Urban Professionals in the 21st Century: Challenges for Pedagogy and Professional
Practice
by
Elliott Sclar,
Professor of Urban Planning and International Affairs
Director of the Center for Sustainable Urban Development
Earth Institute
Columbia University, USA

I. Introduction: *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*?

Many 21st Century urban challenges reprise those of the 19th and 20th centuries. The
urbanization process now, as then, is one in which urban settlement races ahead of the
installation of infrastructure and housing. While the similarity in the problems this causes
is obvious, it does not follow that the solutions will be similar. Even as the rapidly
growing metropolises of the developing world deconcentrate their populations to the
surrounding hinterlands, they too follow patterns of spatial spread that are familiar from
an earlier time even as they do so in global context that is sharply different. The
contemporary structure of globalization driven by communication technology, low
transport costs and a heavy emphasis on lowering barriers to trade requires that poor
urban places in the Global South like Dakar exhibit, many if not all of, the infrastructure
efficiencies of New York if the Senegalese hope to generate the necessary local
prosperity to address the needs of their expanding and urbanizing population. Put slightly
differently, Dakar, as other cities of the Global South, is faced with the need to
simultaneously solve 19th, 20th and 21st century urban problems. In the Global North there
was the time and space to address these in succession.

Unless we recognize this new, yet somewhat familiar, urban challenge, for all its complex
dimensions it is going to be impossible to make meaningful progress in solving or
mitigating problems such as climate change, the global spread of epidemics and
pandemics, poverty, violence, regional political instability *etc*. To move ahead, there are
two necessary, but certainly not sufficient, steps that we must take; we need to explicitly
address these challenges in the context of an all-encompassing global urban reality and
we need to consider how to more effectively employ the skills and talents of the cadre of
urban professionals who grapple with the various aspects of global urban living. An
important step in achieving this latter goal is to ensure that an awareness of the
complexity of the new urban challenges is fully embedded in the training and practice of
21st century urban professionals. Although this paper will principally address this latter
step it is first necessary to put that into the context of the former if we hope for a realistic
and effective response from the urban professions.

To understand the urgent need to renovate urban professionalism, consider the following:
2007 marks the first time in human history that more of the world's population derives its
livelihood from urban rather than rural pursuits. This demographic marker is an important
tipping point along an ever rising urbanization trend line that extends back, unbroken,
over 10,000 years. The cumulative urbanization process that underlies this demographic

tilt is dual in nature: it is a physical process in which humans create dense spatial living patterns and design networks of roads, water lines, sanitation systems, public services *etc*. to support that density and it is a socio-political process in which the urban populace is sorted into highly differentiated and economically stratified social groups. Coming to grips with this dichotomous process is central to solving the century's urban problems. The existence of social inequity becomes an especially pressing problem at this juncture. Although it is true that urban life has always been distinguished by social inequality to a far greater degree than life in the rural villages and agricultural communities from which it arose, the degree of urban social inequality in the modern world is significantly greater. This has important implications for the way in which the urbanization process will play itself out in this century. Dynamically the dual physical and social processes of urbanization are continuous, interactive and iterative. The social organization of an urban society in one time period shapes its decisions about its spatial patterns and service delivery networks in the next one and these in turn redefine the terms of social stratifications among urban inhabitants as they face their living options for the succeeding moment. This process has always had positive and negative consequences. But the consensus, until recently, was that both the social and physical changes associated with urbanization have been, on balance, positive.

Looking forward, there is reason to think that the urbanization process will not continue on balance as a positive one. The concern is that the challenges brought on by this urban demographic tipping point will cause the negative consequences of urbanization to begin to exceed the positive benefits. The concern is rooted in the fact that global urban populations are increasing proportionately and in large absolute numbers as well. Global demographic statistics make a *prima facie* stylized case for this concern. At present there are over 6 billion people living on the planet and about 3 billion of them live in urban areas. By 2030 the forecast is for a global population of approximately 8 billion in which about 5 billion will be urban residents. In terms of unequal urban social stratification, presently about 1 billion of the 3 billion urban residents live in <u>dire</u> poverty. The forecast is that by 2030 that number will double to about 2 billion. Thus we are expecting to go from a world where one-third of urban residents live in dire poverty to one in which two-fifths will. Complicating matters further, virtually all of this urban population growth will take place in the world's fastest growing cities and these cities will be located in the world's poorest societies; places that do not have the resources on their own to improve urban infrastructure and services and hence places that on their own simply can't change the trajectory of the present development dynamic. To fail to address this economic and social reality of contemporary urbanization is to virtually ensure a worst-case outcome in terms of the problems listed above.

II. Urban Professionals for the 21st Century

A crucial and potentially valuable, source of help in reversing this situation is the expertise and capabilities of urban professionals. By urban professionals I broadly mean the designers, planners, public health specialists, social workers, lawyers, civil engineers, public administrators, *etc*. who through training, expertise and professional practice attempt to meliorate the problems of urban life. *The critical assumption underlying this*

paper is that through the ways in which we train urban professionals and through the ways in which their engagement with urban problems are structured by the norms of professional practice it is possible to provide invaluable assistance to those seeking to reshape the iterative and dynamic urbanization process for the better. It is important to remember that even though the urbanization process is iterative and dynamic, it is not deterministic in its outcome. There is a great deal of room for human agency and the exercise of choice. Urban professionals can play a critical role in the ways that choice is exercised. Although my conception of the range of relevant urban professionals is broad, for the purposes of this paper, when I speak of urban professionals I will be focusing on the planning and design professions. While there are critical differences in the training and substance of all the professions listed I believe that the challenge presented here is generic to all of them.

