



Chapter 9: The UN, the Urban Sustainable Development Goal, and the New Urban Agenda

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9.1 Evolving International Conceptions of the Urban

Since its establishment 70 years ago in the ashes of World War II, the international multilateral system's conception of "the urban" has evolved significantly. This reflects both the maturation of the original United Nations (UN) and Bretton Woods institutions and the subsequent establishment of new, more specialized institutions in the 1970s to respond to the rise of environmental and human settlements challenges on international agendas and priorities. Of particular relevance in this context are the UN Environment Programme, or UNEP, and the UN Human Settlements Programme, or UN-Habitat (formerly the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, or UNCHS). Both of these programs are symbolically headquartered in Nairobi as part of an initiative to give the UN a more global physical footprint.

The importance of having a UN agency devoted entirely to human settlements issues, albeit focused on what the UN vocabulary still resolutely refers to as "developing countries," should not be underestimated. UN-Habitat's orientation was expanded to include the transitional economies of Eastern and Central Europe after the end of the Cold War, and though its governing council and reporting cover all five UN regions, its policy advice and capacity development are only now becoming more global. Initially, its effectiveness was hampered by its classification as a "Centre" – without the status of a UN implementing agency, it had to work through UNEP for strategic and budgetary purposes. This constraint was eased when it achieved programme status in 2002 (UN-Habitat 2015). Nevertheless, rather than leading such innovations, the UN's urban conceptions and approaches to tackling the principal problems of fast-growing cities in poor countries have generally lagged behind changes fomented on the ground, in NGO thinking, and in the research literature.

To wit, notwithstanding numerous dramatic demographic shocks with important and often long-term urban consequences, such as the mass displacements of World War II and the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947, as well as accelerating rural-urban migration and growing refugee settlements in decolonizing and newly independent states during the 1950s and 1960s, the dominant conception of urbanization by governments and international agencies was as a temporary, largely negative phenomenon. This perspective was strongly influenced by erstwhile colonial policy in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European settlement colonies, which maintained that indigenous populations had been predominantly rural before the European conquest, and where urban areas were established to serve the settler populations and imperial purposes rather than indigenous needs. The reality of long-standing, large-scale, and sophisticated indigenous urban cultures in many previously conquered indigenous polities from Meso-America through North and West Africa and the Middle East to South and Southeast Asia was somehow erased from such constructs.

The policy response to this perception comprised concerted efforts to keep rural dwellers in rural areas and agriculturally productive, while passively seeking to lessen cities' impact on the environment. This proved ineffective almost everywhere, and rapid net migration continued. The conventional solution of state-funded mass housing in high-density apartment blocks in Latin America and a mixture of single-sex worker "hostels" and small "matchbox" family houses in East and southern Africa became increasingly unaffordable to city authorities and national governments, many of which ceased such practices after independence.¹ Moreover, residents found them alienating (and often alien) social environments, with many sociocultural problems and considerable un- and underemployment where industrialization was not occurring or was expanding only slowly. This resulted in a widespread spatial mismatch between need and availability of housing, services, and employment (Gilbert and Gugler 1992).²

Innovative research, pioneered by Walter Mangin and John Turner in Latin American cities in the 1960s, demonstrated that working with the urban

¹ Later, governments experimented with other urban housing models, including tenant-purchase and site-and-service schemes, often through development cooperation funding. Some of these were strategically located close to business and industry (and have more recently experienced revitalization through public-private partnerships). While some governments were experimenting, however, the private sector took over the lion's share of housing provision without the benefit of much planning guidance from public authorities.

