

MAPS

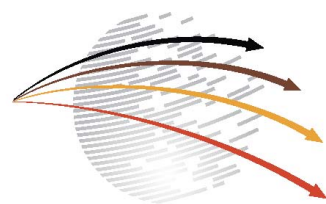
Provocateur Briefing Report

Forum on Development and Mitigation

DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

Cities

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M A P S

Mitigation Action Plans & Scenarios

From 27-29 January 2014, over one hundred professionals working mainly in the climate change mitigation field, in Southern contexts, gathered at the Cape Town Waterfront for the Forum on Development and Mitigation (the Forum). The event was hosted by the Energy Research Centre of the University of Cape Town, the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi, and the international Mitigation Action Plans and Scenarios (MAPS) Programme. As a feature of the Forum nine South African development experts, the 'Development Provocateurs' were invited to participate in the event and write a short reflective piece afterwards. These briefing notes considered the discourse at the Forum from the perspective of each Provocateur's particular area of expertise, looking at shared priorities, disconnects and other points of contact.

This briefing note responds from the perspective of 'Cities' by Philip van Ryneveld. The full set of briefings have been compiled into a compendium, available at www.devmitforum.ercresources.org.za and www.mapsprogramme.org.

The content of this brief is the responsibility of the authors. The views expressed in it are those of the author alone.

CITIES

Introduction

In the first section of the note I briefly summarize the current discourse on city development, indicating both the importance of cities to climate mitigation as well as the fact that climate mitigation is increasingly seen as a key component of urban development and management rather than a challenge to it.

I then summarize my own inputs to the Forum. These attempted to highlight both the importance of managing cities along economically and environmentally sustainable and efficient growth paths, as well as the importance of building appropriate institutions able to do so.

In the concluding section I note that firstly, the focus of the Forum tended to be mainly on national, supra-national issues and micro-local issues, while much of the urban development discourse is focused on matters in between; and secondly, that there was relatively little attention paid to implementation and building the institutions required to bring about the critical changes required in the growth trajectory.

Policy foci and priorities in city development

It is estimated that in 2008 the proportion of the world's population living in cities reached 50% (UNFPA 2007). The process of urbanization arguably represents one of the most important shifts in the human condition ever experienced, and it has occurred relatively rapidly. The urban population of 3.3 billion in 2008 is expected to grow to 4.9 billion by 2030, while the rural population is expected to decrease marginally over this period. Most of the urban growth will be in the developing world, with the urban population of Africa and Asia projected to double between 2000 and 2030. The current process is referred to by the United National Population Fund (UNFPA) as the second wave of urbanization. The first occurred in North America and Europe over two centuries – from 1750 to 1950 when the urban population grew from 15 to 423 million people (52%). The second wave is occurring in the developing world over a period of 80 years from 1950 to 2030, during which time the urban population in these regions will increase from 309 million to 3.9 billion, a shift from 18% to 56% urbanization levels. (UNFPA 2007: 6-7)

It follows that city development is central to human development and to how the planet's natural systems are affected. Moreover the functioning of cities affects not just what happens within cities, but the development and consumption patterns that are driven by urban life, shape the functioning of much of rural life too.

The economic and developmental rationale for the existence of cities is often understood to be captured by the term 'agglomeration'. Agglomeration benefits refer to the economic and social returns which can be generated when large numbers of people have relatively easy access to one another. Urban management – or development – is thus sometimes viewed by economists as the pursuit of agglomeration benefits and the avoidance of disbenefits, such as congestion.

Increasingly, the urban development agenda is not being understood as a pursuit merely of economic growth, but rather as a more multi-faceted set of benefits available to a wider proportion of the population. Such an approach is evident, for example, in UN-HABITAT's *State of the World's Cities Report 2012/2013*, which is a good representation of contemporary progressive mainstream thinking on city development. In his forward to the report (UN-Habitat 2013), UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, explains that the report, entitled "Prosperity of Cities":

"...introduces a notion of prosperity that looks beyond the confines of economic growth that have dominated development policy and agendas for many years. It examines how cities can generate and equitably distribute the benefits and opportunities associated with prosperity, ensuring economic well being, social cohesion, environmental sustainability and a better quality of life in general."