The starting point is to understand the ways in which urban professionals define the scope of their practice. The "pure" classical articulation or modeling of the relationship between professionals and decision makers is posed as one in which questions of values are divorced from matters of professional practice and technical feasibility. In the classic articulation the urban professional poses the options and costs for alternative solutions to the decision-maker who through the exercise of value judgments and accounting for political considerations makes the final choice as to the course of action. Once the course of action is set as policy or approved as a plan, urban professionals carry out the decision maker's mandate as the decision maker intended.

The problem with this idealized articulation, although comforting to the professional in terms of absolution for moral transgressions that may be implicit in the work, is that it bears at best a tenuous connection with actual practice. What is needed is an articulation of professional work that accords better with actual practice. Absent that we continue to return to this idealized model as the yardstick with which to measure our work and treat the reality of practice as a deviation in need of repair. It is time to rethink the conceptual paradigm. Although values and professional expertise can be viewed as conceptually distinct from methodologies and technologies deployed in the actual practice of advising clients in the private sphere or decision makers in the public sphere, the two are always practically and complexly intertwined.

Professionals blend values with methodological and technological expertise in the way they choose to define the problem, propose alternative courses of action and present models of costs. In the public sphere these judgments become acutely manifest through the decisions professionals make about what to include and what to exclude from the advice and information presented to political actors and community groups about alternative courses of action. After the planning decision is made, in the implementation phase, professionals often exercise even more judgment and discretion because the public policy and plan making process is, of political necessity, fraught with ambiguity. Rigid policies and plans inevitably fail. There are simply too many unknowns and uncertainties for legislatures or chief executives to precisely define how to meet their policy targets and planning goals. As a result at both the legislative and executive level plans are, as a practical matter, typically framed in terms of intentions and the on-the-ground decisions

about how to realize these vague intentions are left in the hands of the professionals charged with implementation. As a result both the values and expertise of urban professionals play a major, though not always well-recognized or completely definitive, role in determining the values that are effectively embodied in the outcomes of the planning process.

Because planning takes place in the context of public policy making, the "client-professional" relationship is actually only one aspect of what is effectively a four-part relationship. The parties are the political decision-makers, the urban professionals the affected populations acting via collective community based organizations and narrowly self-interested individuals and/or organizations with an economic concern about the outcome. As a result of these complications, it is not just the interaction between the decision-maker and professional that needs to be modeled in defining urban professional practice, but the role of these others as well. The simplifying assumption that (in a democracy) elected leaders are always or even often the true voice of the people is an assumption that is only occasionally true. A complete model of the process must account for the interactions between the community and the political decision-makers, the political decision makers and various special interests, special interests and the professionals, special interests and the community and the community and the professionals. All of this complexity must be modeled if we are to fully and precisely understand the role that professionals play in the urbanization dynamic. Furthermore while the elements here are generic to most situations, the outcomes in any particular case will be highly specific.

Community reactions are especially crucial during the implementation phase of the planning and design process. Writing about the general process of public service policy implementation, Michael Lipsky[*] argues that public service professionals through their implementation decisions mediate conflicts between official mandates and public responses. Lipsky contends that this *ad hoc* decision making *de facto* become official public policy. The politically charged mediation-implementation process that Lipsky describes is highly relevant to the process of designing and implementing plans for public works and infrastructure. Taking in the complete scope of the planning and implementation process, it is therefore important that we consider the several ways in which the values and planning techniques employed by professionals shape the on-the-ground choices and outcomes that emerge. We must especially consider the ways in which the values that guide the decisions of planning and design professionals derive from factors that are inherent in the content of professional training. Taken together this analysis and modeling of both practice and training must be integral to any deliberation on our common urban future and the role of urban professionals in that future.

III. The Ideological Content of Professional Practice

---

[*] Lipsky, Michael 1980 *Street-level Bureaucracy; Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services,* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

When we turn to the question of values, we must invariably turn to the question of ideology in professional training and practice. Ideology as used here refers to beliefs about "the way the world works." By "ideology" I do not simply mean political ideology. I mean ideology about what is "proper" and "improper" in professional practice. To be sure there is often a convergence between political and professional ideology but it is not a simple one-to-one relationship. Moreover it is not my intention here to delve into political ideology. When I speak of professional ideology I mean the beliefs that planners and designers bring to their work concerning matters of practice. These include beliefs about the way in which cities grow, beliefs about the value of different land uses and social groups, beliefs about building heights and street walls, beliefs about access to public spaces, *etc*. I also mean beliefs about how the planning process itself should proceed; whose voice matters, whose voice is perfunctory and whose voice is not needed at all. It is my contention that we need to honestly uncover the professional ideologies about cities and space that underpin our work as professionals. The important point at this juncture is to understand that there are shared and divergent professional ideologies that are at play and that critically determine the ways in which the relationship among professionals, political leaders, communities and special interests play themselves out in the actual practice of city building.

As a starting point it is reasonable to conclude that there is usually an ideological convergence between the professional and the political leader, community leader or special interest who invites the professional into the process. To the extent that policy making, planning implementation and professional practice flow back and forth as previously described, we must recognize that a great deal of what transpires in terms of convergence and divergence in the planning and design ideas in play at any moment is the outcome of the ways in which the decision process handles political and professional ideological differences. In the subsections that follow, I propose to illustrate this important point about the role of professional ideology by recounting the ways in which ideologies about the nature of the urban condition have defined and redefined the planning profession over the course of the last century. My points of departure are urban planning as distinct from design as that is the field I know best, and the history that I present, though somewhat universal, is largely rooted in the United States experience for the same reason. However I would argue that the process I am explaining is generic among all of the other urban professions and the history I recount is similar to planners in many other places.

