January 1994 Occasional Paper No. 33

Urban Research in Developing Countries

Towards an Agenda for the 1990s

香港亞太研究所

Richard Stren
Yue-man Yeung

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, New Territories
Hong Kong

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies

The Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies was established in September 1990 to promote multidisciplinary social science research on social, political and economic development. Research emphasis is placed on the role of Hong Kong in the Asia-Pacific region and the reciprocal effects of the development of Hong Kong and the Asia-Pacific region.

Director : Yeung Yue-man, PhD(*Chic.*), Professor of Geography
Associate Director : Lau Siu-kai, PhD(*Minn.*), Professor of Sociology

HK$30.00
ISBN 962-441-033-X

Urban Research in Developing Countries

Towards an Agenda for the 1990s

Richard Stren
and
Yue-man Yeung

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, New Territories
Hong Kong

About the authors

Prof. Richard Stren is the Director of the Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto, Canada.

Prof. Yue-man Yeung is the Director of the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Authors' Note

This paper was prepared for the Urban Management Programme (UMP)-sponsored workshop on "Urban Research in the Development World" held in The Hague on 2 July 1993 following its Sixth Annual Meeting. We are grateful to the Ford Foundation which supported the research project and to UMP for agreeing to publish this paper in its present form by the Institute. It will also appear as part of a UMP Occasional Paper.

ISBN 962-441-033-X

Urban Research in Developing Countries

Towards an Agenda for the 1990s

Abstract

In view of an increasingly urban world with population ever concentrated in developing countries, a large-scale, global comparative project funded by the Ford Foundation focused on the role of research in urban development in the developing world was undertaken between 1991 and 1993. Researchers from 55 countries were represented in this effort. This paper briefly presents some of the findings, highlights the changing context and support structure of urban research and tentatively suggests a research agenda for the 1990s. The conclusion raises the issue of the link between urban research and development.

1. Introduction

As we approach the year 2000, urbanization has become a powerful force throughout most of the world. This development has taken place very quickly, and by historical standards comparatively recently. Typically, for example, Western European and North American societies passed the rural/urban divide — when their populations became over 50% urban — in the early decades of the 20th century. The proportion living in cities has been steadily increasing since that time. In the developing areas of Latin America, Africa and Asia, trends in urban growth have been more recent, but the same relentless pattern obtains. Thus, beginning in 1950, the total urban population of developing countries began to catch up with the urban population in developed countries. In percentage terms, as Table 1 shows, the developing world still lags behind the developed world as we approach the next century, but the gap is narrowing. In 1990, the developing regions were

Table 1 Urban Population in Developed and Developing Countries, 1950-2025

	Developed Countries		Developing Countries		World Total	
	Urban population (millions)	% of total population	Urban population (millions)	% of total population	Urban population (millions)	% of total
1950	447	53.8	287	17.0	734	29.2
1960	571	60.5	460	22.2	1,032	34.2
1970	698	66.6	673	25.4	1,371	37.1
1980	798	70.2	966	29.2	1,764	39.6
1990 (est)	877 (est)	72.5 (est)	1,357 (est)	33.6	2,234	42.6
2000 (est)	950 (est)	74.4 (est)	1,904 (est)	39.3	2,854	46.6
2010 (est)	1,011 (est)	76.0 (est)	2,612 (est)	46.2	3,623	51.8
2020 (est)	1,063 (est)	77.2 (est)	3,425 (est)	53.1	4,488	57.4
2025 (est)	1,087 (est)	77.8 (est)	3,845 (est)	56.5	4,932	60.1

Source: United Nations, *Urban and Rural Population Projections, 1950-2025: The 1984 Assessment* (New York: United Nations, 1986). Reproduced in UNCHS, *Global Report on Human Settlements 1986* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 23.

39.3% urban, while the developed regions were 74.4% urban. At the same time, of the world's total urban population in that year, the developing world accounted for some 60.7%. While the whole world will become predominantly urban sometime between 2000 and 2010, the developing world will become predominantly urban by about 2015.

