The Experience of the URBAN 21 Process – Added Value for Strategic Planning

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Estimados notables, señoras y señores, queridos colegas,

quisiera primero dar las gracias a "La Generalitat de Catalunya" por haberme invitado a esta importante reunión para hablarles a Ustedes de las experiencias del BBR con la elaboración del ESDP y la realización del proceso URBAN 21.

Honourable guests, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

first of all I wish to thank the Government of Catalunya for inviting me to this important event and for giving me the opportunity to throw a glance on BBR’s experience in delivering the URBAN 21 process.

The BBR – the German Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning – was deeply involved in the URBAN 21 process. Yet, – with respect to all who had been involved – I feel obliged to stress the fact that the spirit of URBAN 21 was brought to world by many mothers and fathers – the core group composed of Brazil, Germany, Singapore and South Africa. Although the BBR respectively the former BfLR – the German Federal Research Institute for Regional Geography – and the German Federal Ministry of Building, Transport and Housing respectively the former German Ministry of Regional Planning, Building and Urban Development were on board right from the beginning of this process, these bodies remain the organizers and spirit bearers of the URBAN 21 process – both from the political and the scientific point of view – neither more nor less.

From that standpoint I would like to tell you pieces of the URBAN 21 story in order to illustrate BBR’s experience in this process and – based on this – I would like to outline the added value for strategic planning.

History

How did the BBR organize the whole process? First of all some bits and bytes of history:

Initiative for Sustainable Development. One of the central concerns of this initiative was to find global solutions for a socially and environmentally acceptable urban development.

The Global Conference on the Urban Future (URBAN 21), which was held in Berlin in 2000, implemented one of the cardinal topics of the Global Initiative for Sustainable Development and took up these issues. URBAN 21 was intended to outline concrete solutions and – at the same time – to draw up the supporting visions and orientations to guide action for urban development in the 21st century.

URBAN 21 discussed the problems which the growth of cities generates in developing and in newly industrializing countries, as well as the various problems of urban development in industrialized countries. In a world which is becoming increasingly networked, all cities are subject to similar influences and are confronted with similar problems. But there is no single, all embracing solution to their problems. Different strategies are necessary, depending on their different economic, social and cultural background. Nevertheless, there are basic principles for political action to improve the quality of life in cities. These are:

- to realize local democracy and pursue the principle of subsidiarity;
- to fight social exclusion and poverty;
- to strengthen civil commitment;
- to establish partnership between the private and the public sector;
- to support cooperation between different tiers of government;
- to increase efficiency and responsibility of administrative action;
- to learn from exemplary practices.

Each of the four partner countries Brazil, Germany, Singapore, and South Africa agreed to stage preparatory conferences for URBAN 21 in their respective global regions in order to discuss goals, strategies and models of sustainable urban and settlement development according to the specific viewpoints of the partner countries’ global region. The headings run as follows:

- Asia
  World Conference on Model Cities
- Europe
  European Metropolitan Regions – Strategies for a Sustainable Development
- Africa
  African Solutions: Towards Sustainable Urban Development
- Latin America
  Conferència Regional – Urban Management for Sustainable Development

The BBR was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing to organize, thematically prepare and stage URBAN 21. That was also the case with the European Regional Conference which was prepared by carrying out the European Metropolitan Regions Project.
One the one hand, the European Metropolitan Regions Project included capital regions which are facing enormous challenges as a consequence of their dynamic development as pacemakers of economic growth, innovation and social change. On the other hand it considered formerly industrialized regions undergoing structural adjustment where the restructuring process requires a special effort to realize both ecological improvement and social stability. The altogether sixteen metropolitan regions provided strategy reports which described their initial situation, the regional planning system, the goals of sustainable regional development and key projects on the way to sustainable development.