² A signal exception has been the very high-density high-rise apartment blocks in Singapore and Hong Kong, in particular, where such social "pathologies" have not emerged and these urban designs appear to have been quite readily assimilated. This has never been adequately explained but cultural acceptability is likely to be important. Shane (2011) provides fuller coverage.

poor to address their housing and livelihood needs was far more effective in facilitating urban integration than large-scale, top-down public sector housing delivery. Despite opposition from many quarters, especially among governments and national elites, such work spawned a sea change in attitudes, with the first World Bank-funded site-and-service scheme launched in Dakar, Senegal, in 1970, and a veritable flourishing of various self-help and aided self-help experiments and programs through the 1970s and 1980s (see Turner 1980; Moser and Peake 1987; Rodwin 1987; Amis and Lloyd 1990; Gilbert and Gugler 1992; Aldrich and Sandhu 1995). In many cases, these schemes were peripherally located and poorly integrated into the overall urban fabric – though, in retrospect, they were surprisingly resilient to changing urban environments. Despite their varied success, they ultimately did little to address the ongoing urbanization pressures, which became increasingly differentiated in space and time at different scales – both subnational and regional – in accordance with economic cycles and official policies.

Reflecting the changing perceptions, Habitat I, the first global summit on the topic in Vancouver in 1976, was far more positive about urbanization. Its outcome document is often even bullish on the prospects of human settlements. Nevertheless, it states that “[r]ural backwardness ... contribute[s] to uncontrolled urban growth,” leading ultimately to “intolerable psychological tensions due to overcrowding and chaos.” As a consequence, it urges the UN to “give priority to improving the rural habitat.” This was said to “enable the greatest possible number of scattered and dispersed rural settlements to derive the benefit from basic services” which would “help to reduce the migration to urban areas” (United Nations 1976).

In 1996, Habitat II, the second major global housing and shelter convention, held in Istanbul, posed participatory planning and management as a solution to these persistent processes and failed official policies (UN-Habitat 1996). That it took over 25 years from the first World Bank site-and-service scheme to gain prime position in the global agenda demonstrates the duration of policy lag. Nevertheless, this, too, was a limited response that failed to get to grips with rapid urban growth and the turmoil caused by the financial crisis just two years later. This change in the economy saw rising unemployment and government fiscal deficits, which in turn precipitated reduced subsidies for housing and other basic needs and social provisions (see, for example, Satterthwaite 1997).

As evidence of the human cost and development reverses of the economic crisis mounted, world leaders adopted the eight Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs, at a special UN summit in late 2000. Heralded as another landmark by recognizing poverty as the principal impediment to development and committing resources to tackling it via a series of annually reportable targets and indicators, they applied only to poor countries. Although no MDG

addressed urban issues directly, a few targets and indicators on slums and water and sanitation had urban relevance and implications. However, the underlying framing of urbanization amounted to a reversion to mid-twentieth century perspectives, in terms of which it is defined principally as a housing crisis, and the UN's role is thus restricted to treating its primary symptom: the slum.

UN-Habitat (2010a: 16) defines slums as comprising households “lacking one or more of the following: improved water; improved sanitation; sufficient living area; durable housing; and secure tenure.” Hence, the proportion of an urban area's population living in slums constitutes the proportion of such slum households. This definition has been widely criticized as too limiting, pejorative, and prone to statistical misrepresentation. This critique arises because when one or more of the “urban deprivations” is relieved, the house(hold) in question is recorded as having been lifted out of slum conditions – which is often not the case, despite the improvements. Nor does such an improvement address the actual drivers of slum formation. However, the human rights-based definition of “adequate housing” is broader, and adds the key dimension of location (*vis-à-vis* employment, hence mobility) and cultural adequacy.

The recent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development thus represents a decisive shift in approach, from reactive to ambitiously proactive. The New Urban Agenda was adopted by the UN heads of government at Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016, symbolizing the UN's recognition of urbanization as a permanent driver of development with potentially positive impacts on people and the planet. How the 2030 Agenda is ultimately linked to the New Urban Agenda – particularly in terms of monitoring and indicators – during their simultaneous implementation remains to be seen, since the two documents have no appreciable formal connection.

It is worth pointing out that, amid the inevitable focus on evolving institutional perspectives, the examples cited above of Turner and Mangin in relation to low-income housing policy remind us that the roles of key individuals in shaping international institutions and their agendas should not be overlooked (compare with Weiss et al. 2005; Parnell 2016).

