CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE LOST CITY

by Jay Moor

I magine a city where there are no civil ser vants, where authority has passed "from paid officers, in the service of the King, to the shoulders of the common citizen, taking his turn in office." Imagine a city where the citizen contributes his own arms and equipment to perform military service and his own time and intelligence to serve in the assembly and law courts. Imagine that work now done by executives, division chiefs, inspectors, and magistrates, done by ordinary citizens, each taking his or her turn in service to the city.

There was once such a city -- fifth-century Athens -- a jumbled pig-sty of a place that was home to the likes of Aristides, Sophocles and Socrates. As described by Lewis Mumford in his book *The City in History, Athens* was, for less than a century, a place where the city was its citizens, rather than its buildings and infrastructure, and where there was a Golden Mean between public and private life. The average free male Athenian ("democratic" Athenian society excluded women from citizenship and relied on slaves for labour) acted and participated in all facets of life in the city. Participation and action were as much staples in an Athenian's civic dict as were philosophy and learning.

The secret of how such a society was created has been largely lost, but it surely was the city itself that shaped the men who lived there, by bringing activities into close proximity. The polis soon became the object of worship by its citizens and, as with any human institution placed on a pedestal, it quickly destroyed its own perfection. In just one generation, Plato would begin to look for a new utopia, an abstract ideal, in which citizens became -- and stayed -- specialists. What we see today as the comparative advantage of different people with different skills was part of Plato's ideal where the life of the citizen was given over to the city as a whole. In Plato's city, Socrates the Stonecutter would never have become Socrates the Philosopher.

Countdown to Istanbul

April 1995 Number 2

In the next generation of Greek philosophers, Aristotle made corrections to Plato's view of the city by recognizing that the variety of city life itself brought an immense creative surge, and that purpose cannot be imposed on the citizen but is the result of an organic process. More importantly, Aristotle (the biologist/philosopher) placed limits on the practical size of

13 Months to go

the city, knowing that any organism that grows too large will eventually collapse. "The best limit of the population of a city, then, is the largest number which suffices for the purposes of life, and can be taken in at a single view." The debate over ideal city size continues today.

One of Aristotle's other contributions to urban theory was less useful: he sought to exclude mechanics and tradesmen from citizenship. This idea, to bring about the good life through a new aristocracy, helped bring down the Greek city. It excluded large numbers of people from civic life and from politics and gave them license to be irresponsible and "relieved them of any moral end or obligation even in those affairs they could govern".

Ancient Athens may be a source of discovery in today's urbanizing world. Aristotle's proposal for self-governing communities of limited size might, today, be applied to modules within our cities

rather than to the whole city. People can be removed from Plato's non-realm of exclusion and placed back at the centre of life in the city. Although it may take decades to re-institutionalize our urban societies, it can and must be done. The rapidity and scale of urbanization we see today is far beyond the control of government, either as patron or as regulator.

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COUNTDOWN TO ISTANBUL

How often have you walked down a street in your city, town or village and wondered if you'll be safe? How many times have you stood in a queue only to be pushed aside by someone bigger or more aggressive than you? Have you ever had to tell your neighbour to turn down the volume on his/her music system?

If the answer to any of the above questions is "often", then you probably know what it means to be "civically disengaged". This state of affairs usually occurs when citizens of cities become so atomised that they come to believe that their right to the city and its facilities is greater than the rights of others. In this scenario, citizens lack a common understanding of their problems and do not feel a sense of ownership in the decisions that affect their daily lives.

In this second issue of Countdown to Istanbul, we explore the concept of civic engagement and civic responsibility as it relates to the wider issue of governance. Contributors to this issue have posed important questions on the roles of citizens of cities in the emerging urban world -- questions which suggest that now, more than ever, people want to have direct control over their physical environment through a process of participatory urban management which allows for wider debate -- and consensus -- on issues ranging from efficient waste disposal to recreational facilities. Now, more than ever, citizens of cities are demanding to be heard and to be given the authority to make decisions about the way their cities, towns and villages should be governed.

This new trend in urban management may not be "new" -- participation and action were the cornerstones of fifth century Athenian society -- but it is being widely accepted. It is the basis for Habitat's enabling strategy which encourages communities, local authorities, governments and the private sector to come up with integrated strategies to deal with problems in a way that "enables" all urban actors to feel responsible for actions taken at the local level.

Civic responsibility is the flip side of civic engagement: when citizens are engaged in decisions that affect them, they feel responsible for them and vice versa. And, hopefully, when they feel engaged and responsible, they act in a manner which does not infringe on the rights and responsibilities of others. In other words, governance is no longer a top-down process; rather, it is interactive and dynamic, built on partnerships.

We hope that this issue will generate even more debate and foster greater understanding of the issues we will be addressing at Habitat II. We encourage you to send in your comments because we believe that healthy dialogue will enhance the preparatory process leading to the Conference -- the last United Nations conference of the century.

Dr. Wally N'Dow
Secretary-General

Habitat II

Only where people themselves take responsibility for sustaining their common environment and for ensuring equity among themselves can the livable city be created.

In his recent book, Making Democracy Work, Robert Putnam calls the type of involvement in public affairs as was seen in Socratic Athens, civic engagement, which he defines as interest in public issues and devotion to public causes. In the absence of such virtue, each person and each family will seek the short-run advantage and will assume that others will do the same. The result is an uncivic society where personal patronage, cynicism, corruption, mistrust, and control through the use of force are endemic and collapse of society is an ever-present threat.

