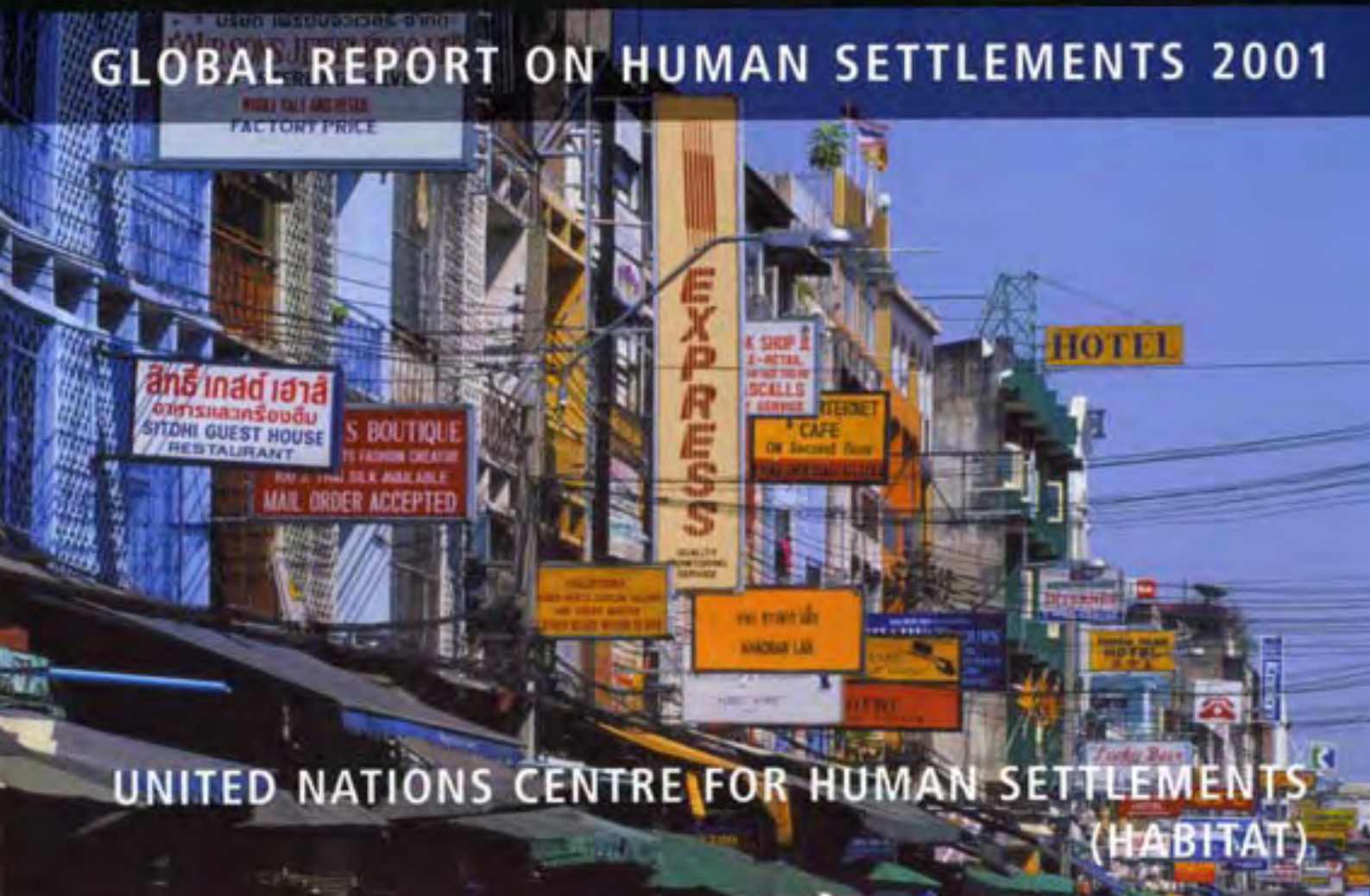




# CITIES IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD

GLOBAL REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS 2001



UNITED NATIONS CENTRE FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
(HABITAT)

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A GLOBALIZING WORLD**  
GLOBAL REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
2001

**United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)**



**EARTHSCAN**

London and Sterling, VA

First published in the UK and USA in 2001 by Earthscan Publications Ltd  
for and on behalf of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)  
Reprinted 2002, 2006

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HS/621/01/E

ISBN 10: 1 85383 806 3  
ISBN 13: 978-1-85383-806-4

Typesetting by MapSet Ltd, Gateshead, UK  
Page design by S&W Design Ltd  
Cover design by Susanne Harris  
Printed and bound in Malta by Gutenberg Press

For a full list of publications please contact:

Earthscan  
8-12 Camden High Street, London, NW1 0JH, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7387 8558  
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<http://www.earthscan.co.uk>

22883 Quicksilver Drive, Sterling, VA 20166-2012, USA

Earthscan is an imprint of James and James (Science Publishers) Ltd and publishes in association with the International Institute for Environment and Development

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cities in a globalizing world : global report on human settlements 2001 / United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-85383-805-5 (hardback) — ISBN 1-85383-806-3 (pbk.)

