving, a critical issue becomes one of *design*, meaning identifying parameters, modes, instruments, agency, and style as integral components of identifying solutions to problems. The notion of design here is far broader than aesthetic design, being meant as "intention," not simply an outcome of diverse forces, but rather a reflection of well-articulated political, economic, cultural, and social principles, a spatial and social fix.⁹ Processes of transformation themselves must be "designed," reflecting a forward-looking diagnosis of trends and practise. Whether these designs are sufficiently robust and sustainable in the process of local assimilation and implementation will depend on many factors. But it is arguable that making the effort—to produce desired outcomes—is essential. The processes of transformation cannot be left to the unmanaged interests of economic or cultural forces. *We are, in a word, doomed to choose.* Waiting for the results of spontaneous processes is a luxury, which the world and its population can ill afford. Here the issue of *public interest* must be considered as a fundamental principle against which policies and actions affecting urban areas should be judged.

The urgency of this agenda is reflected in a series of seven global paradoxes:

- i. Despite their growing economic and demographic importance in both rich and poor countries, the role of cities is neither widely understood nor fully recognized in official and public debates (the latter for political reasons).
- ii. 600 cities now account for about 60 per cent of the world's production of goods and services,¹⁰ yet cities do not feature in the global economic discussions of the G20.¹¹ Nor did they feature specifically in most of

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Construction of new urban areas and urban extensions for anticipated demographic growth will by itself cause more emissions than the world has generated in the last century

There is urgent need to reframe the global debate and place urbanization and cities on global and national agendas for policy and action

the national stimulus packages and economic recovery plans following the global economic crisis of 2008.¹² China was a notable exception, building high-speed railways to link up all of its cities with populations over one million and undertaking national policies that explicitly rely on urban areas as engines of economic growth and development. Discussions of employment usually focus on the macro-economic level, but outside of China, they have not recognized that jobs and mobility must be created in cities where the potential for multiplying effects are highest due to their demographic and spatial advantages.¹³ In debates about the 2014-2015 economic downturns in Europe and Latin America, urban areas are not identified as part of the solution for reinvigorating economic growth.

- iii. Only in 2014 did the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) clearly link the emissions from cities as being the primary cause of climate change.¹⁴ Moreover, IPCC projections suggest that construction of new urban areas and urban extensions for anticipated demographic growth will by itself cause more emissions than the world has generated in the last century.¹⁵
- iv. Despite these enormous planetary urban shifts, the Millennium Development Goals adopted in the year 2000 ignored these societal trends and focused on improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers between the years 2000 and 2020, or less than five per cent of expected urban demographic growth in that period.¹⁶
- v. For all the centrality of cities to global and national futures, it is remarkable how rarely, in many countries; the media focus on the shortcomings of urban life. These include infrastructure failures, accidents, citizen protests, financial collapse, and increasingly, the interaction between weather patterns and cities, whether in Bangkok, Jakarta, or New York. The urban narrative (agenda) has often eluded the mass media in any consistent sort of way, even though more than half of the world's population now lives in cities.
- vi. In the face of today's and tomorrow's challenges, why are the long-established planning practises in cities unable to take into account new approaches to learning, training, innovation and forms of participation that will facilitate the realization of a "city that plans" (see Chapter 7)?
- vii. These issues being shared across cities, how can

these shift from competition to effective collaboration among themselves as they pursue solutions to compelling problems, and do so in a more integrated and regional perspective?

These paradoxes suggest an urgent need to reframe the global debate and place urbanization and cities on global and national agendas for policy and action. In this context, fresh political attention and emphasis on climate change and, increasingly, on urban inequality is very timely, for example as the theme of the April 2014 UN-Habitat World Urban Forum in Medellín, Colombia and the recently approved stand-alone goals on cities, inequality and climate change as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In early 2015, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, warned in his State of the City Address that with the on-going housing affordability crisis the metropolis was in danger of becoming a gated community, if on a grander scale.¹⁷ In May 2015, the *New York Times* referred to "housing apartheid in New York." In 2014, the Prime Minister of France stated that French cities were "apartheid cities." These dramatic assertions—while a wake-up call to citizens and the political class—demonstrate the need for a well-rooted foundation for a global urban narrative, as well as a robust analytic framework within which the changing urban dynamics can be understood and appropriate responses can be devised.

Against this broader global background, this chapter presents a set of principles and objectives, which should form the foundation for a New Urban Agenda. These principles and objectives emerge from a diagnosis of current trends, future dynamics, and growing awareness of challenges and opportunities, which these changes present for the emerging futures of cities. They also arise from the main principles behind the SDGs and served for the definition of goals and targets.¹⁸ Analytically, these principles and objectives reflect the relationships between *what exists*, i.e. stocks, and *what is changing*, i.e. flows, at many levels (Box 9.1).¹⁹

These principles must have as their overriding purpose to motivate governments, civil society, communities, and individuals of all ages and genders to join efforts and gradually usher in sustainable urban communities where inevitable imbalances must be addressed with the objectives of peace, sustainable prosperity and social justice. These principles must serve as guideposts for urgent structural transformation.²⁰

Box 9.1: Stocks, flows and the sustainable urban development agenda

The concept of **stocks** and **flows** provides a prism to help think about urban “balances,” which is the basis of sustainability.

