



URBANSOCIETY

SOCIAL CAPITAL
SPATIAL SEGREGATION
EDUCATION
HEALTH
SECURITY
GENDER EQUITY &
EQUALITY



The globalization of trade has led to increased opportunities for employment and knowledge for many, but has thrown others by the wayside - and public policy has done little to prevent this. In many parts of the world, globalization is associated with increased social inequalities and poverty, and in certain regions higher levels of unemployment too - reinforcing criminality, social violence and corruption.

Despite the potential of cities to improve living standards universally, the benefits are not equally shared. All too often cities are still divided into the haves and have-nots; the established and the marginalized; offering different life opportunities for women and men. In developing countries, the statistics are particularly disturbing: over 50 percent of the urban population of Mumbai and New Delhi live in slums, while in Lagos and Nairobi over 60 percent of households remain unconnected to water. In the developed world, however, the problem is not lack of basic services, but unemployment, poor health and social exclusion.

The Urban Excluded

The excluded in cities are all those who are denied the benefits of urban life, often being forced to occupy land illegally and to live in conditions which put their health and safety at risk. They are often denied

basic services, and suffer from crime and over-crowding. The lack of formal education, skills training and information on job opportunities, along with shortages in the provision of health services, further contribute to urban exclusion.

Exclusion, as a result of physical, social or economic barriers, prevents certain groups from participating fully in urban life and services, and the failure of local authorities to integrate such groups in their decision-making is often a function of inertia, along with bureaucratic and unresponsive forms of government. Ethnicity, gender and religion are also factors that contribute towards exclusion, along with 'self-exclusion' resulting from the breakdown of trust in both government and politics.

Exclusion within the city means:

- **Isolation** or exclusion from the social development process
- **Unemployment** or exclusion from the economy
- **Marginalization, discrimination and rootlessness** or exclusion from the mainstream political and cultural processes
- **Vulnerability** or exclusion from security networks

The Inclusive City

The major challenge of the 21st century is to bring the urban excluded back into the mainstream of society, ensuring that all citizens can participate in the social, economic and political life of the city.

Inclusive cities give everybody a say in how the city is run. In an inclusive city, urban planning and management are made much more effective by devolving certain responsibilities and authority to the poor in their own areas. This calls for trust and political courage on the part of governments. It also means recognizing the importance of transferring responsibility and authority to the most effective level of decision-making.

Many countries have gone through radical decentralization programmes, including Uganda, where power has been devolved to the local councils, while India's 74th amendment to the constitution devolves considerable authority from central to local government. The Ghana District Assembly policy goes further, empowering urban Unit Committees to manage local government functions at a lower level than that of traditional metropolitan and municipal councils. Only a few reach neighbourhood level, however, where services can be made more accessible to all sections of the society, particularly the poor.

Although decentralization is a key to development, certain nuances come into play in determining its effectiveness. Among societies with a history of strong centralized political leadership and weak grassroots participation, devolution has not been smooth, as new checks and balances have not accompanied the process. Furthermore, in most developing countries the decentralization of educational and health services has not occurred, as these remain in short supply in both urban and rural areas.

At the local level, people are increasingly coming together to provide basic services and housing for themselves. But they cannot do this alone, and partnerships between the community, the public and the private sector are being encouraged. In Dhaka, Bangladesh, local communities are working closely with the local authority to improve revenue generation. In Porto Alegre, Brazil, groups of citizens scrutinize government spending through a participatory budgeting process. Elsewhere, municipal authorities organize vocational training - particularly for unemployed young women - enabling them to enter the skilled labour market or produce goods at home, while other municipalities provide hospitals and health services locally, reducing gaps in provision and making them more accessible.

Participatory Urban Governance

Since the mid 1990s, following the Habitat II Conference, attention has concentrated on re-building social capital, stimulated by the inclusion of "civic engagement" and "governance" among the principles of the Habitat Agenda. This new approach, referred to as "participatory urban governance", implies collaborative planning and decision-making processes to co-ordinate the efforts of local government, civil society organizations and the private sector in order to secure sustainable urban development and local democracy.

Participatory governance is a prerequisite to social cohesion and inclusion, encouraging municipalities to concentrate on what is called by Richard Stren the "care and feeding of human capital". This involves supporting local populations to engage in, and benefit from, opportunities offered by urban activities, including managing education, primary healthcare and planning, all of which have been devolved to the local level, simultaneously offering opportunities for strengthening civil society.

Inclusion means:

For the Individual:

- Being employed, having access to the labour market
- Social mobility
- Existence of meaningful ties
- Reduced vulnerability
- Fulfilment of human rights, non-discrimination
- Access to services
- Harmony between and within communities
- Enablement and well-being

For the Society:

- Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms
- Respect for cultural, religious diversity
- Social Justice
- Providing for the needs of the vulnerable
- Democratic participation
- Respect for the rule of law

Source: UN Social Summit, 1995