1. Human settlements. 2. Urbanization. 3. Urban policy. 4. Municipal services. 5. Urban poor. 6. Globalization. I. United Nations Centre for Human Settlements.

[DNLM: 1. Urban Health-trends. 2. Urbanization-trends. 3. Housing economics. 4. Poverty. 5. Public Policy. 6. Sanitation. 7. Socio-economic Factors. WA 380 C5815 2001]

HT65.C57 2001  
307.76—dc21

2001002401

This book is printed on elemental chlorine-free paper



# FOREWORD

The world has entered the urban millennium. Nearly half the world's people are now city dwellers, and the rapid increase in urban population is expected to continue, mainly in developing countries. This historic transition is being further propelled by the powerful forces of globalization. The central challenge for the international community is clear: to make both urbanization and globalization work for all people, instead of leaving billions behind or on the margins.

Although globalization certainly affects rural areas, the impact of global economic change is largely centred on cities. Globalization is changing the structure of employment; it is altering the demographic make-up of cities; and it is introducing a strong international context to local concerns. At the same time, cities and their surrounding regions are themselves shaping and promoting globalization by providing the infrastructure and labour upon which globalization depends, as well as the ideas and innovation that have always emerged from the intensity of urban life.

The benefits of globalization are being spread unevenly. Cities present some of the starkest of these contrasts: homeless people living in cardboard boxes, next to skyscrapers occupied by corporations whose budgets exceed those of many countries; growing gaps between the salaries offered by labour markets and the housing costs determined by urban land markets; enormous levels of consumption alongside great pyramids of waste that threaten the environment and human health; and hitherto unseen patterns of segregation, with pockets of wealth at the centre and vast enclaves of poverty on the periphery.

The combined processes of urbanization and globalization have thrust additional responsibilities on city governments. Public administration and economic development are linked more and more to global markets and investment, but this is also an opportunity: to entrench democracy at the local level and to build new partnerships with the private sector, citizens' groups and other cities confronting similar challenges. National governments, for their part, will continue to play a key role in the governance of cities, not only in terms of finance, but also in overall strategic planning and in crucial matters such as justice, equity and social cohesion.

*Cities in a Globalizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements 2001* is a comprehensive review of conditions in the world's cities and the prospects for making them better, safer places to live in an age of globalization. I hope that it will provide all stakeholders – foremost among them the urban poor themselves – with reliable and timely information with which to set our policies right and get the machinery of urban life moving in a constructive direction. At the United Nations Millennium Summit in September 2000, world leaders pledged to achieve, by the year 2020, significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers. As we strive to meet this target and to implement the Habitat Agenda adopted at the Istanbul conference in 1996, the United Nations system, including the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), will continue to place its unique services at the disposal of all the world's peoples.



**Kofi A Annan**  
Secretary-General  
United Nations

# INTRODUCTION

The *Global Report on Human Settlements 2001* chronicles human settlement conditions and trends since the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) convened in Istanbul in June 1996, emphasizing both progress made in the past five years and the issues that continue to confront a changing world. In addressing these issues, the structure of the report follows the two main strategic themes of the Habitat Agenda adopted by Habitat II: adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world.<sup>1</sup>

The previous edition of the *Global Report on Human Settlements*, written prior to the Habitat II conference, contributed to worldwide understanding of the human settlements issues that became the focus of the Habitat Agenda. The 1996 report, entitled *An Urbanizing World*, characterized cities around the world as places of opportunity and presented a view of cities as engines of growth.

Today, the trend of urbanization continues, although intertwined with globalization. Like urbanization, globalization brings opportunities as well as problems, and its impacts are increasingly being observed worldwide, most clearly in the cities. The challenge is to develop solutions to problems associated with globalization, while at the same time strengthening its positive aspects. Human settlements can play a significant role in this process by fostering good governance and effective partnerships.