Putnam does not argue that all citizens must be fully rounded in the arts, sciences, politics, crafts and philosophy in order to make cities work. He does conclude, from his 25-year study of Italian regional governments, that, where people have a history of forming associations, a kind of capital is built up -- social capital -- that includes trust, norms, and networks that facilitate coordinated action. These associations can be of any sort: sports clubs, choral groups, mutual-aid societies, co-operatives or self-educational gatherings. Through prolonged interaction in such associations, reciprocal relationships are formed that extend beyond immediate associates to associates of associates, who themselves may be key figures in various public and private organizations. Where he or she is linked by a generalized reciprocity to many different associates, the individual will tend not to act selfishly or in a way that jeopardizes the accumulated social capital of others.

The picture sketched by Putnam is not a utopian one where good people always do the right thing. It certainly isn't an image of fifth-century Athens reincarnate, where all citizens participate with verve and sophistication in all public activities and decisions. It is, rather, a probabilistic image where the longer the history of associations and the denser the networks of associations, the more likely it is that governors will work for the interests of the governed. In those regions that have a history of civic engagement, as measured by several empirical indicators, the result has been more efficient and effective governance.

This, however, could be bad news for urbanizing cultures without such a history, without networks formed around a rich heritage of associations. Putnam is clear: history counts. Does this mean that cities without such a heritage are doomed to inefficiency, paternalism, patronage, law-breaking and oppressive control? If so, what should be the development strategy where civic engagement is not a tradition, compared to a strategy for places that do have a fund of social capital?

If people are to become, once again, a central force in improving their own living environments (as they must when needs outrace the abilities of governments) any urban development strategy should, as a first priority, encourage civic engagement, regardless of historic conditions. As Putnam notes, a vigorous network of associations is essential in any effort to overcome mass poverty under conditions likely to prevail in most developing countries in the predictable future.
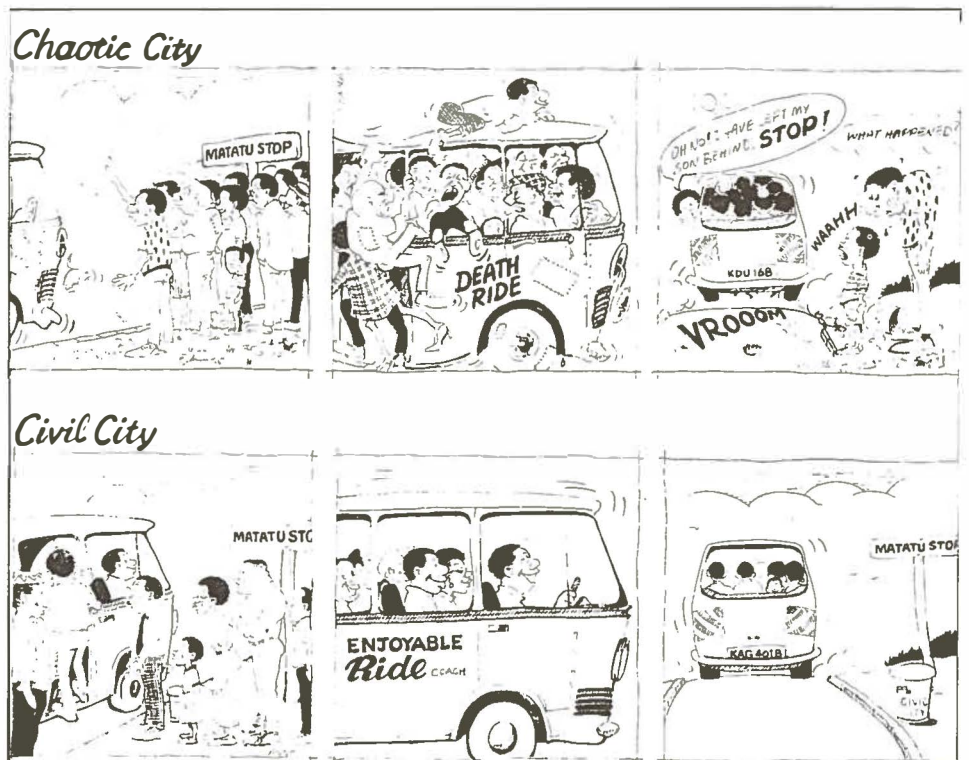
Because the history of tomorrow includes today, there is a strong reason to engage people now in order to begin building the fund of social capital that will surely be needed if cities are to remain centers of civilized behavior. For this reason, civic engagement, including participation and formation of local organizations, especially at the community level, is the first principle underlying the draft Global Plan of Action for Habitat II.

*The author is Co-ordinator of Programme Development for the Habitat II secretariat.*

CONSENSUS: THE ESSENCE OF GOOD CITY MANAGEMENT

What is good governance? This question will no doubt dominate discussions leading up to the Habitat II Conference, not only because good governance can significantly enhance the contribution of cities to socio-economic development, but because in the future, cities will have to increasingly rely on innovative approaches to urban management.

Usually, good governance is defined in terms of transparency and accountability. These criteria are useful for those who shape the development of cities through direct capital investments because they need to be assured that their money is used to address the issues they are concerned with and also because they need to recover their financial investment.