In September 2015, after an unprecedented consultative process geared towards designing the successor to the MDGs³, the 193 nations of the UN unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Figure 9.1)⁴. At its core are 17 global Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, and their 169 targets. The SDGs are much more ambitious than the MDGs in that they address the challenges of the entire world, not just low- and middle-income

³ www.un.org/millenniumgoals/

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>



Figure 9.1 UN Summit Adopts Post-2015 Development Agenda. A view of the General Assembly Hall following the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda by the UN summit convened for that purpose. Source: UN Photo/Cia Pak, New York, 2015

countries. The inclusion of SDG 11 represents broad international consensus to legitimize sustainable urban development as a transformational driver for human development.

SDG 11 is no minor victory for urban sustainability stakeholders – including practitioners, local and regional governments, and their networks, as well as national governments, science and academia, philanthropy, and the private sector – that actively engaged in the three-year intergovernmental process that produced the Agenda. Throughout this time, they confronted the possibility that the urban dimension might be merged with other goal areas, such as infrastructure or sustainable consumption and production, or simply become mainstreamed across other SDGs (with the likely diminution or disappearance of its spatial aspect). It is worth highlighting that 2015 saw the adoption not only of the 2030 Agenda, but also of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030,⁵ the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development,⁶

⁵ <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework>

⁶ http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf; <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/publications/aaaa-outcome.html>.

and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change⁷; these three acknowledge the potential, consequences, and responsibilities, respectively, that are inherent in urban development.

With its fate now secure, SDG 11 has renewed the MDG imperative of ensuring basic living conditions for human dignity (Target 11.1) but has also raised a host of new, twenty-first-century issues. Target 11.2 is a call to action on urban transport provision, which has major implications for access to economic opportunities, household expenditures, greenhouse gas emissions, and health. SDG 11 also addresses air pollution and waste as key challenges to be tackled at the urban scale (11.6) and emphasizes the improvement of community resilience to disaster (11.5). Moreover, cities and human settlements are recognized as worthy of cultural and natural heritage safeguarding. Among the targets that address means of implementation for SDG 11, we find a clarion call for the use of integrated policy and planning (11.b), as well as a focus on building sustainable and resilient buildings in least-developed countries (11.c).

Three other targets under SDG 11 merit special attention. The unprecedented focus of SDG 11 on urban planning and land use (Target 11.3), public and green space (Target 11.7), and national and regional development planning (11.a) make SDG 11 uniquely spatial compared to all other SDGs. These three essential enablers of development are largely unaddressed in the other, predominantly space-blind SDGs. By contrast, the focus of SDG 11 on the wider built environment gives long-overdue attention to the preeminently path-determinant role of physical configuration.

Target 11.3 represents broad international consensus that spontaneous, unplanned urban expansion too often yields inefficiency, increased emissions, and segregation. Nevertheless, it is still difficult for governments to fully apprehend the far-reaching impacts of spatial planning and its numerous benefits and co-benefits, including higher-level outcomes such as efficiency, productivity, amenity, and resilience. Favorable settlement patterns enable these; unfavorable ones not only do not enable them, but ultimately lock a city into rigid, inefficient patterns that are often very expensive and difficult to retrofit. Good spatial planning will likely have positive spillover effects outside of SDG 11, including strengthened food systems and expanded access to services and utilities. Target 11.3 also qualifies planning as a discipline that must be participatory. It can help governments and citizens alike understand the far-reaching impacts of urban form, so that they can engage in the planning process more meaningfully (Rudd et al. 2017). In so doing, they can address a number of critical questions: Where should development be located? Which pattern(s) will

⁷ <http://newsroom.unfccc.int/unfccc-newsroom/finale-cop21/>

it embody? How will it balance process and outcome to yield both social and environmental sustainability?