*Cities in a Globalizing World* acknowledges the positive consequences of globalization: facilitated diffusion of knowledge; facilitated spread of norms of democratic governance, environmental justice and human rights; increased city-to-city exchanges of knowledge, experiences, best practices and lessons learned; and increased awareness in both citizens and city managers of the potentials of peer-to-peer learning. The report also draws attention to many urgent and unresolved problems.

In Africa, only one-third of all urban households is connected to potable water. In Latin America, urban poverty stands at 30 per cent. In Asia Pacific, a mere 38 per cent of urban households are connected to a sewerage system. In Europe, processes of social exclusion marginalize many low-income and minority households, while urban crime and the decline of peripheral housing estates undermine the social cohesion of many communities. In North America, problems of residential segregation, discrimination in housing markets and affordability persist, particularly in the larger cities, despite recent economic growth. Worldwide, hundreds of millions of people live under conditions of abject poverty or experience highly unequal access to resources.

Studies presented in this report indicate that, while some population groups have improved their housing conditions, a disproportionate share of the world population has seen its situation deteriorate further. In many countries, real incomes have fallen, the costs of living have gone up and the number of poor households has grown, particularly in urban areas. Sixty countries have become steadily poorer since 1980. Many studies portray increasing economic disparities between nations, cities, neighbourhoods and households, revealing strong increases in polarization and growing global inequality.

The growing demand for public services in many countries is increasingly being met by local authorities and, in some cases, by the private sector, as these entities take on responsibility for functions previously ascribed to national governments. Furthermore, as civil society becomes more organized, effective and politically active, municipal institutions are becoming more democratic and adopting more participatory local structures.

Local political coalitions, together with representative groups from civil society, are attempting to shape their cities and towns in ways that help to maximize the opportunities as well as to minimize the social and economic disadvantages associated with globalization. Whether this involves campaigns against crime or plans to improve the local environment in order to attract tourists, or whether it involves strategies to reduce local taxes or develop more comprehensive educational or health systems, municipal officials and their partners are increasingly responsive to the potential benefits of competitive strategies.

As a result, and as pointed out in this report, many cities have experienced a shift in the policies of urban government from managerialism to entrepreneurialism. This entrepreneurial attitude views the city as a product that needs to be marketed. The emphasis on marketing underpins the restructuring of cities so that they appeal to global investors. By the same token, cities that do not always have the resources to attract outside interest and investment may find themselves even more bereft and impoverished. Local capacity building is essential to reducing the risk of global polarization. In this

connection, it is encouraging that international cooperation in the form of city-to-city exchanges is rapidly growing in popularity. Public-private partnerships are also increasingly being broadened to include civil society groups and there is increasing evidence of the potential of community-based networks based on direct people-to-people interactions. The challenge at national and international levels is to create an enabling legal framework in which the various forms of community-to-community cooperation can be intensified and strengthened.

Considering the trends that are reshaping the world's urban structures, the report places emphasis on 'metropolization of the world economy'. It describes the archipelagic spatial structure of emerging global urban networks. Megacities, comprising urban cores and associated hinterlands, are theoretically able to address all kinds of technical problems, including urban service provision and environmental management. However, they are facing difficult governance challenges, owing to obsolete municipal political structures and inhabitants who are more and more concerned with only their immediate individual and local neighbourhood interests than with their common future as citizens of the same city.

Urban planners are inescapably caught up in this dynamic of the new urban political economy. Urban planning today is less codified and technical, and more innovative and entrepreneurial. It is also more participatory and concerned with projects rather than whole urban systems. Planning expertise is increasingly sought not only by states, but also by the corporate sector and civil society which seek to forge agreements through negotiation and mediation among contesting parties. Urban planning is no longer the prerogative of national and local governments, who previously claimed to possess privileged knowledge about the 'public interest'. As pointed out in the report, what is controversial is not urban planning per se, but how to reconcile its multiple goals of efficiency, equity and liveability.

Globalization not only increases competition but also fragmentation, with contradictory effects on cities. To compete effectively, cities must act as a collective unit. However, their growing social, political, economic and physical polarization hampers their capacity to build coalitions, mobilize resources and develop good governance structures. Given that metropolitan areas are the chief arenas for global competition, it is necessary to strengthen them by giving them greater authority and autonomy. However, the enabling and regulatory role of governments must be broader than just facilitating the functioning of markets. It must also include responsibility for social cohesion, equity and conflict resolution.

This report reflects the significance of human settlements for sustainable social and economic development in a globalizing world and focuses on key strategies to promote and facilitate the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the main policy document and plan of action signed by 171 member states at Habitat II.



**Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka**

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