

PLANNING COMPACT CITIES: EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF DENSIFICATION

Seville, 13-14 March 2017

#TheNewUrbanAgenda

IMPLEMENTING THE
**NEW
URBAN
AGENDA**



With the support of:

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



Agencia Andaluza de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo
CONSEJERÍA DE IGUALDAD Y POLÍTICAS SOCIALES

With the collaboration of:

NO SDO
AYUNTAMIENTO DE SEVILLA



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GLOBAL EXPERTS GROUP MEETING

Planning Compact Cities: Exploring the possibilities and limits of densification

Seville, Spain

13th – 14th March 2017

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GLOBAL EXPERTS GROUP MEETING

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2. COMMUNIQUÉ



Agencia Andaluza de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo
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COMMUNIQUÉ COMPACT CITIES: ADOPTING AND IMPLEMENTING DIVERSIFIED AND EQUITABLE URBAN DENSIFICATION STRATEGIES

Seville, Spain, 13-14 March 2017

Background On the 13th and 14th of March 2017, 22 experts in urban development from 18 countries from governments, international organizations, and academia gathered in Seville to discuss approaches to the management of urban transformation. The expert included urban planners, economists and legal experts. They discussed this in the framework of the implementation of the NUA and in particular the paragraph 51:

51. We commit ourselves to promoting the development of urban spatial frameworks, including urban planning and design instruments that support sustainable management and use of natural resources and land, appropriate compactness and density, polycentrism and mixed uses, through infill or planned urban extension strategies as applicable, to trigger economies of scale and agglomeration, strengthen food system planning, and enhance resource efficiency, urban resilience and environmental sustainability.

Considering cities in developed countries, in emerging countries and in less developed countries, both large and small, experts agreed that there is a huge potential for improving the efficiency in the use of existing urban space within urban areas, as a key complementary strategy to Planned Cities Extensions. They also concurred that well managed urban transformations have the potential to increase the quality of urban form, urban productivity and inclusion, as well as to absorb a share of the new urban population without necessarily expanding cities into greenfields.

They noted the following relevant global urban trends:

- The fast growth of urban population, particularly in Asian and African developing countries,

and in particular in intermediate size cities.

- The fact that urban areas have expanded disproportionately even when population is not growing with an increase of the land consumption per capita.
- The changes in distribution of population within cities and across territories, in the use of space for residential, economic and other activities (which may include also the increase of housing standards), and in the size and demographic profile of urban families, all factors which impact population density.

These trends, if left unchecked, will continue to translate in urban sprawl, segregation and urban inequalities, higher risks related to climate change and social tensions, and congestion and inefficiency of cities. Processes of gentrification and competition for scarce prime space might result in population expulsion, while decaying urban cores might lose population.

This situation requires a deliberate urban planning and management effort, which takes stocks of experiences and lessons, and needs to be supported by robust design, financial and regulatory approaches and tools: a **proactive urban planning approach** to guide urban transformation and densification processes in a way that improves overall urban patterns and quality, ensures social cohesion and is efficient in the use of space and other resources.

The group agreed on some basic principles and messages that are summarized here:

1. BENEFITS OF DENSIFICATION

- Densification has the potential to deliver development benefits – however, it is not an end by itself and needs to be explicitly linked to development objectives and vision at local level. Should also be considered that densification, just as other urban transformations, requires specific attention to consequences and changes to population and social environment that might generate in each context. Densification can counter tendency to sprawl and reduce numerous externalities of urbanization while leveraging its positive dimensions. In particular, densification can be an opportunity to increase urban quality, inclusion and environmental and economic sustainability in cities of developed, developing or emerging countries.
- Well-designed densification and compact development with adequate activities mix, population density and public space is important for large and small cities alike. In small cities it may be a longer term endeavor, but it has the potential to make them more attractive for population, particularly in developed countries, and in the longer term, also in developing countries.
- Strategies based on the use of existing empty spaces within the city for new developments (planned infill) shall be prioritized as much as possible in relation to city extensions.

2. DEFINITIONS AND ANALYSIS

- Densification does not

correspond to construction: the overall use and occupancy of existing stock, the transformation in demographic need to be also considered. Also, density in terms of number of people per area is not sufficiently qualified. Density of activities needs also to be considered. A balance of the two is needed for density to create benefits. Defining density in both spatial and economic terms will help in bridging the understanding and linking spatial and economic strategies better.

- Density needs to be analyzed and defined through multiple metrics over a given area, which should include the number of people, the number of dwellings per ha, and the built surface, as well as floor area for person. In its qualification, it is important to consider the size of the city and access to nature. The mix of activities and the density of jobs are a key corollary of population density (intensity).
- In every city, density conditions and opportunities (and blockages) need to be analyzed and understood in the local context of social, spatial, economic dynamics.

3. DENSIFICATION STRATEGIES AND TOOLS

- Densification happens spontaneously in many contexts, both on private and on public land (as a component of processes of development (density with growth) or as result of scarcity (density without growth, leading to overcrowding). Also, density can be a demand from the

TYPOLOGIES OF DENSIFICATION PROCESSES

Regulatory

- Improved use of the existing stock – both when unutilized and when underutilized, often due to demographic or economic changes (New York)
- Addressing the speculative holding of land property in urban areas and considering a more equitable distribution of space within a city (Brazil)
- Densification through incremental housing
- Change of FAR (along transport corridors, in areas of high economic growth)
- The processes of informal densification also have an important role and should not be ignored or underestimated (Cape Town)

Project

- Reinforcing of housing estates, particularly the public housing
- Redevelopment projects on brown fields and on existing blocks (Korea)
- Urban infill in vacant blocks/plots

Indirect incentive/demand stimulation

- At larger scale, investments in infrastructure and economic activities also generate demand for densification
- Building economic poles that link CBDs with suburbs, in some cities promote leapfrog and planned city infills to connect secondary cities with larger economy.
- Select transport economic nodes and promote densification in those areas.
- Economic policies

different and can be overall defined as regulatory in nature (driven

and densification strategies may use a mix of approaches. UN-Habitat, United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), Andalusia Agency for Development International Cooperation, and Monteria City Council collaborated to organize the Experts Group Meeting (EGM) on "The Role of Intermediate Cities in Strengthening Urban-Rural Linkages towards the New Urban Agenda";

- Densification strategies and interventions are more effective if linked within a city wide (and metropolitan/regional) overall strategy and plan and not undertaken ad-hoc. They should also be part of citywide housing policies that takes into account housing needs, tenure requirements and locations, in order to prevent social segregation, gentrification and exclusion.
- Design, financial and regulatory tools can provide the adequate implementation tools for different types of interventions. The specific tools will be combined depending on the participants and roles and specific outcome desired and strategies should be assessed for impact on social, environmental and economic dimensions, while incorporating mitigating factors where needed.
- Of particular concern is the apparent contradiction between the collective long-term interest and the short term individual aspiration of many. The rise of the middle class is driving to a large extent urban sprawl, with the alliance of the real estate sector preference for greenfield development. Well designed

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