Target 11.7 responds to research that shows public and green space disappearing in unplanned cities. At the same time, existing public space in planned cities is being commercialized, exacerbating socioeconomic fragmentation (UN-Habitat 2013, 2015). Both situations are weakening cities' capacities to provide basic services equitably and efficiently, suggesting the need for both a qualitative and quantitative approach: cities, particularly fast-growing ones, should first secure an adequate proportion of public space; additionally, cities can take measures to improve the amenities, accessibility, greenness, and safety of existing public space. Scholars and practitioners are left with crucial open questions, such as: How can policy-makers optimally use the information provided by geospatial technology? How to best influence the norms that regulate the private ownership of land?

SDG 11 also acknowledges cities as developmental drivers beyond their administrative boundaries. The goal's promotion of urban-rural linkages (Target 11.a) signals a reinvigorated desire from the international community to move from a dichotomous conception of urban and rural development to one of mutually reinforcing, synergistic development across the rural-urban continuum. However, such a concept remains quite difficult to translate into tangible policies at all levels of government. Cities still require concrete legislative, spatial, and financing solutions that extend beyond the provision of agricultural goods to urban centers and the control of urban expansion into rural areas.

The 2030 Agenda pledges that no one should be left behind in any nation. This universality leaves us with the corollary challenge of being sufficiently specific for relevance and impact in diverse local contexts. Significantly different levels of development, governance structures, and capacities among the world's cities mean that some SDG 11 targets appear to be much more applicable to certain urban contexts than others. A "locally relevant" policy-science interface may help translate the universal SDG 11 targets into national and subnational action programs (Simon et al. 2016).

The universality of the 2030 Agenda, achieved through intergovernmental negotiations, has meant a trade-off with ambition as well as some glaring omissions. SDG 11 does not even pay lip service to cities' status as engines of economic development, innovation, and job creation. It also avoids the issue of governance, including decentralization and access to finance at subnational levels. Achieving sustainable cities will surely require strategic frameworks and plans that are integrated into all levels of government and policy-making. UN language speaks of the integrated character of the 2030 Agenda, particularly the way it targets the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of

sustainability on equal footing. If the implementation of SDG 11 succeeds in integrating all three dimensions, it can accelerate the pace of achievement of many other SDGs. Conversely, if SDG 11 implementation is interlinked with other urban-critical SDGs – especially poverty (SDG 1), health (SDG 3), and inequality (SDG 10); water and sanitation (SDG6) and energy (SDG7); employment and economic growth (SDG8) and infrastructure (SDG9); sustainable consumption and production (SDG12) and climate change (SDG13); and accountable and inclusive institutions (SDG16) – their achievement can help overcome some of the omissions within SDG 11 itself.

Maximizing balanced gains across all three dimensions of sustainability will depend on effective interlinkages. This notion is familiar to urbanists and many local and regional governments that are accountable to the public and accustomed to integrated planning and management, but governments have not put it into practice widely, nor have developing institutional frameworks commonly embedded it into their thinking. This is why national urban policies are a twenty-first century “must-have” (UN-Habitat 2014; Parnell and Simon 2014). Such policies can integrate long-term visions with strategic approaches, and, when crafted in collaboration with all levels of government, can reflect the needs and assets of a country, its regions, and its cities. Progress has been slow: only nine countries have implemented national urban policies to date (UN-Habitat 2016). Nevertheless, SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda offer unparalleled opportunities for countries to adopt them.

In multilateralism, technical rigor is not immune to political negotiation, but that should not tarnish the historic milestone that is the adoption of SDG 11. It is a powerful plan of action that will certainly promote and incentivize urban sustainability all over the world. Undoubtedly, the task ahead is complex and the solutions are not always clear. Nonetheless, that which three years ago was little more than the dream of a few fringe urbanists is now an undeniable victory that must be leveraged to create a global implementation plan across stakeholders and disciplines. The SDGs represent a common denominator, but one that is a floor for urban action, not a ceiling.