However, it is important to note that externally-supported capital investments from bi- or multilateral agencies constitute less than one per cent of the total investment in cities. Ninety nine per cent of investment in cities is generated from within the country by residents of the city, by rural areas surrounding the city, by the private sector and by the government. This fact is often overlooked by governments and local authorities who are under the mistaken impression that deteriorating living conditions in cities are a direct result of scarcity of local resources. In fact, it

has been widely proven that it is not resources that cities lack but good management.
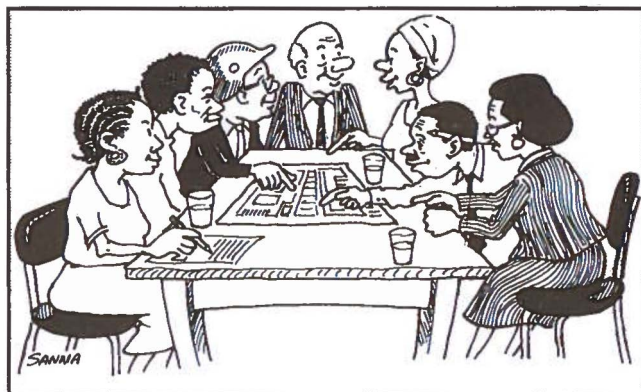
In order to mobilise and facilitate local resources, local authorities need to develop among the various actors in the city a common sense of purpose, a common understanding of the problems to be dealt with, common strategies to tackle these problems and a sense of ownership in the decision-making process.

New Approach

Partnership-building among various urban actors is a concept that is gaining increasing acceptance in many cities around the world. UNCHS (Habitat) is currently promoting this participatory approach in a dozen cities around the globe. UNCHS launched the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP) in 1990 after coming to the conclusion that the inability of local governments to effectively plan, co-ordinate and manage cities was the primary cause of environmental degradation in cities and that the traditional masterplan approach to urban growth and development did not work.

Masterplans are usually so ambitious that their failure is, in a way, guaranteed. They focus almost entirely on physical planning aspects and, although most are technically competent, they remain unaffordable and, therefore, unimplemented, especially in developing countries. Another problem with the traditional masterplan approach is that it

is product and control oriented. "Programmes that prohibit rather than encourage don't work," says Jochen Eigen, the Programme's Co-ordinator.

The Programmme's principal goal is to provide municipal authorities and their partners in the public, private and popular sectors with improved environmental planning and management capacity. It intervenes not merely at the technical/operational level, but also at the administrative/managerial and political levels. "We feel that planning is not just a technical exercise, but a process that involves negotiating rules among the various actors," explains Eigen. "It's easy to get technical answers to problems. The challenge is to reconcile competing interests and to arrive at a consensus which is broad-based. This is the only way to sustainable socio-economic development."

This new approach is flexible, pragmatic and responsive. It introduces a management approach that tries to reconcile rather than restrict the various stakeholders in urban development. Conflict resolution, is therefore, one of its primary tasks.

Local authority involvement and active participation of urban managers, government agencies and concerned parties in the private sector are necessary for the success of the programme. "By bringing people from the various sectors together, we get them to understand each other's needs and priorities," says Chris Radford, the Programme's chief technical advisor in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

This approach, which can be adopted by any city which has the political will to implement it, does not prescribe solutions; rather, it puts in place a process which ensures that development issues are debated by all concerned and that a consensus is reached on how to deal with them. This may take time and patience but it will result in everyone accepting responsibility for their part in ensuring lasting urban development, which is the essence of a sustainable city.

Rasna Warah and SCP Core Team

CULTIVATING A CARING URBAN CULTURE

By Maureen Wameyo

Civic. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you hear this word? If you are like most people, invariably you will equate this word with local authorities, and, if you live in Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, with the Nairobi City Council. You will then begin to think about how inefficient, insensitive, ineffective, corrupt, and uncaring the Council is.

It is true that the activities of local authorities in Kenya leave a lot to be desired. They have, for a long time, been unable to meet the demands of the increasing numbers of the urban population and, consequently, the increasing demands for infrastructure, housing and other public services: the number of potholes on the city's roads has increased; water supply is inadequate or non-existent in many residential estates; there aren't enough schools; piles of garbage are a common sight; public buildings are poorly maintained and; adequate and affordable housing is in short supply.

Mismanagement

Reasons for the incompetence of local authorities include not only their inability to cope with the rapid increase in the urban population and consequent excessive demand on existing services, but also inadequate management skills, corruption and lack of finance. A local daily recently revealed that revenues collected by local authorities, instead of being used to provide needed services to residents of the city, are, in most cases, used to pay council staff salaries and councillors' allowances.

Many councils are also overstaffed and poorly organized. The low salaries paid to most of the staff also act as a disincentive to the employees. It is not uncommon to see council employees sitting by the roadside chatting when what they need to be doing is cutting grass or unblocking drains.

Civic Pride

Having said all that, let's consider that the word civic also relates to citizens' duties and responsibilities towards the city.

At the World Environment Day Exhibitions held in June 1994, a non-governmental organization (in formation), Kenya Environmental Promotions Network (KEPNET), presented a play titled, *"Who's to blame?"*. In this play, residents in a certain urban residential estate came together to a solve crisis which involved a tenant accusing another of emptying food remains on her plot. After the usual tongue-lashing, the residents considered carefully whose duty it was to dispose waste. The play ends with all of them agreeing that since the local authority did not collect garbage or unblock clogged sinks, they, as individuals must take on responsibility for these tasks for the betterment of the community. The idea that citizens of cities also have a responsibility towards the maintenance of the city's environment may be a new one, but it is one which will have to be increasingly accepted, especially in growing, overburdened cities such as Nairobi.

Citizens' Responsibilities

What can citizens of cities do to improve the lot of their community?

Firstly, citizens should use the different fora already in place to express their individual and communal concerns. This could take the form of, for example, open letters to the editor in newspapers, magazines, newsletters and bulletins.