I argue that there are essentially three overarching approaches to planning that characterize the modern profession; master planning, social planning and fiscal planning. They evolved sequentially and via a combination of pragmatism and ideology in response to the ways in which problems of cities became manifest. In the following three sub-sections I propose to explore the connection between problems and ideology in the shaping of both planning education and planning practice.

    a: The Master Planning Era

Master planning focuses on the physical planning of cities; it principally focuses on considerations about land use regulation and the placement of critical infrastructure in a comprehensive manner. It is also known as comprehensive planning, especially when it focuses in great detail on the conditions of land use and the characteristics of the populations to be impacted by the plan. Master planning emerged out of the clashes between the urbanization and industrialization processes that created the modern city. Because so much of the industrial revolution played itself out in Western Europe and North America many of the tools we associate with master planning originated in those places. Nonetheless the planning practices that are associated with master planning were quickly transmitted, modified and adopted by the rapidly urbanizing cities of a recently decolonized Latin America and the still colonized cities of Southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. The ways in which these ideas were transmitted and translated internationally reflected the local political situations, the local geographic conditions and the local cultures.

The larger history of the international transmission of planning ideas is beyond the scope of this particular paper. The important point for present purposes is to understand that master planning did not develop apart from the existing conditions of urbanization and the specific forms it took reflected the specific local conditions of urbanization. Because the urban industrialization process of the Global North played a particularly seminal, though not a complete, role in shaping the way that master planning evolved in the Global South, it is important that we appreciate the ways both obvious and subtle that ideologies in the Global North shaped urban planning in the Global South. One result of the colonial dominance of so much of the Global South by the Global North was that the professional ideas about urban form that developed in the Global North were adopted and applied to the design and development of colonial cities from the vantage point of the colonizers and not the colonized. This heritage has imposed an additional set of complications upon the challenge of developing a relevant practice of planning in these places in the present. This is especially the case in sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

Master planning as urban planning became an identifiable profession with academic training during the first four decades of the 20th century. Ideologically the profession arose out of efforts by reformers to respond to the spatial disorganization and living depravations that the world's rapidly industrializing cities were generating. The content of much of this practice emerged from a physical critique of the industrial city; if infrastructure and land use were disorderly, they needed to be made orderly through intervention by governmental decision makers. The proposed solutions to the observed urban-industrial disjuncture were thus rooted in a particular ideological vision about the nature of the urban problem and thus the solution.

To fully appreciate the dominant professional ideology behind the master planning that emerged, it is important to understand that it emerged at a time when there were several strains of urban and anti-urban ideology all competing for dominance as explanations of the plight confronting cities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some of these ideologies assumed the existing social organization and proposed physical solutions to

the observable physical problems of cities. Others saw the physical problems as manifestations of social breakdown and place a heavy emphasis on social reorganization with only a cursory concern for its physical results. On a physical plane, there were theorists who foresaw the reconstruction of an idealized city as the solution to urban problems. Other physically oriented theorists believed that the existing city was beyond repair and in need of alternative solutions. The most utopian visions such as the one associated with Corbusier called for a total makeover over of urban life in "machines" for living and working; tall high rise towers in the park. One of the most utopian and well known anti-urban visions was Frank Lloyd Wright's "Broadacre City" comprised of independent yeoman suburbanites living on one acre plots where they pursued urban occupations, drove cars and grew some of their own food. There were anti-industrial and anti-capitalist visions that were not physical in nature, but social. These were the insular utopian social experiments in which shared ownership and isolation from the dominant urban society were far more crucial to their identity than the physical shape of their environments. In a less radical, but mildly socialist mode of thought was the suburban "garden cities" envisioned by Ebenezer Howard. Although economically tied to the older central city, they were more cooperative and less individualist in their social organization than the city from which they arose.

In the end it was the moderating approaches to remediation in the existing urban fabric as embodied in the realized Daniel Burnham redesign of the Chicago lakefront and Frederick Law Olmstead's realized plans for parks such as Central Park and suburbs such as Riverside, Illinois that emerged as the dominant paradigm for professional practice. By and large it was this master planning approach to city and suburb that effectively defined the mainstream of professional planning well into the 1960s. Ideologically it accepted the reality of the new industrial based urban society with its new social and political elites. It defined the relationships between the newly emerging urban architectural, engineering and planning professionals and the special interests embodied in the local business elites as the crucial client-professional relationship. Experience quickly taught these new professional city designers that master plans were realized mainly through the support and intervention of local business and political elites who perceived the enlightened self-interest inherent in this approach. It was this master planning approach that became the basis for both the urban and regional planning that crystallized in the 1920s and 1930s. The regional planning that emerged sought to ensure that the growth of the surrounding hinterland and the placement of water, sanitation, transport and power infrastructure harmonized with the needs of the central city. This harmony was especially important to the urban reformers of the early 20th century because it facilitated the deconcentration of the teaming slums that were focused around the central business district. It facilitated the orderly redistribution of the urban population away from the central city and out to garden like suburbs.

Master planning practice was embedded in an ends-means rationality that assumed that although business interests were necessary to catalyze the effort, government provided the sufficient condition via regulations and incentives for guiding the private sector's building process. This belief in an activist state was in large part a reaction to the *laissez faire* approach to governance that held sway for much of the 19th century. In reaction to

the severe urban problems that it left behind, urban reformers in both North America and Western Europe held that government had an affirmative duty to actively promote the public interest over and above the various private interests that dominated society in the *laissez faire* era. The convergence between enlightened business interests and government, which this approach embodied, was accepted unquestioningly as the public interest.