The report argues that a city's prosperity is based on five elements, namely productivity, infrastructure, quality of life, equity and environmental sustainability. A prosperous city contributes to economic growth through productivity; it deploys infrastructure required to sustain the population and the economy; it provides the social services required to maximize individuals' potential and enhance quality of life; it minimizes inequality and poverty; and it ensures that the creation and distribution of benefits does not destroy or degrade the environment.

The inclusion of environmental sustainability as one of the key objectives of city development is increasingly gaining acceptance. A powerful example of this is the organization known as C40, which is an association of the largest 40 cities in the world. C40 consists of cities from both the economically developed and developing world, including most of the major urban conurbations.

The C40 agenda is focused mainly on the challenge of climate change and what cities can do to address the issue. As former chair of C40 and New York Mayor, Mike Bloomberg, noted on being recently appointed as the UN Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change,

"Cities account for more than 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions and two-thirds of the world's energy use today, and their total population is projected to double by 2050 - so the steps they take now to combat climate change will have a major impact on the future of our planet." Mayor Bloomberg 31 Jan 2104.
http://c40.org/blog_posts/c40-board-president-mike-bloomberg-appointed-united-nations-special-envoy-for-cities-and-climate-change

In a recent publication (C40 Cities 2014) entitled C40 Cities: The Power to Act – the Climate Action in Megacities 2.0 (CAM 2.0) Report, the organization summarizes data from 59 members and other associated cities assessing the extent to which they are taking action to address climate change across a range of delivery areas. These include private transport; mass transit; buildings; outdoor lighting; energy supply; finance and economic development; adaptation; water; information and communications technology; community scale development; food and agriculture.

The list illustrates the wide range of activities that city management can influence that impact upon climate change mitigation, and confirms the centrality of city management in addressing climate change challenges.

Transport related issues head this list. To benefit from agglomeration the inhabitants of a city need to be able to access the social and economic opportunities present. And every day large numbers of people travel within cities to do so. Passenger transport is one of the major contributors to CO₂. Thus both the relative level of emissions as well as the economic efficiency of a city are determined to a significant degree by the proportion of the urban economy absorbed by this activity.

In my own presentation to the Forum I emphasized the importance of urban form to both economic efficiency and emissions, illustrating the point with two graphics, reproduced here. The first graphic shows the proportion of metropolitan Gross Geographic Product (GGP) absorbed by passenger transport and reveals the extremely poor performance of South African cities in this regard with approximately 24% of metropolitan GGP attributable to passenger transport. This compares with approximately 8% in European metropolitan cities and just over 5% in wealthy Asian cities. The second graphic has been compiled by transport geographer Alain Bertaud, and shows urban densities in a selection of cities where he has worked around the globe.

It is evident from the two graphics that poorer cities with lower densities allocate a significantly larger proportion of their GGP to transport. Developing Asian cities, which have much higher densities, perform much better in this regard than their South African counterparts. Similarly, European and wealthy Asian cities perform better than US cities.

But they also demonstrate the potential compatibility of pursuing policies which both enhance economic efficiency and reduce emissions. By developing an efficient urban form cities can both spend less on transport leaving more to spend on other objectives and they can reduce emissions. The challenge is thus to find the patterns of economic growth which promote climate mitigation.