Stocks include those of a physical nature — existing economic activities, infrastructure, environmental resources, the built environment, cultural heritage, as well as population scale and settlement patterns — together with those of an institutional nature, namely existing policies and regulations that are in place at local, national, and global levels.

Flows represent new additions to; and subtractions from, these stocks, partly fuelled by absolute growth in population, economic

activity, or availability of natural resources.

Flows can also be negative in the sense that stocks depreciate and decline over time, when finite quantities of resources are consumed, or when significant technological or climatic change reduces the value of the stock of resources. These processes are at the core of sustainability.

In many cases, these changing balances are threatening to disrupt the continued productivity and welfare of urban populations in rich and poor countries. Yet at the same time, it is precisely these imbalances, which provide the impetus for change. While there

is a longstanding debate about whether globalization has led to a convergence between rich and poor countries, or even between their respective cities²¹ where incomes and opportunities grow more unequal, and infrastructure deteriorates. This goes to show that for all the differences in incomes and living standards, cities today face broadly similar challenges. These in turn suggest that **there is a universal, urgent, and shared need for a New Urban Agenda**, which can be understood at the global level and be implemented by nations and cities.

9.1 An Analytic Framework for Urban Transformation and the Diversity of Outcomes

The central policy problem of cities is defining the frames for action across their territories, which typically also involve national and subnational institutions (Chapter 6). These *frames of urban action* must aim at maximizing the benefits of urbanization, not just to respond to problems and challenges at city/global level. This is important because any frame of action worthy of that name should address this double function.

Since multiple factors and processes are at play in any city, interactions between them will tell us whether the present is in balance or not. One of the imbalances which has received increased attention around the world is the issue of inequality, and even more so since the 2013 publication of Thomas Piketty’s *Capital in the*

21st Century.²² The book triggered widespread discussion about the relation between the rates of growth in private wealth and national economies. When the first is faster than the second, wealth accumulates²³ and inequality grows – as anyone would figure intuitively but which the author demonstrates with an array of statistics. This means that supply of urban infrastructure only matters in relation to the existence of demand, just as rents only matter in relation to income. Piketty implicitly recognizes the serious imbalances and strains already affecting many aspects of urban life in all countries. The housing affordability crisis in so many of the world’s largest cities is in part linked to the mismatch between the existing stock and foreign property investors who price local demand out.²⁴ In effect, continued private wealth accumulation is now accompanied by a slowdown in global economic growth.²⁵ This is because inequality prevents low earners from realizing their human capital potential, which is bad for the economy as a whole.²⁶

As discussed in the next section, urban areas can be analytically understood as consisting of six dynamic components: geographies, ecologies, economies, cultures, institutions, and technologies, all of which affect the sustainability of urban development. Each of these components is dynamic, not static. They are changing in themselves and most importantly in relation to one another. The dynamics of cities’ emerging futures will result in new urban forms and new patterns of wellbeing and prosperity for people, new patterns of

Cities’ emerging futures will result in new urban forms and new patterns of wellbeing and prosperity for people, new patterns of behaviour and resource use, and new opportunities and risks

Less dense urban areas raise infrastructure costs and energy consumption, impair mobility and destroy agricultural land...Calls for "spatial justice" opposing "unjust geographies" and environments are also becoming more vocal

Unregulated expansion of cities and the wasteful use of land that affects protected environments, with adverse effects on biodiversity and ecological systems

behaviour and resource use, and new opportunities and risks. For example, recent changes in urban densities are occurring with the concomitant densification of downtown areas.²⁷ Less dense urban areas raise infrastructure costs and energy consumption, impair mobility and destroy agricultural land, as most evident already in many expanding secondary cities.²⁸ Calls for "spatial justice" opposing "unjust geographies" and environments are also becoming more vocal (Chapter 5), on account of harmful effects on specific segments of the population, such as pushing the poor out to dangerous areas and ever farther away from employment or basic services,²⁹ or dumping toxic wastes in residential areas.³⁰

9.2

Urban Dynamics and Imbalances

With the analytical components discussed in the previous section in mind, it is possible to identify a set of dynamic urban trends, which are already suggesting a path for the future.³¹

Geographies

Urban geographies are in the process of large-scale transformation. These changes are as follows:

- Continued urban demographic growth, particularly in developing countries.
- Rapid increases in the number and sizes of megacities and urban corridors, mostly in developing countries.
- Sustained population growth of secondary cities, in new patterns and configurations, with various relationships to primate cities and metropolitan regions. Between 2010 and 2025, secondary cities will be hosts to an additional 460 million residents compared with 270 million for megacities.³²
- Stronger and more diverse demographic rural-urban linkages.³³
- Expanded spatial scale of cities and towns, particularly in peri-urban areas, raising the costs of fixed infrastructure such as roads, water supply, sewerage, and drainage,³⁴ on top of higher costs of mobility and reduced access to employment and services.³⁵



- Persistent loss of density in urban areas over the last several decades demonstrates that demographic and particularly spatial expansions go together. Less dense cities bring higher infrastructure costs, worsen mobility, and destroy scarce agricultural land.³⁶
- Changing spatial patterns and location of adverse side effects, including on the environment, will rouse more calls for "spatial justice."
- The persistence of concentrated disadvantages³⁷ in some urban areas will also rouse calls for mainstreaming equality in development policies.