9.2 Metrics and the Impact of the Urban SDG

Determining the impact of SDG 11 and the urban dimension of other SDGs relies heavily on the choice of metrics to assess their implementation. Experts generally adopt a conceptual framework to guide and anchor the choices underlying a set of performance metrics. Such a framework helps define and refine a common vision, encourages the creation and regular updating of information, underlines and reinforces progress (or demonstrates the weaknesses,

failings, and false assumptions) of a given policy or program, and supports a wider public understanding of the enterprise under consideration (Hak et al. 2007). Although many evaluation techniques exist (such as quasi-randomized studies, case studies, benchmarks, surveys, and questionnaires), the use of indicators has become the commonly accepted approach in assessing sustainable development (Hak et al. 2007; Bell and Morse 2008; Chapter 8, this volume).

To review: An indicator is a simple measure that signals whether a policy or program is on target to reach a predetermined goal. By contrast, benchmarks, while related, are predetermined milestones. Many types of indicators exist. They range from a single figures derived from several inputs (as in the broadly accepted gross national product, or GDP) to systems of multiple indicators (as in the approach employed by the MDGs, which associated 48 indicators with its 8 goals and 18 targets). The monitoring of the SDGs will implicitly use the goals and their targets as a conceptual framework and will take the multiple indicator system approach, such that there are indicators under consideration.

Figure 9.2 illustrates the place of indicators in public policy. Employed correctly, indicators not only serve to gauge progress, but are valuable tools with which to communicate to the public. While indicators have limitations, scholars and practitioners in policy areas continue to advance the work of testing selected indicators against policy goals and actual behavior, consulting users about indicator improvement, and sharpening the data that underlie indicators to achieve uniformity and comparability (Birch et al. 2011).

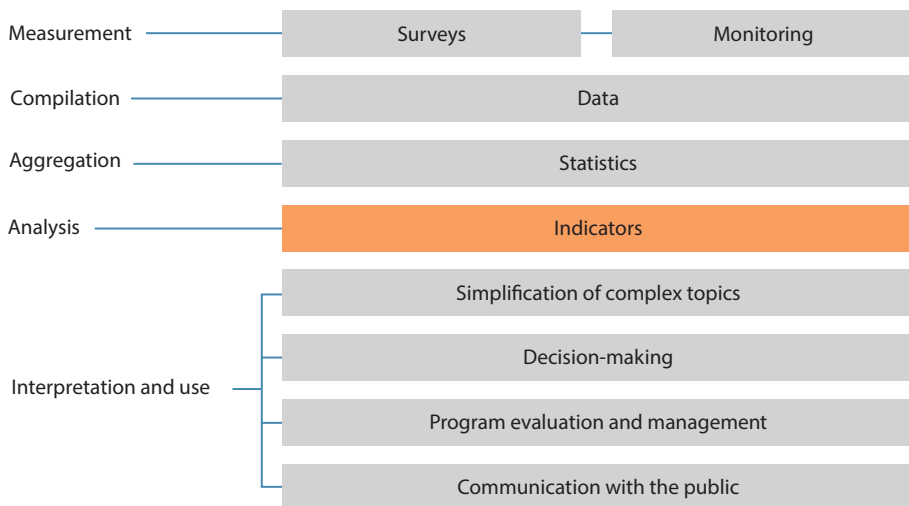


Figure 9.2 The place of indicators in public policy

In the case of SDG 11, the agreed upon conceptual framework holds that cities are systems of systems (for example, housing, transportation, and environment), places of agglomeration (that is, clustering of people and their activities), and nexuses of sustainable development. The underlying assumption is that the transformational potential of cities lies in the equitable and efficient planning and managing of land to foster the provision of urban systems that maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of agglomeration. Current knowledge holds that certain techniques tend to support this approach. They include mixing land uses, adaptively reusing buildings, crafting walkable neighborhoods linked to each other and beyond with public transportation, and reinforcing ecosystem services with green and blue patches and corridors.