Secondly, individuals should aggressively undertake some of the tasks usually done by local authorities. We know that the Nairobi City Council, like every other government department, has been seriously affected by increased inflation and stringent structural adjustment programmes. When services are lacking or inadequate, we can fill in the gap by, for example, cleaning communal drains in our housing estates (either as individuals or as a group) or digging pits in our backyards for rubbish disposal.

And finally, we must also cultivate in ourselves a "culture of "caring" and a pride in our environment. This involves even the little things we don't normally think about such as not littering the streets with ticket stubs or wrapping paper and being polite and "civil" to the person sitting next to us on the bus. The City Council cannot be blamed for irresponsible behaviour. We, as individuals, must cultivate within ourselves and within our children a pride in our city and a code of conduct as citizens of that city.

This does not mean, however, that the local government should take a back seat. The efforts of individuals must be supplemented by the activities of the local government. These activities, together with the efforts of other organizations in the private sector, can improve our urban environment.

The author is Project Officer at Shelter Forum, a coalition of non-governmental organizations dealing with shelter issues in Kenya. Shelter Forum's main objective is to make affordable shelter accessible to all, especially the poorest, through extension, networking and advocacy.

An overloaded City Council garbage truck. Photo credit: United Nations, N. Kihara

URBAN PLANNING IN THE 90s

By Raquel Rolnik

It is generally agreed that there is a need to intervene in the socio-environmental growth and development of cities. However, the consensus ends here. In fact, strategies which need to be adopted in order to address this issue do not appear to be a priority for debate in the national political and economic arena.

On the other hand, there is a generally accepted view on the international scene that the "locus" of urban policy formulation, especially with respect to land, lies in the technical field of urban planning. This belief in the power of planning -- despite years of frustrations -- is still fairly strong in the political and technical spheres.

The history of urban planning is dominated by certain conceptions of the city which are rooted in the post-Carta de Atehas tradition of town planning which bestows leadership to the State. The instruments of this paradigm are:

a) urban management based on "rational" decisions taken by the State to creating a city which is a model of urban order;

b) an ideal model of the city as part of a modernizing and integrated project; and

c) guarantee of continuous national and international investment flows towards provision of basic infrastructure which, in turn, creates conditions for the growth of capital.

Obviously, these assumptions are encountering problems in the international economic and political context where the model of Soviet-style socialism and post-New Deal capitalism -- the State planner and intervenor -- has lost control. The limitations of these assumptions are evident: cities are unable to sustain themselves in the face of economic and political transformations on the global scene and more than half of the cities in developing countries are "illegal". The traditional urban planning model is unable to respond to modern urban challenges; it does not have the capacity to respond to urban problems. It is therefore necessary to redefine the role of the State in terms of diminishing its leadership through a decentralization policy which would delegate more responsibility to local governments.

The tussle over legality

It is necessary to understand that the growth of illegal squatter settlements is a specific and particular form of urbanization with its own economic and institutional dynamism. The legal/illegal strain, one of the areas of conflict in municipal policies, is an obvious indicator of the need to revise the utopias, methods and instruments of urban planning intervention.

This question is strategic today not only because it is directed at the increasing majority of urban dwellers but also because it requires new thinking in the concept of urban order. This new thinking would involve eliminating the idea of homogeneity and making urban planning more flexible. Planning in this form would be a technical exercise which has room for political dispute and in which conflicts are their own driving force.

These changes would involve a redefinition of the role of the State and, specifically, of local government which, far from becoming less important as the market-oriented neo-liberals would wish, should act as a diffuser of negative influences on solidarity, self-reliance and distribution of income and power.

The author is former Director of Planning in the City of Sao Paulo, Brazil. Currently she is professor at Faculdade de Arquitectura e Urbanismo of PUC-Campina and research co-ordinator of POLIS Institute, an NGO devoted to urban policies.

THE NEW URBAN WARS

By Rasna Warah

As the United Nations celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, it is faced with an acute dilemma: despite the promise of unprecedented social and economic progress after the end of the Cold War, the goal of global security and peace appears to be elusive. Conflicts within countries have increased; of the 82 armed conflicts between 1989 and 1992, 79 were domestic, many along ethnic lines.

This state of affairs is not surprising, according to many historians and sociologists. In a recent issue of the Atlantic Monthly, Robert D. Kaplan predicted that future wars will be different from the ones we have seen in the past. These wars will not be for national boundaries or territories. Nor will they be ideological. Rather, as cities expand and the rural poor pour into cities to become the urban disaffected, conflicts will be over social, economic and cultural differences. The wars will be urban-based and largely undeclared. Resolving such conflicts will, therefore, become more complex as they grow more intractable.

Cultural Conflict

Unfortunately, the view that cities will become volatile battlefields is very common among futurists and among urban planners who have lately begun sending out alarm signals on the plight of cities in the next century. In the summer 1993 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard's Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, stated that the world has been moving during the course of this century from nation-state conflict to ideological conflict to, finally, cultural conflict because "increasing interactions (between people) intensify civilization consciousness".

It is in cities that this cultural conflict becomes most tangible. "In theory, the city is the melting pot," says **K.C. Sivaramakrishnan**, *a former Secretary in the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India*, in a recent issue of The Urban Age. "Proximity, mobility and economic opportunity are expected to bring about a reduction in economic and social inequality and consequently, render these factors less divisive. Unfortunately, recent experience has been otherwise. Religious clashes in some Indian cities, ethnic strife in Bosnia, and the unending conflicts in several parts of Africa underscore the fact that the politics of clan and tribe pervade whole countries. Years of city-building and city living are not sufficient to deflect those politics. On the contrary, communal considerations colour and influence political issues in urban areas to a greater extent than realised."

Why are cities, once viewed as cradles of civilization and well-springs of opportunity, turning into breeding grounds of economic misery, social disintegration and violence?