Ecologies

- Deteriorated quality of public goods (air and groundwater pollution, solid waste management).
- Drastic reduction of the "commons," privatization of public goods and the predominance of the "private" versus the public domain.
- Unregulated expansion of cities and the wasteful use of land that affects protected environments, with adverse effects on biodiversity and ecological systems (Chapter 5).
- Over 70 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions originate in cities where both national wealth and vulnerable populations are exposed to climate change.³⁸



Illegal landfill near city sewer.

Source: Strahil Dimitrov / Shutterstock.com

- More unpredictable weather patterns are putting infrastructure under higher stress, not to mention effects on agriculture and food security.³⁹
- Slums should be understood as ecological environments lacking the infrastructure that would channel and manage natural resources.

Economies

The configuration of global, national, local, and household economies is undergoing rapid changes, with major consequences for intra-urban inequality and the formulation of the New Urban Agenda. These consequences include the following:

- A slowdown in macro-economic growth in most countries since 2008, which implies slower growth of the 70 per cent share of GDP produced in urban areas. The productivity and contribution of cities to national economic welfare cannot be taken for granted. As economic growth slows down in relation to the rate of return on private wealth, inequality increases.⁴⁰
- An increase of some six percentage points in the share of income that goes to capital instead of labour, implying that more income will go to stock-owning urbanites and less to workers.⁴¹
- The changing configuration of urban economic activity in some regions, as lower labour costs and proximity to cheap energy and national resources will continue to encourage the mobility of firms and location of production in value chains⁴² (although a significant shortening and regionalization of world value chains has been at work for the past year or two⁴³).
- The emergence or acceleration of a new “geography

of jobs,” with shifts of employment in manufacturing and services from city to city, based on local attributes and potential.⁴⁴

- The flexibility and dynamism of the economy can produce unpredictable effects on local conditions, particularly with regard to tax bases, which can affect government capacity to provide public goods.
- Ever more informal urban economies (Chapter 8), with faster rates of job creation than in the formal sector in most developing countries, but also in many developed nations.⁴⁵
- Sharper polarization between increased private wealth and struggling public finance, leading to higher preference for private urban patterns and services in both rich and poor countries such as gated communities, private education, private security, and private transport.⁴⁶
- Deterioration of housing conditions and slum expansion, as ineffective housing policies remain unable to keep up with demand for low-cost housing.⁴⁷
- Current discussions on city competitiveness and branding have led to considerable investments in, for instance, Seoul or Bogotá, in bids to enhance international attractiveness.

Cultures

Cultures are the systems of values, which guide individual and social behaviour while also serving individual and collective lenses of interpretation. Both tangible and non-tangible cultures can also be identified by location, religious and other beliefs, and by other characteristics such as common historical roots or experience. The most significant cultural trends affecting cities and influencing the New Urban Agenda include the following:

- Mounting evidence of racial, ethnic, and class disparities in income, wealth, and opportunities, leading to competition and conflict among groups seeking upward mobility within cities.⁴⁸
- Stronger presence of non-local groups in urban areas, resulting from immigration and differential access to employment opportunities.
- The multiplying effects of information technology on changing perceptions and rising expectations across cultural groups.
- More racial and religious confrontations, resulting in violence and fear of “the other,” with emergence of ethnic enclaves within cities.

As economic growth slows down in relation to the rate of return on private wealth, inequality increases

Mounting evidence of racial, ethnic, and class disparities in income, wealth, and opportunities, leading to competition and conflict among group

Gradual mainstreaming of the equity agenda by local authorities in close collaboration with national governments

- ▶ Ever-changing lifestyles and urban preferences affecting production and consumption patterns.
- ▶ Standardization or homogenization of urban cultures through spread of multi-national companies, architectural styles, and fashionable planning norms.

Institutions

Institutions are patterns and structures of organized behaviour, which persist through time, and are indispensable to the management and governance of any city. The most relevant institutional changes affecting urban areas and influencing the New Urban Agenda include:

- ▶ Adoption of activities and responsibilities beyond traditional local government mandates such as provision of health, education, or housing.
- ▶ Gradual mainstreaming of the equity agenda by local authorities in close collaboration with national governments.
- ▶ New urban configurations will bring changes to the size and form of institutions at urban, metropolitan and regional scales.
- ▶ Weaker local authority finances (especially in secondary cities) owing to undependable transfers from financially strapped central governments.
- ▶ Slow expansion in effective municipal tax bases, which fail to keep up with demographic growth.
- ▶ Lack of adequate coordination among national, provincial and local authorities, hampering both planning and implementation of urban policies.
- ▶ Inadequate or poorly enforced rules and regulations governing urban management due to weak, inefficient institutions and poor civil society participation.

Technologies

Urban uses of communication technologies can bring innovative enhancements to conventional utilities such as water supply, electric power, or transport, health, education, or communications. The most important technological trends affecting cities and influencing the New Urban Agenda include the following:

- ▶ More widespread application of ICT to urban management and governance, as well as for collection and dissemination of data and information in various areas such as land registration, municipal finance, urban planning and security.
- ▶ Continued financial depreciation and physical

deterioration of public infrastructure including roads, bridges, water supply, sewerage, drainage, lighting, and others in the absence of adequate expenditures for operation and maintenance.⁴⁹

- ▶ More public-private partnerships for technology development.
- ▶ Increased access and expansion of technological development into new areas of urban life and management.
- ▶ Stronger connections between technology and other areas of development such as transport, energy or waste management.
- ▶ Use of technology to stimulate creativity and develop new forms of innovation.