Unlike the classic liberals who rationalized the status quo through advocacy for *laissez faire* policies as a bulwark against government tyranny, the reformers who sought activist government and master planning viewed their ideas about governance as a pragmatic response to the social and physical problems of the industrializing city. Although they worked closely with progressive business leaders, they did not view themselves as an extension of the business community. In many instances, such as the fight for child labor laws and support for workers rights, they were strong antagonists to the interests of the business community. These reformers saw themselves as a neutral voice for "the public interest." For them, activist government was the only viable solution to the social and environmental problems created by unregulated urban land and labor markets and a lack of urban infrastructure. They became a viable political force because they understood and were able to document the excesses of *laissez faire* policy upon the processes of urban expansion then underway <u>and</u> they were able to propose a believable alternative in the form of activist government engaged in master planning. Their ideology was rooted in a strong belief that science and technology pressed into the service of the public interest by democratic government would solve society's problems. It is noteworthy that for them capitalism and industrialization were presumed, thus planning and market regulation, not socialism, was their solution. It was reformers of this pragmatic stripe who were the founders of the modern profession of urban planning. The master plan was their tool of choice.

Reflecting the optimism of the progressive era beliefs that government could create social policies to solve social problems and physical plans to make modern urban life better, urban master plans along the pragmatic lines set by the likes of Burnham and Olmstead became the professional norm. At their best these plans typically projected a positive physical vision of what the city could be if it was to create an attractive environment for urban existence. At their worst master plans reduced themselves to architectural fantasies superimposed upon bureaucratically created land use maps indicating where housing, commerce and infrastructure were supposed to be located. These hollowed out illustrations bore little resemblance to urban physical reality and were of even less relevance to the lives of most urban residents but especially the urban poor. However, at its best master planning was capable of rendering a realistic physical vision of an urban and suburban lifestyle rooted in a commitment to a fulfilling and healthy life for all the residents of the metropolis. Such plans and designs rested on commitments to address the service needs of all residents, regardless of their station in life via sound and effective governance. In their details these master plans sought to provide rational guidance to private developers via the imposition of effective land use regulation and the careful placement of infrastructure and important public works such as schools and hospitals.

b: The Social Planning Era

Despite the promise of the best master plans, by 1970 master planning was passé. The reasons for its decline are complex. I would argue that to a large extent the loss was due to a hollowing out of the social content that motivated the early master planners and its replacement by a zeal for professional standards and technical virtuosity as a solution to urban problems. Absent an overriding concern for social content, the inherent fundamental methodological flaws in the approach quickly became an obstacle that technical expertise could not repair. Instead the approach fell into disuse. Master planning assumes *stasis* in the urban conditions it seeks to address i.e. the master planning process implicitly assumes that urban conditions as they exist when the plan is drawn up will be about the same when the plan is finally realized. Master planning failed in part because it never could adequately account for the complex and dynamic patterns of population and socio-economic change that are the hallmarks of vital urbanization. Even as master plans were drawn and regardless of how quickly they were implemented, the urban social and physical fabric had moved beyond the assessed conditions. One solution to this is to create a master planning process that is continually updated. To some extent this is an offset, but it is a cumbersome one at best. Instead what would occur is that wherever master planners could, they would seek to impose their vision over the social furor it created. The social furor is in part a reflection of the fact that the master planning process was replacing social concerns with technical content. The famous clashes between New York master planner Robert Moses and the urban communities he sought to change are a good case in point. His process essentially left urban communities devoid of any voice and he applied technical analyses that did not take into account the vital information that dialogue would have produced. More to the point he understood, as did many other master planners, that what he was seeking to do was to displace certain urban communities for the benefit of others.

As a result of the inability of many master planners to approach their plans with flexibility, important and pressing urban social and environmental problems were, more often than not, untouched by the physical structures proposed as solutions. Master planning also failed to sustain itself in part because it focused heavily on the benefits and not the costs of the demolitions that its improvements required. Typical post World War II master plans called for the demolition of the neighborhoods, tenements and informal settlements where the urban poor took shelter. These demolitions were always put forward in the name of "progress." Progress meant public works or new neighborhoods. The poor were assured that once "progress" was complete, they too would enjoy the fruits of the effort. On too many occasions the poor and the working class found themselves uprooted from their homes to make way for highways or new urban development projects and left in worse circumstances. These social costs were never part of the decision calculus no matter how complex. In response to this situation, around the middle of the 20th century local resistance to master planning, which became labeled as "top-down planning," began to grow.

These problems with master planning impacted both the cities of the Global North and the newly decolonized cities of the Global South. But the problems of the Global South

were exacerbated by the fact that the master planned cities that the newly independent states of Africa and Asia inherited in the 1950s and 1960s bore little to no resemblance to the ways in which the colonized populations of these places lived. This was not the case in Latin America, which was already largely urbanized. Latin American cities suffered more from the kind of disjuncture caused by economic breakdowns, political cronyism and dictator's whims. Planning in a colonial context meant planning that accorded with the ideological sensibilities, convenience needs, and segregationist desires of the colonial rulers and not the needs of the native populations being ruled. Contemporary Nairobi provides an excellent example of this. It has a central business district, replete with high-rise modernist architecture that resembles many in the Global North. The creation of this center dates back to pre-independence. Until independence, with few exceptions, Africans could not live in Nairobi proper. As a result of this heritage Nairobi's residential and working patterns are far more dispersed than would be suggested by the presence of a high rise downtown. Instead contemporary Nairobi is a place where over 50 percent of its residents live in dispersed slums and walk to work. As a result their lives do not focus on this CBD. But the modernist master plan proposed for Nairobi called for building auto-connected suburbs and demolishing the settlements where the urban poor lived. Carrying out this plan would have involved forcibly uprooting slums at great cost in terms of social unrest.