The high, sustained urban growth rates in these three regions of the developing world are superimposed on existing urban populations that were until recently relatively modest in size. Absorptive capacity is also related to resources. As Table 1 indicates, the aggregate increase in urban population in developed countries between 1950 and 1990 was approximately 430 million; in developing countries the population increased by 1.07 billion, almost four times in absolute numbers. Because of extreme limitations in real income, the increase in urban population in developing countries has created enormous problems of infrastructure and service provision. These problems have most acutely impacted on the lives of the urban poor, whose numbers have swollen, and whose households — at least in Africa, Latin America, and South Asia — have suffered a deterioration in standard of living during the 1980s. While comparative statistical measures of poverty are subject to some qualification, reliable figures for Buenos Aires show a steady increase in the proportion of poor in the population over the period 1980 through 1989; for Chile, the proportion of urban households that were poor rose from 3% in 1970 to 13% in 1987.[1]

The magnitude of infrastructural and service problems, as well as their impact on the lives of the poor and the marginalized, is especially striking in the large cities, although small towns and intermediate cities also suffer.[2] Yet the importance of very large cities — often called megacities, when their population exceeds 10 million — in the developing world is increasing. In 1960 only one of the world's four cities with a population of 10 million or more was to be found in the developing world. By 1980, four of seven were in developing countries, and by the year 2000, it is estimated that 17 of the 22 megacities will be in the developing world.[3]

This exceptional level of growth in cities of the developing areas has not adequately been recognized in the development programmes of major international agencies. There are at least two reasons for this state of affairs. In the first place, during the 1970s and much of the 1980s (until the advent of structural adjustment lending), leading international development agencies were concerned with the problem of poverty. But in the eyes of most members of the development community, the problem of poverty was overwhelmingly more severe in rural, as opposed to urban, areas. A second reason for the neglect of cities in international assistance was the argument that systematic investment in services and infrastructure of cities in developing countries would simply reinforce an existing "urban bias" which was already depriving the rural areas of needed capital and human resources.

With the beginnings of massive structural adjustment programmes throughout the developing world during the 1980s, it was clear that urban populations were going to be severely impacted by a whole range of measures that were meant to liberalize economic management in many countries. For example, it was common for structural adjustment "packages" to attempt to reduce the size of the public sector, to reduce the level and cost of public services, to expose the currency to market influences (which would have the effect of increasing the cost of imported goods), and to raise producer prices for agricultural products. All of these measures have had a palpable effect on the quality of life of both poor and middle-class urban dwellers. In some countries the political effects have been dramatic — riots and demonstrations, mass resistance to government measures — but in almost all countries there has been an increase in political awareness in urban areas. With the end of the Cold War, these effects of structural adjustment have coincided with an overall rise in open political activity and a strengthening of the texture of civil society. Again, these trends have been most concentrated in urban, rather than rural, areas.

These trends led to a paradox: development thinking and international assistance tended to ignore urban development; but

huge numbers of people were living and working in cities, asserting their interests in an increasingly direct fashion as structural adjustment programmes were applied. To this paradox, the response of the local research community was unqualified in almost all regions of the developing world. Not only was it illuminating and interpreting the "facts" of urban socio-economic development, but it was actively involved in the policy process at the national and local levels in many countries.