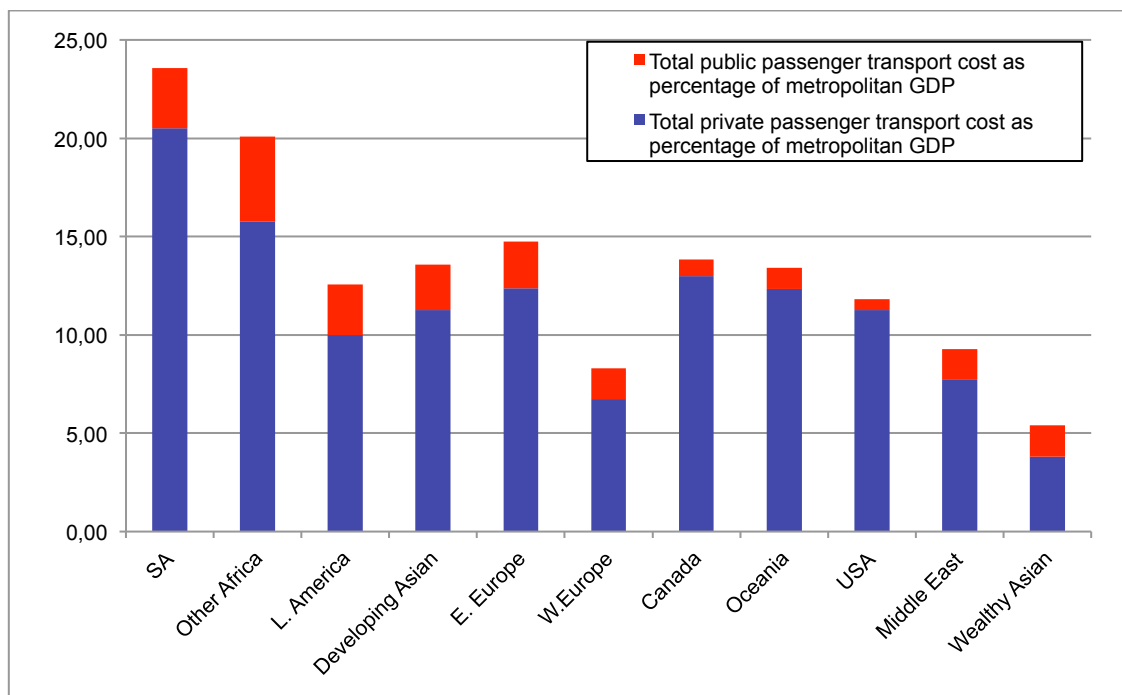


Figure 1: Share of transport in the metro GGP

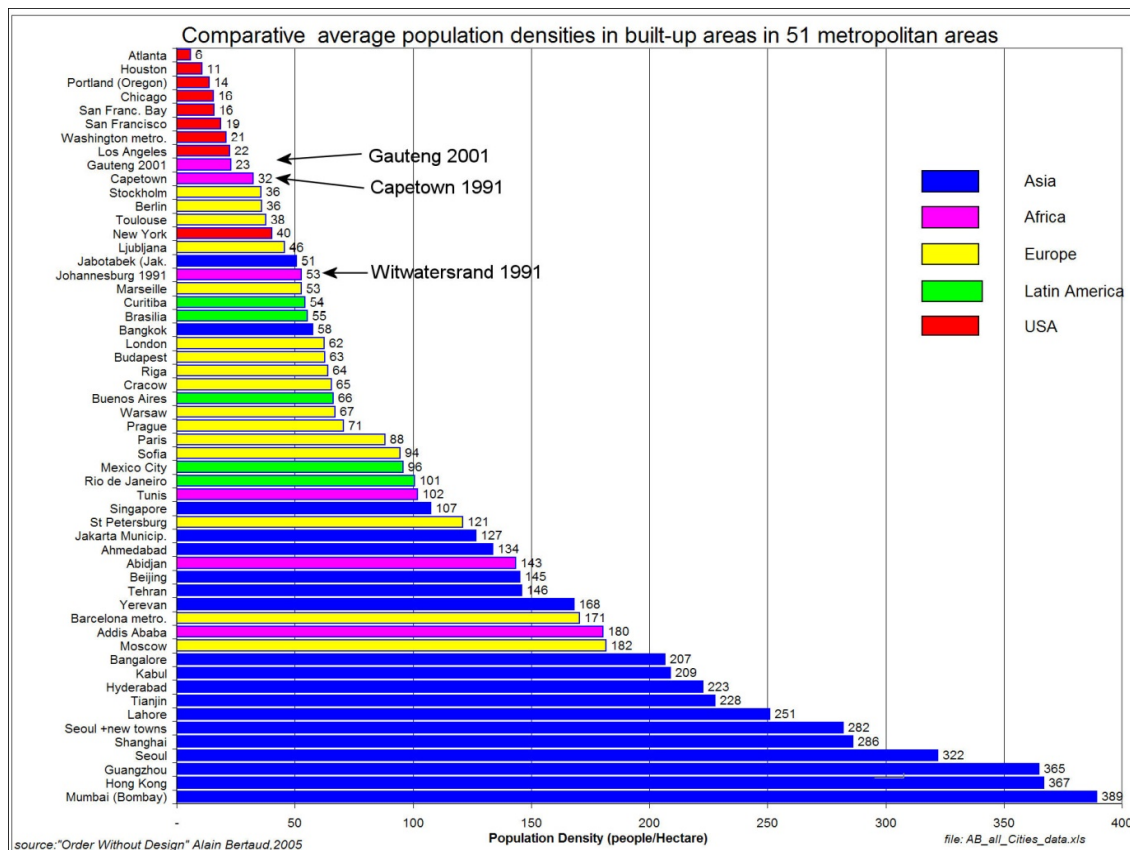


Figure 2: Urban density by city graphic

Given the substantial differences in both economic efficiency and emissions that result from different urban development trajectories, as well as the multiple other ways in which cities influence emissions, it is crucial that cities are managed towards an environmentally sustainable growth path and climate mitigating practices are entrenched. This requires good governance.

Many elements are required if city government is to be effective, but in my presentation at the Forum I highlighted three as being of particular importance. Firstly, there should be integrated management of the built environment related functions. Cities should be able to manage in an integrated way planning, housing development and transport, as well as the infrastructure related services which underpin this. They can have responsibility for other functions, too, but if the essence of city management lies in the management of agglomeration, then the coherent management of the built environment is crucial. Secondly, there need to be mechanisms to exert coherent authority over the whole functional area of the city. This gives a better chance to manage urban form in a way that contains sprawl. Thirdly, cities should have sufficient revenue instruments so that they are substantially self-financed. This is crucial for building strong city government institutions and is feasible given the concentration of economic activity in these areas.

Cities are crucial to the planet’s emissions trajectory. They are growing and will continue to grow for some decades to come. Influencing the patterns of that growth is perhaps the single biggest challenge on the climate change agenda. To do so requires building institutions that have the insight and authority to wield that influence.

Alignment of the Forum discourse with priorities