In response to the failings of master planning and the rise of social movements calling for social justice in both the Global North and South, the planning and design professions and the academies that trained planners began moving away from the heavily physical and engineering based planning practice that was the hallmark of master planning at its technical zenith and towards a practice rooted in directly addressing social needs. This newer practice, which I call social planning, involved smaller scale neighborhood and community units of analysis. The tools it employed include the use of advocacy planning on behalf of under represented populations and promoting processes of community consultation in master planning endeavors. Social planning came to dominate planning education, beginning in the 1960s and it became dominant in the pedagogy of planning schools by the end of the 1970s. It was seen as a corrective to the failings of master planning in its move away from social content.

From the perspective of social justice, social planning very powerfully restored social content to urban planning. It was planning that directly addressed the service and shelter needs of those on the lowest rungs of the income and wealth ladder. The best of the new social planning did make several important contributions to the work and training of urban professionals. It more sharply focused planning and design upon the importance of structuring community participation into the planning process ("bottom-up planning"). There was a new and direct insistence that urban improvements needed to be measured by the extent to which they benefited the most vulnerable urban residents. Social planning also expanded the horizons of planning practice by incorporating concerns for broader social values such as historic preservation and environmental sustainability into the planning and design process. However social planning made its contributions at a price; concerns with the larger and more structural processes of broader urban change as well as the creation of a positive vision of what the city as a whole might become

disappeared from the planning agenda. Planning practice moved away from creating a city or metropolitan whole to small area planning and neighborhood design, or a fractured city landscape – both physically and socially. Urban space was now seen via its component parts, an aggregation of buildings, settlements and neighborhoods. The city was now a collection of assorted people arranged in disparate interest groups and ethnic and racial categories. It was no longer a larger whole.

c: The Fiscal Planning Era

Master planning and social planning differed from one another in terms of what they made foreground and what they made background. For master planning, it was the physical elements of urbanization that were foreground. For social planning, it was the equitable distribution of the fruits of urbanization that was front and center. The ideological tie that connected the two was a belief in the ultimate effectiveness and benevolence of an activist and progressive welfare state. The intellectual lynch pin of planning practice and education for the first eight decades of the 20th century was the presumption that urban planning was essentially the operational extension of policy making and planning implementation by an activist government bureaucracy within a democratic state. A part of that belief structure was the idea that the democratic state was competent to carry through on its policies and plans in a bureaucratically efficient manner. In the 1980s and 1990s a *laissez faire* counter-revolution to this notion of activist government swept the world. Its ideological roots could be traced to the modern incarnation of the long-standing tradition of *laissez faire* liberal thought – now called neoliberalism. Neoliberal policy advocates and politicians questioned the most basic tenets of the progressive ideology of activist government. They argued that government was not competent, not efficient, and not even democratic. This view quickly came to dominate policy and planning thinking in the closing decades of the last century. A major reason for this reversal was the collapse of central planning as a tool of economic organization both via the introduction of markets into China and the disappearance of communism from Eastern Europe. An impact of this new conventional wisdom was felt in the practice of urban planning. I call this third turn fiscal planning. Fiscal planning is the creation of physical and social development strategies for localities that are driven by considerations for maximizing local economic development and the local capture of taxes and other revenue sources.

There are two organizing ideas to this planning approach. The first is that planners need to be adept at the creation of arrangements that bring private sector actors into the process of achieving public ends. The flagship idea of this approach is the public-private partnership (PPP). A PPP is seen as the superior way in which to achieve a public goal be it a new toll road or the administration of a job training program. PPPs are the operational extension of the neoliberal drive to privatize as much of government as possible. The second organizing idea is that planners should concentrate on the promotion of physical development projects that maximize the revenues to local governments from existing sources. Local governments must be viewed as being in competition with one another to squeeze as much efficiency and effectiveness out of local fiscal resources as possible, For

fiscal planners the size and shape of the city was no longer a paramount question as it was for master planners. Instead it is the size and shape of the urban real estate market that is the focus of the planner's attention. As a result the initiative for urban vision effectively shifted from the public to the private sector.

Land use regulation and zoning, to the extent that they were valued, ceased to be tools to guide physical development in the public interest and instead became tools to "incentivize" private developers to create projects that boost property values and tax receipts from existing sources. Of course one of the open questions here is whether the incentives granted to developers in these PPPs are ever really offset by the future benefits they are purported to create. Follow up studies are rarely, if ever, done. Urban design considerations as well as social equity considerations become secondary to economic considerations in this new planning calculus. It no longer mattered what the shape of the built environment looked like or what its impact was on the social or physical environment. Instead what mattered was transforming the urban settlement into a vital hub of enterprise. The pursuit of property value quickly became the highest and best use of the planner's time.

What especially fell between the cracks in this drive to maximize short term economic returns were the needs of the urban poor. To the extent that there is always a "trade off" between equity and efficiency, the rationale for ignoring the needs of the urban poor in the short run was that the hardship created would, in the long run, produce more efficiency and hence added resources to better meet the needs of the urban poor. This rationale is uncomfortably close to the master planning era rationale in which costs of displacement to the poor were not considered because some time in the future better places for them to live would appear.