Together, these dynamic trends suggest that the defining “stocks” and “flows” of cities are dangerously out of balance — with their changing geographies, ecologies, and economies — undermining the likelihood of sustainable patterns of urban growth. Resources are squandered, temperatures and sea levels are rising, and the numbers of people at risk of being left behind are staggering. These imbalances pose important risks for countries, whose economies increasingly depend on production of goods and services in urban areas, and underline the need for transformative change.

As urban cultures are undergoing accelerated changes, in part owing to worldwide mobility and new forms of diversity, it is also apparent that urban institutions are not robust enough to cope with these new social and cultural challenges. They lack political support and both the human and financial resources. And while available technologies can improve management, they are not robust enough, either, to make the difference in the rebalancing of these dynamics. Stocks are being stretched and flows are growing, in terms both of pace and magnitude.

All of the above raises the question of the sustainability of current imbalances in cities, i.e. whether increased pressures or intensity of occupation of land, demand for services, inadequacy of income, or the sheer low densities shaping the city that reduce the possibility to generate economies of agglomeration. How long can these unresolved problems be allowed to persist? How do we assess the risks of failing infrastructure or other calamities? How do cities and populations recover from uncontrolled urbanization and poor planning that have lasting, adverse consequences on sustainable development? Should we expect more and more frequent failures?

New urban configurations will bring changes to the size and form of institutions at urban, metropolitan and regional scales

Cities function in an efficient, equitable, and sustainable manner only when private and public spaces work in a symbiotic relationship to enhance each other. Public spaces like this park in Paris are needed to sustain the productivity of cities, their social cohesion and inclusion, their civic identity, and their quality of life. Paris, France July 2015.

Source: Eduardo L. Moreno



What are the critical thresholds beyond which these problems become too complicated to manage? Infrastructure networks may be considered “too big to fail,” but they will fail if remedial measures are not taken to assure stem depreciation which threatens continued operation. Similarly, those systems may be considered “too connected to fail,” yet history has shown that single links can shut down vast networks.⁵⁰ Given the diversity of conditions across cities, we should also be asking whether the same critical thresholds appear in all cities or whether the vulnerability of different economics, ecologies, and institutions varies from place to place. Finally, all decision-makers must be keenly aware of the fact that if urbanization is not harnessed in a productive, equitable manner, cities stand to miss out on various opportunities for further socio-economic development. For all their problems, urban areas also are the sites for potentially sustainable solutions and societal transformations.

This diagnosis suggests that unless a New Urban Agenda is given prominence in national policies, the future of many cities will become:

- ▶ More unequal;
- ▶ More spread out in terms of urban spatial form;
- ▶ Less productive due to lack of adequate infrastructure and weaker potential for of the generation of economies of agglomeration;
- ▶ Detrimental for the living standards of increasing numbers among the population, as, unfulfilled demand for essential services and access to public goods continues to grow;
- ▶ Challenging for adequate infrastructure provision, in terms of cost and access;
- ▶ More highly exposed to the effects of climate change and, more generally, to environmental risk, as carbon dioxide reductions fail to keep pace with ever-rising energy demand; and
- ▶ Challenging in terms of government, as existing institutions become overstretched in the face of persistent, diverse demands (businesses, elites and the poor). In short, this type of urbanization will be unsustainable on four critical grounds:⁵¹
 - i. *Environmentally*, with its combination of cheap fossil fuel, heavy dependence on the motor car, ever-higher consumption of land and other resources, destruction of agricultural land and preserved natural areas;
 - ii. *Socially*, with exclusive and segregated forms of

urban development, with integration of the poor and migrants and sharing the benefits of urban life an ever-taller challenge as time goes by;

- iii. *Politically*, with the continuing domination of traditional modes of representation and leadership, which tend to concentrate power in the hands of the economic and social elites, disenfranchising large sections of the urban population;
- iv. *Economically*, with endless rises in the cost of living that is becoming prohibitive for many, pushing them ever farther into urban peripheries with poor access to decent employment.

At this point, it might be worth remembering that back in the early 1950s, “urbanization” referred to an active, not passive process whereby the city and its benefits, first and foremost housing and basic services, were understood as extending to all, including newcomers: “urbanization, namely, planning for collective life,”⁵² as one eminent French urban geographer defined it at the time. In other words, “the city that plans” as opposed to “the planned city,” (Chapter 7) — a locus for emerging, as opposed to closed-out, futures. With the Habitat III conference, the governments of this world face a unique opportunity to commit to turning “urbanization” into the active, deliberate, controlled, inclusive process⁵³ it was only two generations ago — instead of today’s city-centred mass drift that sees hundreds of millions shuffling from rural to urban destitution. A sprawling city is divisive and unjust—the opposite of an inclusive, sustainable city. A city builds society through spatial and socioeconomic density, not divide. Cities can only do so over time but, again, it is for Habitat III to map out a path for emerging futures under the guidance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The governments of this world face a unique opportunity to commit to turning “urbanization” into the active, deliberate, controlled, inclusive process