Jorge Wilheim, *the Deputy Secretary-General of Habitat II*, says that the problem is a result of the fact that cities can, and do, create anonymity and competition. " In the village where everyone knows you, you are more accountable for your actions. But in a big city, you become anonymous and are, therefore, more easily corruptible," he says. Moreover, he argues, competition among urban migrants often leads to irrational prejudice, intolerance, social exclusion and ultimately, cultural clashes and violence. (This problem is compounded by absence of good leadership: when ruthless political leaders exploit centuries-old prejudices by pitting one group against another, no amount of tolerance can salvage the situation.)

Most importantly, it is in cities that the gap between the rich and poor is most stark. When the poor survive in escalating squalor and the elite live in sanitised opulence, the resultant stress leads to chronic disfunction. Hence, economic growth in itself has little impact on human security if it is not accompanied by social justice and equity, including gender equity, emphasizes Wilheim.

Cities per se are, therefore, not the cause of economic misery and social disintegration. (In fact, many large cities have managed to achieve a healthy balance between economic progress and social integration.) On the contrary, cities are where people have a future. Cities exist because they are a marketplace, laden with opportunities for individual betterment. Most of these opportunities are made possible through integration of economic activities and access to a variety of human resources. The sustainability of those opportunities depends upon a mixture of co-operation and good management -- both of which are necessary for harmonising the activities of a great number of people, all competing for personal gain.

Shlomo Angel, *a senior advisor with UNCHS (Habitat)*, believes that urban life can be made more tolerable through a "sustainable civic order" whereby citizens are not expected to love each other but are expected to maintain a functional level of civility towards each other. This civility, he says, is what makes urban life possible, what makes a social contract possible and what makes productive work possible.

Similarly, Wilheim, who is an architect and city planner by profession, believes that citizens of cities should embark on a "crusade for solidarity" and on "an enabling strategy for better cities in a world of cities". This includes increasing awareness of the challenges and potentials of cities and freeing opportunities which enable people, organisations, institutions and governments to make cities more liveable. In other words, the urban agenda for development must be made up of an integrated effort to combat poverty, improve governance, manage local environments and allow for more equitable access to land, housing, jobs, finance and shelter.

Declining Investment

Partnership-building doesn't mean that governments need not invest more in cities. In fact, lack of government investment in urban development is one of the leading causes of urban insecurity. For example, in the United States of America during the 1980s, U.S. federal aid to cities was almost halved while counties and states faced similar cutbacks. As public health, public education and public facilities deteriorated in most American cities, human security decreased. Ironically, larger chunks of local budgets then had to be allocated to maintain bigger police forces, jails and prisons. Some cities have managed to remain socially and economically integrated but for many, such as Los Angeles which experienced violent rioting and looting three years ago after the Rodney King verdict, rebellion is seen by many residents as the only option.

Few countries have established positive strategies and policies to guide their urban development. Among national governments and international donors and lenders, rural development remains a high priority, often to the exclusion of investment in urban infrastructure, despite the fact that typically, cities and towns produce more than one half of country's national output and hold a majority of its population. United Nations projections indicate that more than three-fifths of the world's population will live in urban areas by 2025; in that year, developing countries will have nearly four times as many urban residents as developed countries.

New Renaissance

Not long before he died recently, the science fiction author Isaac Asimov wrote that the emerging world of the city was not an imaginary world of the future but one already here today, a real world in which the city, overfilled and troubled, had become the symbol of our common hope and humanity. "*We are not prepared for this world, he warned, "but unless we act now, before it is too late, the city, which originated civilization, may in the end destroy it.*"

Wilheim is more optimistic. He believes that urban tensions and upheavals will occur in the near future but will merely be transitional. He predicts that after a turbulent phase riddled with ethical doubts and philosophical questions, the world will awaken to a New Renaissance in which ethics, aesthetics and a more socially-committed mode of production will prevail.

"All transitional periods are set in doubts," he says. "Ethical doubts produce radicalism and fundamentalism -- the kind we are seeing today. The question facing us now is how to shorten the period of transition. That is why I believe that the Habitat II Conference is crucial.

"The role of cities in future development is extremely important," emphasizes Wilheim. "After all, the game we are playing in our cities is the game of the future of humanity."

The author is Information Officer for the Habitat II secretariat and Editor of this bulletin.

GOOD
GOVERNANCE REQUIRES
GENDER EQUITY

by Susan Thomson

If the benchmark of good governance is its responsiveness and openness to marginalised groups in society, then why do governments systematically ignore the world's largest marginalised group -- women? While many governments would argue that women are equal to men in the eyes of the law, the fact remains that women face barriers to active participation within traditional male-oriented power structures. The inability or unwillingness of governments to facilitate the removal of such barriers means that "gendered governance" will remain an ideal.

Governance is an interactive process between institutions designed to provide goods and services to people in an administratively and spatially defined area. Good governace takes account of the social, legal, political, economic and cultural needs of people both men and women. Governance from a gender perspective would require that governments facilitate the active participation of men and women in the affairs of government.

"Gendered governance" makes sense. Imagine a system of government where men and women are equal in all areas of law. This legal equity then translates into equal access to economic and social resources, such as land, credit, jobs, health care, education, etc., and to political power, meaning the allocation or adminstration of resources. This equal access then translates into attitudes that enable, serve and empower men and women to engage and challenge governments to fulfill commitments to men and women equally.

Government based on the equality of the sexes, without connotation of inferiority or superiority of one sex over the other, will create a spirit of co-operation and understanding; empowerment contributes to the development of society while ensuring the growth of individuals and institutions alike by strengthing the constituent elements of systems to become more efficient and effective.