Just as master planning and the activist state found their way into the cities of the Global South via colonialism, the new views of neoliberal policy also filtered there via the regime of international public finance put in place after the Second World War. This is the regime of international financial institutions (IFIs); primarily the World Bank and the International Monetery Fund that was put in place after the Second World War. Economically these IFIs were intended to stabilize the world economy and to nurture market oriented economic development in the emergent post-colonial states of Africa and Asia. Ideologically the IFIs were viewed as bulwarks against the threat of communism and socialism. In their early guise these IFIs were exemplars of notions of activist and interventionist government in support of markets. With the collapse of communism, the ideology of activist government as a positive social force melted rapidly within these institutions too. It was replaced by an ideology that held that government itself was the problem and not the solution

Beginning in the late 1970s and accelerating after the collapse of communism in the 1980s, the IFIs began to impose a series of reforms called structural adjustment programs (SAPs). SAPs are conditions or "conditionalities" that international lenders impose on countries to ensure that the loans they make are used as intended and produce the intended outcome. After the decade of stagflation, rising oil prices and massive loan

defaults in the late 1970s and 1980s, the IFIs began pushing a range of new and more stringent conditionalities on developing countries that went beyond the need for loan related assurances and that instead sought to drastically restructure the way in which the larger governmental and economic system worked in these countries. These SAPs, were built on the notion that the central problems in the developing world were not a lack of infrastructure per se, although that was important. Rather the problem was that governments there were bureaucratically overbearing, inefficient and corrupt. Hence the infrastructure projects and other programs for which individual loans were being made had little or no chance of performing as expected. To remedy the situation, the IFIs imposed the condition that a more radical restructuring of the economy, along neoliberal lines was needed as a condition for further loans and grants-in-aid. The market needed to replace government as a principal driver of social and physical urban investment. SAPs called for significant cuts in social spending, the privatization of public services, the deregulation of the economy and the opening of the local economy to free trade.

One of the results that immediately followed from these new conditionalities was the effective destruction of many of the urban public services that existed in the cities of the Global South. These services were typically very weak to begin with for a variety of reasons and the withdrawal of public support effectively closed the option of a public revitalization. This pattern was widespread all across the Global South. It occurred because SAP policies pressured the governments of developing countries to not subsidize services that might be able to stand on their own in the private market place. The withdrawal of public subsidy for services for which partial private markets exist such as public transport, water and sanitation, telecommunications and electric power effectively make these markets more difficult for the urban poor to access. Consider the case of public transport, typically fixed route public bus systems: in situations were the bulk of the riders can not afford unsubsidized fares, these services were drastically cut back. A common on-the-ground result of this was the emergence of informal variants of taxis, minibuses, motorized three-wheelers, *etc*. They kept costs down via a poorly maintained and poorly driven fleet of unsafe vehicles that began to swarm over the poor roads of cities in the Global South in numbers that quickly congested the streets of these cities and further damaged what was left of the public system. Among the social costs this creates are health threatening levels of air pollution, high pedestrian fatality rates, an increase in travel times for those who commute, a decrease in mobility for many others and an increase in living density in under-serviced slum areas close to places of employment. The lesson here is clear: Absent state provided urban services, vulnerable individuals via informal markets and illegal activity are forced to devise their own solutions. The alternatives for them are literally life or death. The solutions impose a range of social costs that are not easily avoided. But fiscal planning with a focus on revenue driven results is not easily able to account for these social costs.

One reason for this outcome is related to the institutional structure of government. The IFIs deal with nations not sub national entities. The SAPs are therefore enforced at the national level where there is little direct responsibility for local services and infrastructure. Sub national units of government have the abiding function of overseeing the provision of infrastructure and public services and care for the urban poor. To the

extent that urban planning is most often undertaken at these levels, the challenge for urban planners was learning to be fiscal planners. In the context of an environment in which privatization and deregulation are considered the preferred option for service provision, the sale or concessioning of public infrastructure assets and the tendering of public services becomes doubly attractive. Public assets such as transport, water, sanitation and power are leveraged via their inherent market value through PPPs to provide revenues for government. Concessioning and competitive tendering hold out the additional promise of private providers who could act more efficiently than their public sector counterparts.

For cities in the global south the turn towards *laissez faire* neoliberal policy in the last two decades has produced neither more urban productivity nor more social equity. Thus as with master planning and social planning so too with fiscal planning, it has a contribution to make but it is far from a total solution. Fiscal planning at its best can make important contributions to the way in which planning professionals understand the urban economy and broadens the range of alternative planning possibilities open to them to meet the needs of a burgeoning urban population. But markets are not a general solution to the challenges of efficiency and equity in the newly expanding urban settlements of the world where public goods are sorely needed. They can only be one part of the process. Moreover markets only work well when the public sector works well.

IV. 21st Century Urban Planning Challenges

At its broadest level, the challenge for 21st century planning and design is to fashion a practice that is relevant to the world's expanding urban populations and settlements. Our goal must be to ensure that these populations live and work in places that are healthy, sustainable and productive for all urban residents and especially the most vulnerable and poorest of them. To meet that challenge we will need to refashion the several approaches to planning that evolved in the 20th century, taking that which is relevant and discarding that which is no longer useful. We must connect these approaches to the new 21st century global urban reality. As was noted at the beginning, some of the problems that we face have a strong air of familiarly; namely the problems relating to the creation of urban infrastructure and urban population health systems. But some of what we face is entirely new, much of what is new is directly related to consequences that derive from global climate change. In this section I want to consider some these factors for purposes of illustration.

Global climate change is an all-encompassing event that makes all the other vulnerabilities of Global South urbanization (i.e. poverty, the spread of disease, political instability, *etc*.) that much worse. However in addition to exacerbating existing problems it adds new complexity. It calls into question a great many of our assumptions about how infrastructure design should work and it creates new political and social problems for urban residents in the Global South to solve; problems that they had no part in creating in the first place.