According to the conceptual framework of SDG 11, achieving sustainable urban development suggests the use of a series of indicators premised on the advantages of agglomeration (United Nations, Economic and Social Council 2015). Such a series starts with a base figure that measures the alignment of land consumption with population growth to mark necessary and sufficient conditions for equitable and efficient service provision and to support agglomeration. This land efficiency indicator, or LES, is most simply expressed as a ratio: the rate of land consumption to the rate of population growth. While the LES is a new type of indicator that calls for the use of geographic information systems in tandem with traditional demographic data collection methods, the technology is now sufficiently developed to be employed widely.

A land-use efficiency ratio is diagnostic rather than prescriptive; desirable ratios should be determined locally, based on the cost of services, customs, and land availability. However, a baseline of 1:1 would indicate that the growth rates for land use and population are in equilibrium. A baseline of 2:1 would signal that a place is becoming less dense because land consumption would have occurred at twice the rate of population increase. Conversely, a 1:2 ratio would indicate more dense land development with less land being used to accommodate a growing population. Notably, the corrective in places where land is viewed as a seemingly limitless resource would be to address uncontrolled, fragmented, and/or sprawling development patterns; the remedy in places where land supply is constrained would be to release, allocate, and/or prepare sufficient land to accommodate growth (see Atlas of Urban Expansion 2016). Thus, this indicator is a gross measure that “takes the temperature” of a place, showing an overall trend. It warns decision-makers of potential issues – issues that would require more nuanced analysis to inform policy-making. Nevertheless, global trends all point to a general decline in land-use efficiency – that is, a movement towards sprawl – which tends, overall, to correlate with undesirable socioeconomic and environmental effects.

At a minimum, then, the LES alerts decision-makers to the general nature of growth in their communities, which can guide deeper probes to explore the location, direction, and character of land consumption. These issues include ascertaining whether developments are on disaster-prone or vulnerable land; whether they are contiguous or fragmented; whether they are moving towards existing nearby centers; and whether metropolitan mobility is increasing or decreasing. Answers to these and other questions will enable decision-makers to craft policies to affect the place and timing of future development. Such answers might also help urban residents better understand the short- and long-term trade-offs involved in configuration-based planning and contribute to more educated decision-making (Rudd et al. 2017).

The LES also works with other indicators associated with the SDG 11 targets to expose interrelated policy choices, especially those addressing housing (proportion of people living in slums), transportation (proportion of people having access to public transportation), public space (the average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use), and the environment (percentage of urban solid waste regularly collected). Working in tandem with related policy choices is useful because of the thresholds of socioeconomic viability that urban agglomeration can help other sectors meet. If, for example, the LES demonstrates less dense settlement patterns, instituting a citywide, technologically advanced waste management system may be economically unfeasible until the municipality employs land-use policies to promote the required density for such a management system to work. Conversely, if the LES shows excessive density, then looking into instituting corrective policy for public space provisions would likely be in order.

Finally, decision-makers can employ the LES and the other indicators for SDG 11 to assist in the achievement of the total suite of SDGs. For example, with its focus on the provision of public transport infrastructure, the indicator for Target 11.2 will almost certainly result in lower per capita rates of energy use and emissions production, thus accelerating the achievement of SDG 7 and SDG 13 on energy and climate. Likewise, the indicator for Target 11.1, which addresses slums, indirectly calls for dwellings composed of durable materials and with access to water and sanitation, which will contribute to the achievement of SDG 3 on health. Similarly, the land-use efficiency measure adds to an understanding of land-use patterns and thus could serve efforts to protect peri-urban agriculture and habitat, consequently supporting SDGs 2 and 15, which are concerned with food and biodiversity.

While a clear conceptual framework must underlie the metrics of any effective indicator system, such a framework is critical to the measurement of equitable and efficient planning and managing of land. This is particularly the case if cities aim to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of agglomeration.

Urban spatial configuration plays a highly deterministic role and portends many spillover effects in the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of urban sustainability. In connection with this the LES is the fundamental indicator because it gauges the relationships between land consumption and population. The LES and other associated SDG 11 indicators on housing, transportation, resilience, cultural and environmental heritage, environment, and public space form a holistic approach to implementing SDG 11 and are ultimately supportive of other SDGs in important ways.