Despite the immense advantages of gendered governance, many barriers still exist within systems of government which exclude the full participation of women in the public sphere. First, leadership in government, both at the national and community level, is typically male. Stemming from this is a "male terminology" or way of doing business that culminates in a dominant male culture of politics, especially within the confines of party politics. The male-dictated culture of politics is focussed on the needs of men; it does not allow for women to participate actively and fully in politics for a variety of reasons: the spirit of conformism, aggressiveness and patronage that often are the ingredients of male politics combined with logisitical problems such as the time and place of political meetings implicitly keep women at the fringe of political life. The absence of women in the body politic as key actors is detrimental to the openness and responsiveness that characterise good governance as male politicians have consistently failed to realise that women have specific needs, priorities, and demands of government. This failure is the direct result of the absence of political commitments to gender equality.

The lack of commitment to gender equality is based on the lack of recognition that women play multiple roles women in their household, in their community, and in the public sphere. The management of the household -- the role of primary caregiver -- is rarely recognised as management. Reproduction responsibilies, including birth control, pre- and post-natal care, and the raising of the children, are primarily left to women. This hard work is rewarded with less disposable income (often characterised by a gender-blind taxation system and\or gaps in wage equity), less job security and a longer working day due to women's private and public responsibilities.

Governments must realise that the unpaid or reproductive work of women makes up a sizeable chunk of Gross Domestic Product. Recognition by governments of the multiple, and the differing roles that women play, or can play, in all levels of governance is crucial to their full participation in the processes of government. The willingness of governments to recognise the roles and responsibilites of women at all levels of government can only lead to a system of governance that allows for social and economic development aimed at the needs of men and women through wider control and access to political power for all.

At a minimum, a set of gender tools must include the following: governments at all levels must commit themselves to the goal of gender balance (meaning an equal number of equally-qualified men and women) in all sections, divisions, departments and branches of government; a gender "watchdog" or ombudsperson should then be appointed to monitor the commitments of governments to gender and; all government statisitics must be disaggregated by sex. Only then will inequality between men and women at all levels of government become blatantly obvious. Training on including a gender perspective in the processes of government mustbe provided for all officials and leaders of governments.

The tendency of men, and some women, to feel insecure and threatened by the opening up of channels to power at all levels through the empowerment of women is based on two false assumptions: first, that power is finite and, second, that power equals control. The idea that if there is more power for women, then there will less power for men is ill-conceived. Effective governance, at any level, is not based on a static reality. Individuals change, as a result communities change, then cities change, and perhaps even countries change.

Power must be viewed as a means of personal development not as the path to control of others. Empowerment is a means of increasing personal power to act effectively, fairly, and with integrity when making choices at all levels -- household, community, local, national and even global. If the principal objective of good governance is to provide equal, nondiscriminatory opportunity for the personal fulfillment of all people, then the empowerment of women is the first step in attaining that goal.

The author is Gender and Best Practices Officer for the Habitat II secretariat.

ON THE ROAD TO ISTANBUL: PREPARATORY ACTIVITES UNDERTAKEN BY THE SECRETARIAT

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the designated secretariat for Habitat II, is actively preparing for the Conference which will be the last United Nations Conference of the century. The focus of its activities has been on expanding partnerships with national governments, local authorities, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the scientific community in defining the relevance of local human settlements issues to the global development agenda.

Currently, it is in the process of involving a range of other United Nations specialised agencies in the preparatory process and in the Conference itself. Various key partners such as UNEP, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNV, UNU, ILO, the World Bank, UNDP, IFAD and WHO are planning to organise studies, colloquia and global competitions later this year around the themes of central importance to the Conference and of mutual interest to UNCHS (Habitat) and its respective partners. These agencies are already preparing, through steering groups, meetings that will deal with some central themes of the Conference.

For instance, the Director-General of UNESCO has agreed to a partnership with the secretariat which will result in the organisation of colloquia on "Prejudice, Intolerance and Violence versus Solidarity". The ILO will cooperate with the secretariat in organising another colloquium on "Perspectives and Change in Urban Employment Structures". UNICEF is considering a secretariat proposal to organise a competition this year around the theme "The City in which I Would Like to Live". WHO has been approached to co-sponsor a research competition on "Alternative Sewerage Systems for Large Cities". Through collaborative endeavours like these, the secretariat hopes to tap the support and expertise of a variety of United Nations agencies and to raise global awareness.

Other partners have already expressed their interest in participating: FIABCI, the worldwide association of real estate developers, is on board. The Global Parliamentarians will also be in Istanbul. Several major foundations have been approached and are establishing a format for their participation. The World Resource Institute, based in Washington D.C., is also getting on the road to Istanbul. An important meeting with the International Union of Architects sealed an agreement for their participation. They are in the process of organizing three pre-conferences and an architectural competition on the theme "Convivial Places". The Minute Information Centre in Sao Paulo , Brazil, is holding a One Minute Video Competition later this year with the institutional support of UNCHS. The theme for this year's Competition/ Festival is "Eyes on the City" which will focus on various aspects of urban life. In addition, the National Academy of Sciences is studying the best way of participating in the City Summit.

UNCHS has proposed an Intercity Solidarity Fund that will be steered by cities like Barcelona, Bologna and Manchester, among others, to create a direct collaboration among cities, and initially to facilitate the active involvement of local authorities in developing countries in the preparatory process for Habitat II. Similarly, G4+, a worldwide co-ordination of international associations of local authorities, has committed itself to mobilising cities and towns in preparing and participating in the Habitat II Conference through national delegations.