Addressing the complex issues of global climate change can be thought of as a two-step process: mitigating the human sources of green house gas (GHG) emissions and adapting to the climatic consequences that are already upon us. The issue of mitigation is well understood, especially in the Global North where governments are taking steps to reduce GHG emissions. The Kyoto Protocol[1] is the most noteworthy proactive step to date. The several reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)[2] provide standards of scientific understanding about the dimensions of the problem. Finally "The Stern review on the Economics of Climate Change[3]"makes a powerful case for the argument that the costs of aggressive mitigation now are far lower than the benefits to be achieved in the future; hence immediate action is needed.

The problem from the vantage point of the Global South is that the more pressing problem for cities there is adaptation. Urban residents in the Global South emit very little CO_2. But the increasing incidence of severe weather related incidents and sea level rise caused by climate change are exacting a large toll on them. The problem of adapting to these changes tends to be invisible in the resource rich Global North were existing governance and public finance systems are absorbing much of the adaptation problem through their normal practices. By way of comparison it is difficult to talk about water system redundancy in places where these systems do not exist in the first place. It is therefore important to understand that calls for immediate mitigation action in the Global North ring hollow in the Global South. The global response to climate change must become an explicit and highly visible two-step process in which the problem of adaptation is made as important as mitigation.

To move this to a more concrete level of understanding let us consider the challenges of designing and financing water and sanitation infrastructure.[4] Initially it was believed that the ultimate solution to this problem in the Global South would be the same as the one developed in the Global North; master planning an integrated and closed system of water delivery and sanitary wastewater disposal. At a cursory level it is easy to see the logic in calling for a closed network system in the Global South. But for that to work it is necessary to assume that the environmental conditions and the institutions of governance and finance are also similar. But they are not. Attempts to master plan water and sanitation along the lines of the Global North via large infrastructure loans from the World Bank failed in the 1980s and 1990s. They failed in part because the problem of long-term operation and maintenance with its implications for effective administration

---

[1] The **Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** is an amendment to the international treaty on climate change, assigning mandatory emission limitations for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to the signatory nations.

[2] The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** (**IPCC**) was established in 1988 by two United Nations organizations, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to evaluate the risk of climate change brought on by humans. The IPCC does not carry out research, nor does it monitor climate or related phenomena. One of the main activities of the IPCC is to publish special reports on topics relevant to the implementation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

[3] The report was commissioned by the then UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, authored by Sir Nicholas Stern and released in October 2006.

[4] Some of this draws upon the paper by Barbara Evans "Understanding the Urban Poor's Vulnerabilities in Sanitation and Water Supply."

and systems of finance was never thought through completely. They also failed because the unique aspects of urbanization in the Global South were never well understood. At a most obvious level master planning assumes *stasis* in the urban physical and social environment that is even less appropriate in situations where the dynamic of urbanization is accelerating. If *stasis* was a poor general approximation to conditions in the Global North, it is even worse in the Global South.

The initial response of the IFIs in their neoliberal phase to the inability of cities in the Global South to solve the problem through a master planned system was to call for a demand driven solution. Demand driven decision making involves moving the locus of action from the supply side of the market (master planning) to the demand side of the market (fiscal planning). Philosophically demand driven decision making accords well with neoliberal thinking because its policy implications essentially call for PPPs and privatization of public water and sanitation systems to ensure that the operation and maintenance as well as the capital costs are absorbed by the systems users through their market purchase of the product (termed "cost recovery"). That approach has now proven to be limited for the some of the same reasons that crude attempts at master planning failed; it did not take the realities of local situations and the public goods nature of the product into account.

Complicating matters further at the present are the new realities of the not yet well-understood problem of adjusting to climate change. It is important to point out that the large scale closed systems of water and sanitation that evolved in the Global North over the last century and a half were systems that assumed certain stability in climatic conditions. Climatic conditions are vital determinants of water sources and system vulnerability to severe climate events. These assumptions are no longer valid. It may mean that the evolution of water and sanitation systems in the Global South will have to proceed in a more piecemeal manner if for no other reason than the fact that we really do not understand the climatic assumptions we will need to make about the context in which we construct these systems.

Taken together then, we need to consider a planning process in the Global South that combines elements of master, social and fiscal planning in new ways to meet the new realities of viable urban places that are built on foundations of democratic government and social equity.

V. Looking Ahead

What are the lessons to be drawn from this overview? The most obvious lesson concerns the impossibility of separating substantive theories about the nature of professional urban work from ideological conceptions of either the nature of urban life or conceptions about the roles of the public and private sectors in that urban life. All of the approaches were correct to some degree; but they were only partially correct. The existential problem is that whenever we propose to engage with society we are both observers and participants. Our personal histories are entwined with the subject matter in front of us in more ways than we can ever understand. There is always more relevant activity taking place that is

important at any moment than it is possible for us to appreciate. At minimum then the first lesson is that we need to be humble about the urban truths that we advocate as educators, as urban theorists and as professional practitioners. We need to be wary of all simple nostrums as solutions and especially those that call for the most radical, far-reaching and rapid overhaul of the *status quo*. Central planning and self-correcting market mechanisms have both promised magical transformations that neither can deliver upon. History matters greatly. We need to understand how the current situations in each specific place evolved. As obvious as this is, it is a far easier truth to acknowledge than it is to act upon.

While we need to be modest in thought, we still need to be resolute in action. The social and environmental crises that we face are sufficiently severe that we must do something. To not act is to assuredly permit the situation to get worse. Thus the second lesson here for our future courses of action concerns how we proceed. We are not locked into our preexisting mindsets. We can critically and continually question the assumptions, some of which are almost unconscious, that define "the reality" in which we think we are working. This week affords us an opportunity to engage one another in just such a pragmatic dialogue about both our realities and the nature and substance of our urban professional work. We should go about this with a pragmatic eye for what works and what does not in terms of the urban challenges that lie ahead.