9.3 Implementation and the Future

Much of the world is currently underprepared to implement SDG 11, be it at the city, provincial, national, or global scale. This is a serious challenge facing the global urban community. Except for a handful of countries and a somewhat larger cohort of cities, the constitutional and legal mandates; institutional capacities; and human and financial resources required to implement these universal goals are at best weak, and – at worst – confused and contradictory. Moreover, such parameters are often missing at the city level. These shortcomings will need to be addressed by the early 2020s if the SDGs are to be delivered by 2030.

Even more challenging for many countries is the prospect of having to implement *all* the SDGs in urban areas, from poverty; health and education; basic services; employment; and prosperity to safety; rule of law and institutional strengthening; and partnerships (Kanuri et al. 2016). The first step in enabling the achievement of the SDGs is the recognition that most countries – and almost all cities, even in high-income countries or countries scoring highly on the Human Development Index – are “developing,” in that they are far from achieving many of the universal economic, social, and environmental targets agreed in the 2030 Agenda (Sachs et al. 2016; Revi 2016). There is much to be done over the next few years to improve the coverage and quality of the SDG goals, targets, and indicators through an iterative process of innovation and testing, capacity building, financing, monitoring, and evaluation. Once this process is undertaken, rapid, flexible, and multi-stakeholder problem solving will ultimately be required to implement them (Kanuri et al. 2016; Simon et al. 2016). In short, this will be an interlinked local, national, and global effort.

However, sectorally organized national governments are generally not only unwilling to share power and resources with cities, but even struggle simply to *imagine* integrated, cross-sectoral planning and delivery (Parnell 2016). In stark contrast, joint planning and delivery are parts of the daily lives of most mayors, as well as local and regional urban leaders, who are naturally able to see the

value of the SDGs clearly (New School 2015). A local-to-national convergence along these lines will require active dialogue between cities, a partnership among various levels of government, and the recognition that citizens lie at the heart of the implementation agenda. The New Urban Agenda outlines the need to address integrated action across all the SDGs, sectors, and levels of governance if we are to ensure that no one and no place is left behind (Revi 2016; UN-Habitat 2016). The reality of the Habitat III process – and that it happens only once every two decades – has provided a fillip to a clear agreement on these foundational questions (United Nations 2016).

Since the answers to these questions have political implications, they require high-level approval by UN member states, similar to that required for the SDGs; this approval occurred in December 2017, when the General Assembly endorsed the New Urban Agenda after its adoption in Quito⁸. Its implementation will proceed in a series of processes that will extend to 2018 and beyond. The New Urban Agenda confirms the linkages between its implementation and that of the SDGs.⁹ On the international stage, important next steps for the SDGs are (1) agreeing on national and subnational monitoring systems that will ultimately move through the High-level Political Forum, thereby providing a formal role for local and regional governments, (2) committing to a reimaged global, regional, and national architecture for financing urban infrastructure, (3) delineating a clear operational division of labor among key UN agencies and stakeholders – including UN-Habitat, other UN and multilateral agencies, development finance institutions, bilateral aid agencies, and new private sector and other nongovernmental players, (4) continuing the mobilization of local and regional governments – in partnership with the enterprise sector; universities and knowledge institutions; movements; and trade unions – towards the implementation of SDG 11, and (5) engaging citizens (especially youth) so that they take charge of key choices and actions (Kanuri et al. 2016).

Effective SDG implementation depends on a set of five minimum enabling conditions (Kanuri et al. 2016). First, a facilitatory constitutional, legal, and regulatory environment must exist to enable local and regional governmental stakeholders to contribute to implementation. Second, a multilevel national urban and settlements policy framework must be in place to permit planning, implementation, and monitoring at multiple levels (see Section 9.1). Third, the institutional capacities of stakeholders – and of agents of change at the

⁸ A/71/L.23, 23 December 2016. <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/New-Urban-Agenda-GA-Adopted-68th-Plenary-N1646655-E.pdf>.