The Centre has also been actively promoting meetings among civic leaders and municipalities in order to obtain the commitment of mayors and city governments to cooperate regionally and globally to improve city management. For instance, in August last year, it supported a Mayors' Colloquium organised with UNDP in New York. The meeting was attended by more than 100 mayors, city associations and government officials responsible for local government from 36 countries who endorsed the importance of active participation of local governments in the Habitat II preparatory process. UNDP is firmly behind preparations for the Conference with emphasis on in-country preparations for which it is leveraging financial, technical and human resources to support initiatives by mayors, NGOs and all local actors as well as promoting national action.

In order to improve urban policy by strengthening participatory processes and partnerships for decision-making, the secretariat for Habitat II is supporting activities that will motivate a multiplicity of actors to participate and lead the preparatory process at different levels. NGOs and CBOs will be some of the key players in this process. The Preparatory Committee granted accreditation to several NGOs; other NGOs are in various stages of being granted accreditation. Numerous other NGOs and CBOs have expressed an interest in Habitat II and many have initiated Habitat II preparations in their cities, countries and regions. Often this has meant establishing partnerships with the private sector, with local authorities, with national governments and with other NGOs and community groups.

At the first session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II held in Geneva in April last year, it was decided that focal points or national agencies in each country would be encouraged to establish national steering committees with membership drawn from a broad base of interested groups and representative organisations. By March 1995, 79 countries had either already formed national committees or were in the process of doing so. Forty two of these countries have submitted Progress Reports, informing the Habitat II secretariat of their preparatory plans and ongoing activities that their respective Governments, Ministries, NGOs, Local Authorities and other sectors are involved in. Several countries have also shown keen interest in participating in, and hosting, the many UNCHS-organised regional seminars, technical workshops, colloquia and regional national committee meetings that will take place this year. Already, a series of African Ministerial meetings have taken place this year, confirming the continent's commitment to participate actively in the preparatory process.

The Centre has also initiated the setting-up of a set of urban

indicators and an electronic catalogue on "Best Practices and Partnerships in Managing Urbanization". These will be success stories from around the globe which will serve to reshape international and inter-city cooperation by providing on-line and easily accessible information on innovative and effective responses to the major cross-cutting issues of the Conference.

The Minicipality of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and Habitat are also organizing the Dubai International Conference for Habitat II on Best Practices in Improving Living Environments, to be held from 19-22 November 1995 in Dubai. (The conference was originally planned for April but due to the overwhelming response by governments, local authorities, NGOs and the private sector, it was rescheduled in order to ensure that presenters have more time to produce high-quality contributions which will simultaneously be fully integrated into National Plans of Action for Habitat II.) The conference will be an opportunity for representatives of local authorities, national governments, NGOs and the private and professional sectors to share, discuss and learn from each others' successful practices in tackling some of the world's most pressing shelter and urbanization problems.

In August 1994, Dr. Wally N'Dow, the Secretary-General of Habitat II met with the President of Turkey, Mr. Suleyman Demirel, and other high-level Turkish government officials to set up a task-force to prepare for the Conference. Dr. N'Dow also discussed arrangements for the core Conference meetings which will pave the way for organising a range of related roundtables, a Cities' Assembly and a World Fair and exhibitions on "Good Ideas for Cities". At the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II, which will take place from 24 April to 5 May 1995, the Habitat II Secretary-General will present a progress report on national preparations for the Conference that are being made worldwide and in the city of Istanbul.

The secretariat is currently working on a review and analysis of actions at the local level to implement Agenda 21 in order to present Habitat II with a comprehensive report of action at all levels. The objective is to support implementation of the goals and programmes of Agenda 21 within the preparatory process for Habitat II and to incorporate them strategically into the Global Plan of Action.

The secretariat has also initiated a research project which will review current global trends in economic and social development as they affect planning, development and management of human settlements, and recommendations for future action at the national and international levels.

DUBAI CONFERENCE RESCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER

The Municipality of Dubai and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) have rescheduled the Dubai International Conference on Best Practices from 2-5 April 1995 to 19-22 November 1995.

The response by governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to the invitation to present Best Practices has been overwhelming. The total number of successful stories submitted to the Evaluating Committee is already more than double what it had anticipated, and is growing daily.

Rescheduling the conference will ensure that the organisers can best assist the presenters of Best Practices in preparing their substantial papers and videos. It will also ensure that the presenters will have more time to produce high-quality contributions which will simultaneously be fully integrated into National Plans of Action for Habitat II.

Owing to other programmed events over the coming months and the need to bring the outcome of the Dubai Conference to the third session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II (planned for January 1996), it has been decided to hold the Conference from 19-22 November.

The organisers have been pleased to receive many registrations in recent weeks from governments, local authorities, NGOs, academic institutions and United Nations agencies. They encourage them all to reschedule their participation for November and apologize for any inconvenience caused by the postponement.

For further information please contact:
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People Towards Habitat II

By Minar Pimple

THE END OF A CENTURY DRAWS NEARER, BRINGING IN ITS PROSPECT A SURGE OF HOPE. YEARS FADE into a blur but the turn of the century gives pause to ponder, a rude awakening of the time that has passed and the little that has changed for the better.

Sobered by this reflection, the international community seeks ways to usher improvement in all spheres of life. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in September 1994 and the Social Summit in Copenhagen in March 1995 reiterates local and global responsibility towards the environment. The 4th World Conference on Women set to take place in Beijing in September 1995 will place women's perspective and concerns on the international agenda. The decade of UN Conferences will be rounded off by Habitat II in June 1996.