Proceedings

In order to organize the URBAN 21 process properly BBR created different elements structuring the whole process. Based on this structure every actor – whether politician, local actor or scientist – had a fair chance to express himself. The main elements of URBAN 21 were:

- World Commission URBAN 21
- World Report on the Urban Future 21
- Berlin Declaration on the Urban Future
- Conference Programme
- Mayor’s Summit

World Commission URBAN 21 / World Report on the Urban Future 21

A World Commission URBAN 21 composed of eminent persons (so-called “multipliers”) from the scientific community, the political arena and the society in general from all over the world was established – under the guidance of Sir Peter Hall – in order to thematically prepare the World Report on the Urban Future 21. The World Report stated the basis for discussions and declarations at the Global Conference. It analyzes the current global trends in urban development and proposes guiding principles for the cities in the 21st century. Problems and policy recommendations are worldwide roughly distinguished for three types of cities:

- City coping with informal hypergrowth, represented by many cities in sub-Saharan Africa, in the Indian subcontinent, by the Moslem Middle East, and by some of the poorer Latin American and Caribbean cities;
- City coping with dynamic growth, the typical city of the middle-income rapidly-developing world, represented by much of East Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East;
- Weakening mature city coping with ageing, the typical city of the advanced world of North America, Europe, Japan, parts of East Asia and Australia.
Berlin Declaration on the Urban Future

A common framework was elaborated by all actors of URBAN 21, the so-called “Berlin Declaration on the Urban Future”, which at last was passed by all participants of the Global Conference and therefore marked an important step to the goals of URBAN 21. An editing team headed by Professor Tommy Koh, Ambassador-At-Large of Singapore and “spiritus rector” of the Global Initiative for Sustainable Development, accompanied this process.

Conference Programme

The conference programme was designed as a market place to stimulate the exchange of information / ideas and to promote the process of learning from each other. Sessions and discussions on:

- Society and the city
- Economy and the city
- Environment and the city
- The liveable city
- The city and its citizens
- Mobility in the city
- Urban form and settlement development
- Housing in the city and
- Indicators of sustainable urban development

plus several fora organized and staged by different interest groups gave all those who advocate improving living and environmental conditions in towns and cities the opportunity to express their ideas, wishes, dreams and sorrows.

Mayor’s Summit

Last not least a Mayor’s Summit was staged. Mayors from some of the largest world agglomerations and megacities met on the occasion of URBAN 21 to discuss the future of their cities, and of cities in general. So, politicians were on board, too.

Lessons to be Drawn and Options for Future Strategic Work

A set of basic topics seem to be worth taking into account when considering options for future strategic work:

- Setting a framework, similar to the Berlin Declaration on the Urban Future
- Promoting Strategic Local Development Concepts
- Giving both scientists and local action groups an opportunity to express their respective opinion through creating places / occasions for discussion (Let the people place their local potentials on the map!)
When preparing strategic local concepts in Europe one may consider what had been identified as crucial in the course of the European Metropolitan Regions Project. Five core tasks of regional development – although of differing importance in the various regions in Europe – were considered as central challenges for all:

- Balancing the metropolitan spatial structure
- Improving the quality of life at the urban level
- Maintaining regional identity: Revival of the cultural heritage
- Managing integration: Cooperation in regional infrastructure networks
- New partnerships in planning and implementation

The European Regional Conference itself concentrated on discussing the subjects of settlement development, traffic management and new forms of regional cooperation. Key conclusions of the European Regional Conference are the following ones:

- **Subject I**
  Metropolitan regions caught between dynamic development and conservation
  - Guiding settlement growth
  - Internal before peripheral development
  - Founding cultural identity and preserving the historic fabric
  - Preservation of open spaces and integration of their potential
  - Regeneration of the environment
  - Framework planning for sustainable regional development

- **Subject II**
  Traffic management – Strategies for shaping growing transport demand to ensure a sustainable environmental and settlement development
  - Creative rather than reactive approaches
  - Integrated development of settlement and transport
  - Intergovernmental cooperation
  - Integrative management rather than sectorial planning
  - Extension of urban-friendly transport systems
  - Quality management

- **Subject III**
  New partnerships to meet new challenges for a balanced regional development
  - New administrative structures
  - Strengthening regional cooperation through the appropriate distribution of competence
  - Development through projects
The questions raised by the project and the regional strategies of the participating metropolitan regions were discussed in two project-accompanying workshops.

Also here the most important topic is: Let us bring the people together!

By the way, a CD-ROM containing all strategy reports of the European Metropolitan Regions Project and information on further regions in Europe is available free of charge. Please send me an e-mail (andre.mueller@bbr.bund.de).

The URBAN 21 proceedings can be downloaded from the internet at www.urban21.de

I would like very much to discuss with you BBR’s experience in carrying out the URBAN 21 process and wish to express you my warm thanks for your attention.

*Muchas gracias!*