A city builds society through spatial and socioeconomic density... it is for Habitat III to map out a path for emerging futures under the guidance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

9.3

Defining the Guiding Principles for a New Urban Agenda

Ensuring that the new urbanization model contains mechanisms and procedures that protect and promote human rights and the rule of law

Urban areas are the sites where most challenging development problems have been concentrating for decades, such as poverty, inequality and climate change effects. That is why policy and action at the urban level are part of the solution to global problems. Moreover, the linkage to global development goals strengthens the priority of urban issues within a set of competing development objectives, further legitimizing a focus on urban problems. Both of these reasons might be described as “thinking inside out,” in the sense that the justification for attention to the urban level is not just for its own sake, but also for the resolution of broader global problems. Cities cannot grow on and on at the expense of supporting biosystems. In this sense, urban areas represent both the sites and the forces for transformative change as suggested in the principles outlined below.

This agenda itself rests on five principles that reflect a broad shift in strategic and policy thinking:⁵⁴

- i. *“Ensuring that the new urbanization model contains mechanisms and procedures that protect and promote human rights and the rule of law:* i.e. both the desirable outcome (sustainable cities) and the process to achieve it are consistent with the substance and purpose of international human rights instruments. Well-planned and managed urbanization, as supported by efficient legal and institutional frameworks, together with an equitable model for urban development, is an essential prerequisite for gradual fulfilment of human rights in cities, such as decent work, health care, adequate housing, access to basic services, a voice in public decision-making, transparent institutions and judiciary systems, among others. All of these contribute to the expansion of opportunities, prosperity and social justice for all.
- ii. *Ensuring equitable urban development and inclusive growth:* the New Urban Agenda can bring transformative change when equity is brought to the core of development and guides informed decision-making to enhance the lives of all city dwellers. This can happen when all levels of government and development partners adopt equity-based approaches; not only for ethical reasons, but also because they realize these approaches are cost-effective. It also happens when information, institutions, infrastructure and economic development are part of an equation of inclusive urban growth.
- iii. *Empowering civil society, expanding democratic participation and reinforcing collaboration:* the New Urban Agenda can promote transformative change through equal and balanced participation by men and women, young and old, as well as marginalized groups including the poor, the disabled, indigenous people, migrants and historically excluded groups. Such empowerment must be entrenched in law and proper enforcement thereof. Transformative change requires new avenues for political organization, social participation and the expression of cultural and sexual diversity to influence decision-making and change policy outcomes for the benefit of the majority. It also requires an effective local platform that allows for genuine and efficient collaboration between different levels of government and interested groups to steer urban growth towards more sustainable path.
- iv. *Promoting environmental sustainability:* the New Urban Agenda can lead to transformative change when a critical connection is established between environment, urban planning and governance with regard to issues such as land and resource use, energy consumption, rural-urban linkages, material flows, land fragmentation and climate change. The need to integrate “green” growth considerations, “decoupling” of urban growth from resource use and its environmental impacts, and environmental strategies in long-term urban planning and management of cities⁵⁵ is a fundamental aspect of this guiding principle.
- v. *Promoting innovations that facilitate learning and the sharing of knowledge:* the New Urban Agenda can result in transformative change if social and institutional innovations facilitate participatory learning. This can happen when a supportive learning environment is created, people’s and institutions’ capacities

Empowering civil society, expanding democratic participation and reinforcing collaboration

are developed and appropriate tools are employed; when long-term collective, collaborative and cumulative learning is connected to knowledge in support of the achievement of desirable outcomes and the monitoring of goals and targets.”⁵⁶

These shifts cut across long-established functional, professional, and institutional boundaries and suggest a set of integrating considerations, which can be formulated as principles for policy and action, which can address the imbalances, identified above.

9.4 Regional Urban Challenges and the New Urban Agenda

Urban areas themselves can be distinguished by demographic size, rate of demographic or spatial growth, by their historical origins, by their economic composition or structures, by their linkages to the global economy, or by their degree of informality, to mention a few defining characteristics. Urban challenges can be separated into two broad categories: developed versus developing countries, and within those categories, primate versus secondary cities. This simplified typology is not intended to be exhaustive but rather illustrative of some of the differences in urban conditions and challenges which exist and would influence policy recommendations and specific solutions of the New Urban Agenda.

The concepts of stocks and flows earlier described is still used to suggest that the balances and imbalances which exist in these regions and cities depend heavily on the historical processes, institutions and legacies of urbanization in different countries (stocks) and the rates of demographic and spatial growth as well as new policies, actions and investments (flows). The levels of GDP per capita of countries are used as proxies for level of development.

