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URBAN AND REGIONAL RESEARCH
Note prepared by the delegation of the United Kingdom

Introduction

1. At its fifty-ninth session in September 1998, the Committee on Human Settlements agreed that the ECE Conferences on Urban and Regional Research were a unique forum for policy makers and researchers to discuss topical issues (ECE/HBP/110, para. 14 (f) (i)). It welcomed the readiness of the delegation of the United Kingdom to host the ninth Conference on Urban and Regional Research in 2002.

2. This note has been prepared by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions of the United Kingdom in consultation with the Committee's Bureau and the secretariat. It outlines a tentative proposal for topics of the Conference based on the outcome of the Eighth Conference held in Madrid (Spain) in 1998, and the organization of the preparatory work for the Conference.

I. MAIN CONCLUSIONS FROM THE EIGHTH CONFERENCE

3. The Eighth Conference addressed the issues of globalization, conflicts between trends in urban development and requirements of sustainable development, and the role of key actors in setting up and implementing urban development policies. The main message of the Eighth Conference was that, despite differences in administration and governance, the issues and perceptions of sustainable

development are common to all ECE countries and there is a considerable potential for cooperation in research to resolve them. It was noted that work on socio-economic aspects of sustainable development was much less advanced than on environmental aspects. Links between environmental, economic and social sustainability need to be strengthened and research must address all three aspects.

4. There is a common view that compact, socially integrated urban areas with good public transport links constitute sustainable urban development. If urban expansion is unavoidable, planned urban extensions offer the most appropriate solution. The main challenges are social polarization and urban traffic growth. The Conference noted that no cities, even those which have achieved considerable success in other sustainability aspects, have seriously addressed these issues.

5. For regionally sustainable built environment it is essential to make best use of existing settlements and improve the networks between them. Effective regional spatial planning is seen as the best way to counter social polarization resulting from external economic control exerted by multinational companies. By establishing effective urban networks to foster economic cohesion, competition and growth, regions can become internationally competitive while retaining control over their economies. This facilitates cohesive planning to take account of local issues and promote social equity.

6. The key to delivering effective regional planning is a strong cooperation between public and private sectors at all levels and the effective involvement of local communities. This is essential to foster a participatory process in policy formulation and in its local implementation. In addition, there is a need for integration both across policy areas and also vertically from national through regional to local implementation.

7. Research plays a fundamental role in policy development and the participatory process at all levels. There is much to be gained from research cooperation and sharing knowledge. Links, networking and cooperative ventures should be fostered between researchers and practitioners from different disciplines, organizations and countries. The ECE region is an ideal test bed to determine how the goal of environmentally sustainable economic growth and urban development can be realized. The Eighth Conference identified a number of topics for future research, which are presented in the annex.

II. PROPOSALS FOR TOPICS AND THEMES FOR THE NINTH CONFERENCE

8. On the basis of a broader view developed at the Eighth Conference on how to integrate sustainable urban development with a wider sustainable development agenda, the following three topics and nine themes are proposed. It is suggested that the Conference topic be chosen from these three options:

Topic I: Cities and Regions (relationships between urban centres and hinterlands)

Themes: (a) Links: transport, telecommunication, economic links and networks;

(b) Flows: resources (people and materials); energy; wastes; goods and services;

(c) Organization: planning; governance and administration systems.

Topic II: Urban Structure (relationships between physical urban structure and socio-economic issues)

Themes: (a) Urban environment: design; density; mixed use; cultural and recreational facilities; conservation; walking paths; energy efficiency; wastes and pollution; accessibility and transport; parking; and green space;

(b) Urban sustainability: settlements patterns (accommodating development pressures and minimizing sprawl); sustainability of different types and sizes of urban areas;

(c) Urban society: social equity through good urban planning; sustainability of urban areas through lifestyle choices; management of urban space by bringing different bodies and interests together.

Topic III: Delivering Urban Sustainability (integration between spatial planning and urban planning; and interaction between the public and private sectors)

Themes: (a) Partnerships: cooperation between public and private sectors; involvement of communities; creating effective research networks;

(b) Policy: integration of policy, its delivery, as well as strategic (regional) and urban planning between regional and local levels; integration of land use, transport, economic and social issues into spatial plans;

(c) Indicators: measuring baselines, process and outcome; data availability; target-setting.

III. ORGANIZATION AND TIMETABLE

9. The Conference would be held in June 2002 in a city in central England with good transport links, such as Birmingham, Leeds or Nottingham. It would be preceded by technical visits to see practical examples of the city development and surrounding area related to the themes of the Conference.

10. It is suggested that a Task Force of international experts would be established to prepare a basic paper on urban structure, its influences and interrelationships. The paper would be circulated to Conference participants to elicit response papers under the three Conference themes. The Conference would be structured around the presentation of response papers and related discussions, with rapporteurs for each theme. The rapporteurs would also

summarize the proceedings to produce structured conclusions to inform the next Conference and intervening research agenda.

11. The following timetable of the preparatory work is envisaged:

- (a) Establishment of the Task Force: May 2000;
- (b) First meeting of the Task Force (inception): June 2000;
- (c) Second meeting of the Task Force (information review):
November 2000;
- (d) Third meeting of the Task Force (outline of the basic paper):
June 2001;
- (e) Fourth meeting of the Task Force (draft paper and draft
programme): September 2001;
- (f) Sending out the programme, the main paper and invitation for
response papers: January 2002;
- (g) The Conference, preceded by an informal consultation on
organizational matters: June 2002.

Annex

RESEARCH PROPOSALS IDENTIFIED AT THE EIGHTH CONFERENCE ON
URBAN AND REGIONAL RESEARCH

A. Issues of sustainable urban development

1. The meaning of urban public space and green areas.
2. The influence of large projects on urban sustainability.
3. The relationships between physical urban structure, population structure, people's socio-economic resources, their values and lifestyles and their environmentally relevant behaviour.
4. The effects of sustainable urban physical structures on the economy.
5. The role of natural resources in the urban environment.
6. The improvement of housing conditions and consequences for sustainable development.

B. Issues of globalization and international trends

7. The role of supranational organisations in urban development.
8. The role of the private sector in urban development and the role of the public sector in the development of cities.
9. The social polarisation and dualisation of urban regions and new trends in urban labour markets.
10. The role of urban sub-cultures.
11. The changing patterns of urban systems.
12. Networking of cities across the borders.

C. Planning procedures and methodologies

13. Adopt a new approach to planning: integrate urban planning within the frame of strategic planning.
14. Taxation procedures as a policy to redistribute the benefits of urban development, and direct development and actions in a more sustainable way.
15. The role of scientific knowledge in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies.

16. Establish a system of quantitative and qualitative indicators to monitor urban development in a comparative perspective; also using geographical information systems in the development of indicators.

17. Different models of sustainability in different sizes and types of cities.

18. Long-term forecasting to analyse and visualize future problems of urban development.

D. Policy evaluation

19. The effects of policy instruments supporting cities in their efforts to achieve sustainable development and social equity.

20. The consequences of the current growth-oriented urban development on the environment.

21. Evaluation of experiments with the application of sustainable development principles in designing human settlements.

E. Actors and their roles in planning and development

22. The relation between urban expansion and administrative boundaries.

23. Public attitudes to urban settlement forms.

24. The effectiveness of research networks and links in stimulating development of planning policy and its implementation.

25. Methods and practice of participation in urban development.