Our deliberations should be both wide-ranging and yet focused. In terms of focus, we have the advantage of knowing information exchanged at the substantive deliberations that took place over the three weeks that preceded our meeting. The topics covered (the financing of water, sanitation and shelter, adapting to climate change and urban population health) cover a sufficiently wide swath of the new global urban reality that they provide us with a broad canvas upon which we can begin to sketch a new understanding of the ways in which we as professionals can help to meliorate the social and environmental problems of 21st century urbanization.

There is little doubt that in that process of thinking about how we as professionals can contribute we will invariably borrow elements from the three approaches to practice that I used to characterized 20th century planning. But the approach or approaches that emerge will, if they are to be of use, be rooted in an appreciation of what works and what does not work now. It is out of such a pragmatic discussion combined with an appreciation of what occurred in the past that we will begin to create a new basis for practice and education.

In this endeavor it becomes important that urban professionals from the Global South take the lead in articulating their visions for their cities and the basis for a new professional practice. It is no longer acceptable that the ideas on how urban life should be organized trickle down from the Global North regardless of whether it is through theories of physical planning or theories of fiscal restructuring. If we are to be effective in the translation of the various urban challenges taken up in this urban summit into teaching and practice, we will need to absorb a third lesson from the history. We will need to

understand the parts of the present global urbanization process that are universal and the parts that are locally unique. And we will need to develop a proper appreciation for both.

We will not solve the problems of the urban professions in the 21st century in one week, but to the extent that we succeed in establishing the basis for a new dialogue and creating a process for carrying the dialogue forward, we will play an important role in the creation of a new generation of urban professionals who have the knowledge and skills to reshape the urbanization dynamic in positive ways.

VI. Questions to Consider

As a starting point we need to examine the specific social and environmental urban vulnerabilities identified in the papers for each of the earlier weeks and consider the ways in which the role of design and planning professionals can fit into solutions. How are we as professionals presently addressing the problems of adaptation to climate change, financing water, sanitation and shelter and urban population health in our education and practice? Are these topics central to our work or are they ancillary to it? A critical inquiry into the ways in which we presently work is an important jumping off point for opening up a consideration into the ways in which we can proceed as we move ahead.
To do this effectively, we will need to consider the institutional context in which we undertake our work as educators and urban designers and identify the strengths as well as the obstacles in the present institutional arrangements for creating new pathways for professional work that addresses the identified vulnerabilities. To do this well we will need to consider the ways in which the politics of urban decision-making intersects with the realities of urbanization.

When we speak of the realities of urbanization, we need to be clear about the vantage point from which we view urbanization. Given the severe depravations of the urban poor and the huge absolute and relative numbers of the urban population that they represent, pragmatism alone would dictate that we address the issue from their prospective. There is a large body of evidence that suggests that to the extent that we provide for the most vulnerable and poorest among us, we do well for the "middle class" too. One of the lessons of the global studio project, which we will hear about this week, is that planning and design professionals often come to their work either from the vantage point of the most affluent who can pay for design services or if we take a "policy oriented" approach we often view the city from the vantage point of a broad based yet never well defined "middle class." Neither of these is a good starting point either as a matter of values or as a matter of pragmatism. The urban poor must become <u>actively</u> central to the ways in which we construct the mainstream of our professions. The emphasis on active is to underscore the reality that unless we make a significant effort to be inclusive of the most vulnerable, they too easily disappear from the professional analysis. When that is pointed out we add them in, not as central to our practice, but as an afterthought. When we do that we end up creating solutions for "the poor" that quickly become poor solutions.

In light of the above concerns with the most vulnerable and the problems of urbanization, it becomes important that we inquire into the nature of the difficulties in the current

models of practice? Given the economics of professional life we must candidly ask whether professional practice can really be transformed into one in which professionals genuinely serve the needs of the poor? Or is it inevitably a "pro bono" sideshow to the mainstream of practice? The approach to this should not be one in which we accept the status quo as the inevitable future. Instead we should envision alternative professional futures in which those who take on this work can have career ladders and reasonable standards of living. How would we make this happen?

An important thread that ran through the history in section III was the push and pull between the conception of government as the active agent of planning and the market as the active agent. Both have strengths and both have drawbacks. Over the coming few years it is clear that a new balance between the two is going to emerge through some mix of pragmatism and ideology. The question that we need to explore concerns the ways in which we perceive that regulation and market or the public and private sectors could or should be balanced to facilitate the ability of urban professionals to most usefully contribute to meeting the challenges of 21st century cities. We must not fall into the trap of thinking of "the government" and "the market." Instead we must recognize these as institutions that are historic in their evolution and highly specific in time and place. Such a dynamic understanding of them is important because it permits us to see possibilities for approaches and processes that can improve their functioning. Government and markets are not abstract entities that are "good" or "bad," rather they are products of the evolution of the societies in which they are embedded. It is more correct to view them as amoral and in need of continual oversight, intervention and reinvention.

A final question and a large one: Do we need visions of cities that work? As Daniel Burnham one of the founders of the modern profession put it: "Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will not themselves be realized." The master planners present at the profession's creation were convinced that a larger vision was needed to motivate people to carry the process through. Yet as we saw master planning often dissolved into renderings and maps that failed to address real needs, and especially the needs of the most vulnerable. Moreover as we move beyond physical planning to integrate social and economic concerns as well as considerations of planning process, does that complicate the role that larger visions can play? Does the attempt to draw such visions run a real and significant risk of bogging us down in seemingly endless discussions about "the vision?" Perhaps we need something larger but sufficiently vague that many different groups and individuals can sign on?

No doubt all of you will have other questions and considerations. I look forward to a productive week of discussion and enlightenment.