The importance of research in urban development has, in general, not been fully appreciated in the international development community. Researchers have been seen as acting in their own (limited) interest; they have been seen as too arcane and "academic" in their approach; or they have been found to be little concerned with subjects and research methods that could be of direct and immediate interest to the so-called "policy-makers" of their own beleaguered cities. But at a time when knowledge is increasingly becoming recognized as "the key factor of production,"[4] and as the economic role of cities becomes central in a competitive, globalizing economy, the function of urban research requires our attention. We would define research as consisting of three necessary elements: systematic investigation of a defined problem, rigorous analysis of the evidence obtained, and publication of results and conclusions. These factors taken together distinguish research from what are more loosely called "consultancy studies" which — although they often depend at least partly on research for their data and analysis — are more rapidly produced than most research studies and are rarely published or widely circulated. In the urban sector, research often involves teams of investigators (of different disciplines) working together, on problems which themselves cut across many professional fields. But urban research may also involve single disciplines, and work by individuals operating on their own. While the balance may be shifting to more team-based and more inter-disciplinary research, the bulk of published work in the urban field is based on single disciplines and carried out by single researchers. Of the disciplines most likely to be concerned with urban research, the most

important are sociology (sometimes overlapping with social anthropology), geography, economics, planning, architecture and political science.

To address the question of the role of research in urban development, a large-scale comparative project began to take shape in early 1991. The first phase of an agreement between the Ford Foundation in New York and the Centre for Urban and Community Studies in Toronto to carry out a consultative project on urban research in the developing world was signed in June 1991. The major objectives of this first and limited phase of the project were to organize a meeting in Toronto to discuss both the organization and objectives of the project; and to prepare an overview document explaining the importance of the consultative process and the significance of urban research. The meeting in question was held in Toronto during a five-day period in July 1991, and attended by some 20 researchers, policy-makers and others. A detailed summary of the discussions of the meeting was produced by the Centre, along with an overview paper on urban research written by Richard Stren and Patricia McCarney. Entitled "Urban Research in the Developing World: Towards an Agenda for the 1990s," it has been issued by the Centre for Urban and Community Studies as Major Report No. 26, October 1992.

A second phase of the agreement was begun in February 1992. The major objectives of this more complex, extended phase were (1) to support and help organize twelve sub-regional meetings on urban research in Asia, Africa and Latin America; (2) to supervise the production and writing of overview papers on urban research for each of these sub-regions; and (3) to organize a final meeting of the project for Cairo in February 1993. The main countries involved in this project were, in most cases, contiguous with the Ford Foundation overseas offices. Each sub-regional team was led by a coordinator, who was responsible for an overview of the urban research in his or her country, supplemented by a consideration of the work being done in several neighbouring countries. Including these neighbouring countries, which have also participated in the sub-regional workshops, 55 countries were represented in this project. The project coordinators were ably assisted by an advisory panel of six leading researchers, representing both a range of important disciplinary perspectives as well as extensive experience and knowledge of the three major developing regions. The advisory panel (made up of Jorge Enrique Hardoy, Akin Mabogunje, Rakesh Mohan, Caroline Moser, Lisa Peattie and Yue-man Yeung) was also very active in the sub-regional workshops and in the production of overview papers for the final volumes of the project.

In the event, the sub-regional work has now taken place, culminating in a five-day meeting in Cairo at which some 50 researchers and donor agency representatives were present. The project coordinator is currently editing the output of the Cairo meeting. The published results will consist of three volumes of regional papers (one each for Asia, Africa and Latin America), in addition to a more general volume containing overview and theme papers on general aspects of urban development and urban research. These volumes are expected to be available for circulation through the Centre by late Autumn 1993.

2. Some Major Findings

In this paper we can discuss some of the main findings of the project in terms of the structure and dynamics of urban research. Discussion of the substantive areas of research is an integral part of the overview paper already published, and of the papers by the participants in the project which are about to be published. As evidence for the arguments and points we are about to make, we may note the lengthy and often passionate discussions which took place at the twelve sub-regional meetings; the numerous papers presented both at the sub-regional meetings and at the final meeting in Cairo; and a continuing dialogue with our colleagues. All told, more than four hundred social scientists (with the addition of more than a few architects, some engineers and some medical doctors) have played an active role in these meetings — as paper

writers, as discussants, as moderators of panels, or just as participants.