⁹ See New Urban Agenda, paragraph 164. We stress that the follow-up to and review of the New Urban Agenda must have effective linkages with the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to ensure coordination and coherence in their implementation.

appropriate levels of subsidiarity to the country and regional context – must be commensurate to the task. Fourth, appropriate mechanisms of local and domestic financing (linked to regulatory and institutional capacities) must be available to direct financial flows into infrastructure, services, housing, and buildings at both regional and city levels. Fifth, an open and flexible institutional environment must exist to enable key stakeholders from community groups, private enterprises, media, and research organizations to interact, focus on problem solving and implementation, and learn from one another.

These five minimum conditions will require nurturing in a variety of contexts related to history, culture, political economy, and the spatial specificity of urban systems. A clear definition and partitioning across the rural-urban continuum may help provide clarity on roles, institutional jurisdictions, policy frameworks, and financing, so that implementation can take center stage. Subsidiarity may not be possible until city, regional, and national governments and other stakeholders build a culture of trust and partnership. This is a complex and often contentious process of political and economic discovery, as new institutional structures, interest groups, and blocks of winners and losers will emerge. Addressing both horizontal (that is, across sectors) and vertical (that is, across levels) governance could have constitutional, legal, and regulatory implications, depending on the national context.

In many contexts, implementation will also hinge on strengthening and developing urban economic systems. This will likely include reducing the risk of lending to cities, increasing municipal authorities' local revenue generation capacities, and addressing employment, informality, worker skills, and productivity. Preemptively addressing land and labor market concerns and building integrative and participatory planning processes will pay off over the medium- and long run. All the same, the capacity to address emergent shocks – ranging from conflict and economic cycles to disasters and climate change – remains low, and this will require a concerted effort to build resilience. Ultimately, the monitoring and evaluation frameworks for both the SDGs and New Urban Agenda will need to enable the localization of action, the tracking of impact using citizen participation and open big data, and the aggregation of results for reporting at the national level.

In spite of the considerable enthusiasm that the SDG, COP 21, and Habitat III processes have generated, it is important to remember that the global urban community is still in its adolescence in terms of local and collective action (Parnell 2016). It would do well to learn from the experience of more mature global constituencies, such as those of health, education, and agriculture, to avoid disciplinary fragmentation and enable the localization of the entire 2030 Agenda. Indeed, localization concerns more SDGs than SDG 11. But the inverse is also true: urbanization is also about more than localization in two key ways.

First, as the 20 years between Habitat II and Habitat III have taught us, urbanization is more than governance. Space- and place-based strategies must underpin all of our efforts to shape cities and human settlements. Second, urbanization is wider than the local scale. A focus on the subnational and national scales – as units of spatial inquiry and as levels of governmental intervention – are as important as the local in delivering urban outcomes.

That the 2030 Agenda, Sendai Framework, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, Paris Agreement, and now the New Urban Agenda have happened under UN auspices represents a noteworthy breakthrough. These agreements indicate a validation by the UN of a more universal, proactive approach to sustainable development in general, and urban development in particular. While this approach and the various frameworks and agendas supporting it implicate a much wider range of actors than the UN itself, a full discussion of those actors is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that for these agendas' aims to be realized, the UN will increasingly have to embrace this full range of actors. As the UN is inherently constrained by its accountability to national governments – and, thus, by competing national interests – this expanded configuration is particularly important. Promisingly, the unprecedented level of consultation with non-UN entities in the formulation of the 2030 Agenda suggests a major shift in modality.

As the world implements the 2030 Agenda, immediate results may be rare and difficult to sustain. However, there are positive signs from some countries – and a moderate number of cities and towns – that are ready to take the plunge to test and further SDG implementation (GLTF et al. 2016; Simon et al. 2016). Building trust, sharing, resources and experiences sharing, and deepening the sense of solidarity and common purpose of key actors and stakeholders at local, regional, national, and global scales will be essential.

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