Developed countries: Urban opportunities and challenges

The longer historical path of urbanization of developed countries implies ten various major characteristics that the policy outcome of Habitat III needs to consider:

- Older stock of urban infrastructure and building, with associated decline and depreciation, with financial and environmental consequences. New York City for example has more than 1,000 miles of water pipe which is more than 100 years old, while the Underground in London has similarly passed its centennial anniversary.
- More developed public and political institutions and local capacities, with higher levels of trained staff and municipal revenues, reflected in the share of local revenue as a portion of total public revenue.
- More defined urban spatial structure including residential segregation by income, spatial sprawl with higher demand for transport and mobility, such as in suburban Paris.
- Greater installed economic interests and productive capacities, reflecting historical legacy of industrial revolution, with higher levels of accumulation and capital formation. The downside of this legacy is associated with vulnerability to changes in global economy, de-industrialization, and higher unemployment, examples such as Detroit or Spain..
- Established modes of urban finance and resource mobilization with higher accountability levels.
- Important levels of human capital investment, particularly at higher levels of education.
- Populations who are increasing their average and median ages, leading to the need for new kinds of social policies to meet their particular requirements in health care, transportation, or leisure, to mention a few.
- New forms of marginalization, particularly with the lack of economic opportunities for increasing shares of youth and immigrants within their urban populations.
- Slowing down of rates of demographic growth due to lower birthrates which in turn often reflect reduced economic growth.
- Large waves of immigration to Western Europe from Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe, as well as continued high immigration to the US from Latin America.

Differences in urban conditions and challenges which exist and would influence policy recommendations and specific solutions of the New Urban Agenda

More developed public and political institutions and local capacities, with higher levels of trained staff and municipal revenues

Nearly half of the cities in developed regions are shrinking, some keeping good quality of life and others with important deteriorations

Historical patterns of production, employment, and incomes are changing in the face of shifts in the global economy

What these mean in practice is that developed countries and cities have in general more solid and efficient institutions with stronger levels of coordination across tiers of government. National incomes are higher, and in many cases there are extensive public expenditures for social services and social security in these countries. Nearly half of the cities in developed regions are shrinking, some keeping good quality of life and others with important deteriorations. Frequently there are highly entrenched patterns of intra-urban inequality, concentrations of private wealth, and relatively slow growth of opportunities for income growth and social mobility in a rather polluted ecological context and deteriorating infrastructure. Inequalities are especially visible in the spatial construct of cities, with associated worsening of relations between groups and a growing incidence of violence, particularly with a growing immigration and racial, ethnic, and religious diversity. The cities of industrialized countries also face urgent problems of environmental pollution, waste management, and protection of green space. In some cases they have become dangerous heat islands which have to be remedied by city level environmental policies. The New Urban Agenda needs to take into consideration these specific features of cities in developed countries

While urban areas in more advanced regions have a longer historical trajectory as industrialized cities suggested above, it is notable how much historical patterns of production, employment, and incomes are changing in

the face of shifts in the global economy, as indicated in earlier chapters.⁵⁷ Earlier assumptions about the stability of local economies and the continued benefits coming from installed infrastructure, firms, and labor forces have been severely disrupted over the last several decades, with a first wave coming from the reconstruction of East Asian economies such as Japan, Korea, and Taiwan and their growing share of world trade which challenged producers in Europe and North America in many sectors, and a second wave in the 1990s with the liberalization of national economies following the Washington Consensus. The third wave is from globalization itself as new patterns of outsourcing have completely transformed global value chains in most productive sectors.⁵⁸

These changes have had particularly heavy impacts on secondary cities in developed countries. Whereas many secondary cities were able to economically specialize in certain products and develop a comparative advantage at the national level over time, they proved to be overly dependent on vertical specialization which characterized their economic organization. Economies of scale worked within a framework of vertical specialization, but when these industries were challenged by lower labor costs in Latin America and later in Asia, they were unable to compete. De-industrialization first hit North America and Europe and later Latin America as jobs moved to China and other African and Asian countries. In contrast, secondary cities with heavy investments in human capital have been able to adjust to the spread of new technologies and have been able to shift from their focus on single



People with face masks and protections are increasingly seen in various Asian cities. This family on a motorbike is from Hanoi, where levels of pollution for this motorized way of transport are becoming higher and higher. Hanoi, Viet Nam, May 2014.

Source: Eduardo L. Moreno

Box 9.2: Primate and secondary cities in developed nations and the New Urban Agenda

Over the past three decades or so, developed countries have undergone large-scale industrial restructuring as a result of trade liberalization, the end of communism and the rise of Asian economic power. Relocation of manufacturing to low-wage countries has combined with lengthening value chains to de-industrialise numbers of secondary cities while primate conurbations remained privileged locations for the services sector. Taken together, the differences between primate and secondary cities in developed countries can be summarized as follows:

1. Primate cities are demographically larger and therefore tend to feature more economic diversity; they can take advantage of economies of agglomeration, and thus are more productive, with higher income levels.
2. Strong economic performance generates higher average incomes, but also high-income inequality and differences in social mobility and other opportunities across cities of different scales.
3. High inequality leads to social conflicts between income levels, racial, ethnic, and religious groups, and a growing duality between those who benefit from urban scale and those who do not.
4. While larger cities may have stronger institutional capacities to manage these conflicts, the scale and multipliers of such conflicts are greater.
5. With some exceptions, primate cities tend to have more robust municipal institutions and revenue bases, and thus are more able to finance a fuller range of infrastructure and social services.
6. Even though some secondary cities feature outstanding institutional capacities, most, however, suffer from weaker institutional and financial bases and are, thus, more vulnerable to infrastructure failure and natural disasters.

industries and to diversify. This is particularly true for industries within the knowledge economy where skills can work across sectors and where agglomeration economies are more important.⁵⁹

The implication of these economic changes is that shifting structures of production have major consequences for local tax bases, for population growth, for the availability of finance for public services, and for patterns of accumulation, savings, and capital formation. The economic dynamism of many secondary cities, therefore, has not proven to be able to withstand global economic change and volatility. While some cities are able to prosper, others collapse, with the average level of economic prosperity in secondary towns considerably below average wage levels in primate cities whose more diverse and larger economies are more likely to withstand external shocks (Box 9.2 presents the difference between primate and secondary cities in developed countries).