(1) Level of Scientific Production

Before this project was undertaken, it was commonly felt in the international research and donor communities that urban research had been in serious decline both in quantity and quality during the 1980s. The project has made it possible to test this assumption, since most of the teams involved have produced elaborate bibliographies of both internationally and locally available studies written during the last 30 years. Eastern Africa is one sub-region for which this assumption may very well be valid. For example, while the number of accessible urban research documents rose appreciably in Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia from the 1960s to the 1970s, there was a drastic decline in the 1980s. Tanzania showed a decline of about 50%, Kenya a decline of about 47% and Zambia a precipitous fall of 77% over the decade. The decline in this sub-region can be attributed both to the economic crisis and the undermining of institutional support for all aspects of scientific research. But according to the researchers involved, it may also be attributed to a shift to development strategies which have de-emphasized the spatial dynamics of development. In other sub-regions, however, either the economic crisis did not operate with the same penetrating force, or there were other factors at play. For Indonesia, for example, of a total of 1,082 post-1923 urban references identified, 680 or 63% were dated during the 1980s. Of this 680, 165 (or 25%) were published internationally in European languages, and 515 (or 75%) were published locally in Bahasa Indonesia. For Brazil, the pattern is similar: out of 5,598 citations to 21 research themes over the period from "before the 1950s" through the 1980s, our researchers found 31% of the citations during the 1970s, and 61% of the citations during the 1980s. As the quantity of circulated research studies rose, a larger proportion was in Portuguese rather than in other European languages.

These examples demonstrate that interest in urban research has been growing in absolute terms, although access to this work on the part of the international community has been falling as a result of the greater local content. We have also been told on numerous occasions that local researchers have experienced greater difficulty in recent years in getting access to research materials, even when they are produced locally. Results of the workshops provide many examples of these contradictory findings, with respect both to production and dissemination of research.

The increase in research output in many countries reflects a very high level of individual and institutional activity in the urban field. The most dramatic example of this trend is China. "Urban science" research in that country had been virtually non-existent from the early 1950s to the late 1970s, in the context of a highly-centralized management system which had allocated land and human resources in urban areas essentially for the purpose of industrial production. With the opening to a more market-driven system in the late 1970s, urban development research began, gathering momentum during the 1980s. By 1986, admittedly incomplete statistics indicate that there were 213 government research institutions devoted to urban science studies in the country. By the early 1990s, it was estimated that this figure had risen to 500 or higher. Parallel to this development has been a mushrooming of non-governmental research organizations dealing both with different sub-disciplines (such as the Urban Economics Society, the Urban Housing Research Society, the Urban Sociology Research Society) and with specialized sub-topics (as, for example, the Housing Law Society and the Urban Housing Social Science Society). There are nearly 300 of these groups in each of the areas of urban land and housing alone. Funding comes from various sources, including membership fees, consultancy fees and overseas contributions.

Along with increased production of articles, books and reports, and the growth — at least in some countries — of a flourishing urban research organizational structure, we were also concerned with the state of health of scholarly journals. In Mexico,

for example, where a National Network for Urban Research has at present 377 members in 24 states and in Mexico City, there are at least 12 specialized journals currently being published, in which urban research is either central or a regular feature. In Bangladesh, where a specialized urban journal is only now being launched, there are nevertheless at least a half-dozen regular journals publishing in English which regularly carry articles on urban questions. The importance of local journals in any field in supporting and maintaining interest in research is, surprisingly, only recognized by the few scholarly devotees of these publications. Until now, no major international donor agency has considered that the regular publication of scientific journals has developmental implications. But in Eastern Africa, where research in the urban field fell precipitously during the 1980s (as illustrated above), it is also the case that almost all local social science journals ceased publishing during the same period. The only alternative to local journals for regular scholarly publishing is publication in overseas journals. But for poor countries, and countries that do not have access to hard currency to obtain overseas publications, the "export" of articles and ideas to the editorial boards of European and North American journals means that what is published is not available locally. Even within the developing world, this suggests that some countries have been able to use their own resources to establish a strong base for the intellectual discussion of urban questions; while other countries — in most cases the poorest — have not only suffered a drop in research on important local problems, but what is published is not even disseminated locally in an effective fashion.