Habitat II also marks an end of the beginning made at Habitat I at Vancouver, Canada in 1976, which was an assembly of Nation States, NGOs/CBOs and Development agencies identifying the need to include human settlements as a focus in development agenda. As an outcome of this conference UNCHS (Habitat) was set up in Nairobi to fulfil the expectations raised by the Conference.

Habitat II has raised many concerns in the NGO community. It is projected as a "City Summit" homing in on urban sprawl thereby losing its wider more inclusive mandate. It is feared that the concerns related to rural settlements and livelihoods and concerns of indigenous communities facing the continuous threat of forced evictions will get pushed under the carpet.

The very location, Istanbul, has caused consternation, for Turkey is infamous for the number of evictions of Kurdish villages as well as urban poor settlements in the very city of Istanbul. This phenomena of forced evictions and displacement is faced by the poor in various developing as well as developed countries under the pretext of so called development projects, beautification projects, clearance for international events such as international conferences, games etc. or merely to allow market forces to have free access to resources including land inhabited by the poor.

Despite the above mentioned concerns, the challenge before NGOs and CBOs is to maintain pressure on making global strategies relevant and accountable to the local reality of people in impoverished and marginalised situations. Being actively involved in shaping the precepts and practices of Habitat II, NGOs and CBOs must stress the concept of multicultural diversity, the links between privileged and the marginalised, North and South, urban and rural settlements and the dichotomy therein. For NGOs and CBOs the next few years towards the end of the millennium represent the time for stock taking, in exploring the changing roles and functions of various actors in development as the world itself changes its social, economic and political character. For the

NGO-CBO community, Habitat II is not end in itself, but the means to express forcefully the collective hopes of people and demand accountability from the State by creating the space to allow for greater participation of people in improving the quality of their lives.

The vision of "Just Sustainable and Democratic Human Settlements based on People's Processes, Culture and Experiences" is more than a slogan. With the National Consultation on Habitat II preceded by national consultation on ' Women, Settlements and Development ' and four regional consultations in India, a beginning has already been made towards concretising it. Following is the summary of key issues emerging from this consultative process:

SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

1. People's contribution to development goes unacknowledged. The distorted development model and the present development processes marginalise the poor and deny them their basic human rights including their fundamental right to housing. Moreover, liberalisation and new economic policies negatively affect sustainable development.

2. Groups most affected by displacement and forced evictions include women, street children, tribals, minority populations, scheduled castes and rural communities.

3. Homelessness is on the rise in rural and urban areas. Reasons include lack of harmonisation of planning for different sectors, growth of land expropriation and speculation, changes in city and regional planning, refugees, migrants, internal conflicts, natural disasters, large scale development projects and neglect of certain areas.

4. Rural and urban poor are unable to take advantage of credit from financial institutions. Flexibility and composite credit that combines housing and livelihood demands is not available. Financial institutions do have large allocations for credit but these are not available to the poor. The extent of

investment in social sectors has not proved to be an indicator of income generation nor of the ability of poor to secure livelihood.

5. Available schemes, programmes of housing exclude the poor. They also segregate and divide the poor along caste and religious lines. In addition bureaucratic complexities prevent people to benefit from development schemes.

6. The Government, the police, the builders' lobby and crooks at different levels are often responsible for denying security of shelter. People and communities especially women become targets of their terrorism. Court orders and statutory provisions are blatantly abused.

7. Effective resettlement policies both in rural and urban areas are not available. Such policies, where they do exist are not made known to people.

8. People and Communities do not have access to information about policies programmes and projects that have an impact on their housing and living conditions. This is one of the reasons why people are unable to participate in local decision making processes that should be a basis for democratic functioning.

9. The Right to Housing has been denied to women both traditionally and legally. The dual burden of production and reproduction, intra-household inequities, discrimination in society cause forced evictions and worsening conditions to impact women more severely.

The author is Honorary Director of Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action, an NGO based in Bombay, and editor of "Beyond Settlements", a Habitat II newsletter supported by the Asia-Pacific 2000 India Programme.

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IMPORTANT DATES

24 April - 5 May 1995

Second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II,
Nairobi, Kenya

25 April - 1 May 1995

Fifteenth session of United Nations Commission on Human
Settlements,
Nairobi, Kenya

4-15 September, 1995

Fourth World Conference on Women,
Beijing, China

19-22 November, 1995

Dubai International Conference fro Habitat II on Best
Practices in Improving Living Environments,
Dubai, United Arab Emirates

January/February 1996

Third meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II,
New York, USA

3-14 June 1996

Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements
(Habitat II), Istanbul, Turkey

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WORLD HABITAT AWARDS: CALL FOR ENTRIES

Entries are currently being sought for the 1995 World Habitat
Award. 1995 is the eleventh year of this annual competition
which has been highly successful in attracting outstanding
human settlements projects. The winning projects have
received world-wide publicity, with a view to encouraging
their replication in many other countries.

Projects are sought, in both developed and developing
countries, which offer sustainable futures to residents and
which provide practical and imaginative solutions to current
housing problems.

A panel of international assessors assess the projects. The
two Award winners receive £10,000 plus an individually de-
signed and crafted silver trophy. The Awards are presented
each year on World Habitat Day; last year, they were
presented by His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of
the Republic of Senegal in Dakar, Senegal.

The World Habitat Awards were initiated in 1985 as part of
the U.K.-based Building and Social Housing Foundation's
contribution to the United Nations International Year for the
Homeless. The Building and Social Housing Foundation is
now calling for entries for 1995. Preliminary submissions
should reach Diane Deacon, the research officer, by July 31,
1995.

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