Developing countries: Urban opportunities and challenges

In contrast to developed countries, the developing countries face another set of urban challenges that are to be considered when preparing the New Urban Agenda. Although these problems are not homogeneous they affect cities in different levels and intensities, including:

- Continued rapid urban demographic growth.
- Low levels of infrastructure provision and little improvement, particularly in sanitation and road connectivity among cities.
- Ineffective housing policies, and particularly poor urban planning, with resulting high shares of urban residents living in slums.
- De-densification of urban areas resulting in urban sprawl and increasing demand for transport.
- Poor provision of green and public spaces, including streets networks.
- High levels of urban poverty, growing levels of intra-urban inequality, and marginalization of various groups including women.
- Low levels of human capital.
- Slow growth of formal sector employment, with high levels of informality and unemployment, particularly among youth
- Declining environmental quality
- Weak urban governance and poor provision of public goods.
- Weak municipal finance, with low revenue base.
- Weak ability to prepare for and withstand disasters.
- Weak management of potentially productive rural-urban linkages.⁶⁰

The differences between primate and secondary cities are greater in developing than in developed countries, reflecting generally lower incomes, less developed municipal institutions with weaker capacities, and higher rates of demographic and spatial expansion. The

Shifting structures of production have major consequences for local tax bases, for population growth, for the availability of finance for public services

The differences between primate and secondary cities are greater in developing than in developed countries

Box 9.3: Primate and secondary cities in developing countries and the New Urban Agenda

Secondary urban areas feature increasingly diverse conditions, reflecting geography and shifting economic opportunities.⁶¹

1. Just as many urban areas started as trading or administrative posts during colonial times, today many secondary cities are growing in response to new opportunities, including across borders (e.g. natural resources for export).
2. Domestic patterns have been transformed by rapid expansion of small towns, as they turn into transport corridors or development hubs, transforming local and regional economies, and creating new, emergent urban forms.
3. At the same time, rates of demographic growth are often higher in secondary compared with primate cities with attendant stronger demand for housing, infrastructure, jobs and social services. This “secondary cities mismatch” is the gap between demand and the capacity of public institutions and the local economy to meet it.
5. Despite their critical role in urban hierarchies and in rural-urban linkages, the question of institutional capacities remains. Public sector weakness is reflected in uncontrolled sprawl and expansion of settlements on peri-urban fringes, resulting in rapid declines in overall density and associated higher costs of extending infrastructure in financially strapped municipalities.
6. Most secondary cities rank low against UN-Habitat’s City Prosperity Index and much remains to be done in terms of quality of life, infrastructure and the environment. Production of goods and services is still low, as a reflection of underdevelopment. Historical structural problems, chronic inequality of opportunities, widespread poverty, inadequate capital investments in public goods, and lack of pro-poor social programmes characterize these cities.⁶²

Most secondary cities rank low against UN-Habitat’s City Prosperity Index and much remains to be done in terms of quality of life, infrastructure and the environment

challenge for secondary cities is the degree of recognition and support they are given within the broader framework of national urban policies, keeping in mind that their populations are often expanding faster than those of primate cities. The most defining features of these cities are presented in Box 9.3.

Developing countries: Observing differences through a regional lens

While the differences between cities in developed and developing countries are significant, further understanding can be achieved through looking at the developing countries through a largely regional typology. While many typologies have been developed, this subsection uses a typology linking the rural and urban sectors with the scale of urban growth and the absorptive capacity of urban areas. Four categories of countries are identified:

1. **African countries**, with rapid recent urbanization, fuelled by rural migration, with weak capacity to respond to the demands for housing, infrastructure, decent employment and social services.⁶³ Lack of manufacturing is coupled with scarce public services and severe poverty. Towns are more likely to be trading centres with close links to agriculture, the challenge being to turn them to production centres, with the tax revenues required for infrastructure. Employment is mostly informal, featuring low profitability and weak job creation potential. Therefore, the urgent need for

economic transformation calls for job creation and improved electricity, water, and sanitation supplies, with basic services and infrastructure improving densities, and attendant energy and greenhouse emissions savings.