The Forum had much excellent content and was well organized. It sought to address what is often regarded as a juxtaposition in the climate and development discourse between growth and climate mitigation – that pursuit of growth will undermine climate mitigation, although it covered a variety of other issues.

Historically there have often been attempts to slow urbanization, but the process is now so massive and rapid that this notion is regarded as largely irrelevant. Thus the discourse on city development is focused not on how to stop urbanisation but how to manage it and direct it most constructively, including for the purposes of climate mitigation, as seen in the efforts of organizations such as C40. In this context the question is more about what form the growth (urbanization) takes, and the question of whether it undermines climate mitigation appears interesting but somewhat academic.

Two features of the Forum stand out when viewed from the perspective of the city development discourse.

Firstly, much of the focus was either on national and supra-national issues, or micro-local issues, but there was little focus on the level in between, which is where much of the city development discourse occurs. Part of the reason for the focus lying where it does may be the extent to which climate negotiations are held between nation states. The development of organizations such as C40 in this context is significant in bringing the focus to city level.

Secondly, there was relatively little focus on implementation. Implementation requires capable institutions that are appropriately designed for the task at hand. Arguably, the role of climate specialists is not to focus on the institutional dimension; however it would appear that unless we integrate both wider development issues and institutions of delivery into our approach to climate mitigation we are unlikely to deliver the successes that are required.

References

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