2. **Latin American countries** feature historic urban centres with large contributions to GDP, with supporting infrastructure and social services. The economy has slowed down after the bouts of dynamism of the 1950-1980 period, rural-urban migration has diminished sharply and many countries have achieved a demographic transition. Peru, Uruguay, Panama and Mexico have managed significant reductions in poverty but inequality is steep in most urban areas⁶⁴, as middle classes expand but larger numbers still live in precarious conditions. Low densities and sprawl heighten public transport costs and marginalise significant shares of the population in Mexico City, São Paulo or Buenos Aires. Nonetheless, important urban management innovations have been undertaken, for instance, in Curitiba and São Paulo, Brazil; in Bogotá and Medellín, Colombia; and Mexico City and Guadalajara, Mexico. These innovations demonstrate that real change is possible if institutionally supported and imaginatively designed.⁶⁵ Latin America has become a major locus of innovative urban management.
3. **Large South Asian countries** - Bangladesh, India, Pakistan - feature massive, expanding urban populations in mega-cities such as Dhaka, Mumbai, Delhi,

Innovations demonstrate that real change is possible if institutionally supported and imaginatively designed. Latin America has become a major locus of innovative urban management

Karachi, or Lahore, as well as in growing numbers of secondary cities (500,000 to one million) and thousands of cities with populations under 500,000. In face of the daunting magnitude of projected urban demographic growth over the next 20 years,⁶⁶ accommodating the needs of these populations through planned city extensions is going to be a challenge. In India, urban areas already contribute more than 60 per cent of GDP and an extra 300 million new urban residents are projected by 2050, leading to a call by the Indian Government to build 100 new cities over the period. The attendant amount of additional greenhouse gases would have consequences on climate change. The alternative, if challenging, is to build denser, low-energy, low-infrastructure cities. Central to this challenge are the twin bottlenecks of municipal finance, i.e. lack of tax revenues to provide urban services, and infrastructure finance for transport, electricity, communications, water supply, and sanitation in support of production.⁶⁷ These problems are also found in Bangladesh and Pakistan, municipal institutions and finance must be strengthened for the sake of effective urban management.

4. **Fast growing, rapidly urbanizing countries** as a category takes in Tunisia and Turkey on top of China,

Korea, and Malaysia. Rural migration has taken vast proportions in China, where more than 50 cities with populations over one million, stimulate the economy, particularly the construction and manufacturing sectors.⁶⁸ Korea and Malaysia have also demonstrated their economic dynamism and ability to compete in global markets.⁶⁹ As in Latin America, East Asian cities have demonstrated their interest in innovative urban management, most recently with moves to reduce air pollution and traffic congestion.⁷⁰

In conclusion, the principles presented in this chapter should be the foundation of a New Urban Agenda. They reflect broader shifts in global thinking. While general and universally applicable, they also must fit within a widely diverse panorama of countries and cities, as suggested in the typologies presented above which distinguish developed from developing countries, primate and secondary cities within both categories, and regional differences as well. Each lens suggests some of the specificities, which need to be considered in the formulation of a compelling and credible New Urban Agenda that needs to be problem-oriented, programmatic and practicable if our emerging futures are to be sustainable for all.

New Urban Agenda that needs to be problem-oriented, programmatic and practicable if our emerging futures are to be sustainable for all

Notes

- Global Commission, 2014.
- World Bank, 2009b.
- Brenner, 2014.
- Moser, 2009.
- Soja, 2000.
- Gutman, 2011.
- United Nations, 2014.
- Gutman, 2011.
- UN-Habitat, 2013g.
- McKinsey, 2011.
- Cohen, 2008.
- Cohen, 2012b.
- Miller and Cohen, 2014.
- IPCC, 2014.
- Creutzig, Baiocchi, Blerkandt, Pichler and Seto, 2014.
- Cohen, 2014.
- DiBlasio, 2015.
- These principles refer, for instance, to the "triple helix" approach of (i) sustainable development, (ii) protection of the Earth's life-support system and (iii) the fundamental notion of planetary wellbeing.
- Cohen, 1998.
- Hirschman, 1958.
- Cohen, 1996.
- Piketty, 2013.
- Harvey, 2006.
- The New York Times, 2015; Sassen, 2014.
- UN-Habitat, 2014d.
- OECD, 2015.
- Angel, 2015.
- Roberts, op.cit.
- Soja, 2010.
- Bullard, 2005.
- Gutman, op.cit.
- Roberts, op.cit.
- Tacoli, 2012.
- Angel, op.cit.
- Bertaud, 2014b.
- Angel, op.cit.
- Patrick, 2013.
- Rosenzweig, Solecki, Hammer and Mehrotra, 2012.
- Increased drought coupled with heavier monsoon rains in India and Pakistan have reduced agricultural production and placed growing strains on rural households.
- Piketty, 2013.
- OECD, 2014, UN-Habitat and CAF, 2014.
- Milberg and Winkler, 2013.
- CEPII.
- Moretti, 2013.
- For example, the informal sector now contributes some about 80 per cent of the Indian economy and similar data is registered in many African cities and Arab economies. WIEGO data, UN-Habitat, 2010d.
- Piketty, op.cit, Stiglitz, op.cit.
- Buckley, Chisholm and Simet, 2014.
- Tippett, Deweever and Rockeymoore, 2014.
- Center for the Urban Future, 2014.
- Obermaier, 2015.
- UN-Habitat, 2014d.
- « (...) l'urbanisation, c'est-à-dire un aménagement de la vie collective» in George, P. (1952).
- An apt example being Ouarzazate, Morocco, on the edge of the Sahara: in this marginal historic landmark turned boomtown, every single plot in yet-unbuilt residential developments already comes with connections to water and sanitation networks, with sockets for electric power supplies from across the Atlas mountain.
- UN-Habitat and CAF, 2014..
- UNEP, 2013b.
- UN-Habitat and CAF, 2014..
- Moretti, 2014.
- Milberg and Winkler, op.cit.
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- Satterthwaite, 2006.
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