(2) Disciplinary Clusters in Urban Research

Another general finding has to do with the disciplinary focus of research. While the project administrators have tried to vary the disciplinary mix among the sub-regional teams, clusters of disciplines constitute a historically established pattern in different major regions. In Asia, for example, economists, urban geographers and urban/regional planners make up the majority of active researchers. In Africa, urban geographers are the most prominent; while in Latin America the key disciplines are sociology and architecture/urban planning. (In most Latin American countries, training in architecture is a prerequisite to post-graduate training in urban planning.) In the complex process of selecting team leaders for this project, disciplinary training was normally not an explicit criterion considered by either the Toronto team or the Ford Foundation. The main concern was to select experienced and respected researchers who would be in a position to bring their colleagues together to consider the needs of the urban research community. In the event, however, disciplinary clusters among the research teams did emerge across the major regions. These patterns also reflected the gendered nature of urban research. For example, in Latin America, where two of the three research team leaders were women, sociology — a discipline with a high proportion of women professionals — is the dominant approach. The literature on gender and urbanization, as Caroline Moser demonstrates in her analysis, is most advanced for this region.[5] Outside Latin America, the only other woman research team leader of the twelve was in Indonesia, where the key focus of research was gender and public health. While the question of gender was raised in both Asia and Africa, it has tended to be a significant research focus in countries where sociology and social anthropology are important disciplines.

The disciplines of the twelve team leaders (from Chile, Brazil, Mexico, Egypt, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and China) tended to reflect the important urban discipline clusters in the different regions. Thus, of the four Asian team leaders, two had training in economics, one in public health, and one in geography. Of the five African team leaders, two were trained in geography and planning, two in political science, and one in sociology. In Latin America, all three of the team leaders had post-graduate degrees in sociology (two were also architects).

These disciplinary clusters represent different visions of the ways by which urbanization has been understood in much of the developing world, since formal disciplinary influences over research methodology and content are still very powerful — both in the Third World and in the West. Given the fact that a high proportion of active researchers hold doctorates, their training and professional activity in the urban field reflect the lines of traditional disciplines. Research methodologies, career orientations and patterns, and professional social networks largely follow the "fault lines" of sociology, geography, economics, political science and urban planning. These "fault lines" are reinforced by strong personal relationships which southern researchers have with their former supervisors (usually in the north). These networks often have a national character, particularly when language of instruction is an important issue. For example, the French approach to overseas scientific research is to station full-time French researchers in overseas postings, attempting to associate these researchers with local scholars wherever possible. In regions where this policy has been in effect for some time (such as West and North Africa), a great deal of important urban work has been carried out; but it is only now that African researchers are becoming closely associated with these structures.

An important element in this complex pattern is the relatively minor role in urban research so far played by economists. Why economists have not been more actively involved in this field is a subject of some interest both among researchers and donor agencies in Africa and Latin America. Their greater involvement in Asia seems to be related both to the greater importance given to economic variables in development planning in that region, as well as to a greater recognition that urban development itself is of positive economic value. But in general, to the extent that economic research has not been comfortable with the categories and approaches of other urban-oriented disciplines in Africa and Latin America, there is a gap between the research community and the perspectives of national and international agencies dealing with

urban development. Many in positions of influence in these agencies, or their reference groups, have training in economics.

(3) A Dispersion of Research Activity

A third tendency which has been evident in many of the countries participating in this project is what one Brazilian researcher has aptly called the "pulverization" of research during the 1980s. At least two elements come together in this concept. In the first place, at a conceptual level, many of the more abstract and transcendent ideas that were popular among researchers during the 1970s (such as "dependency," "underdevelopment," "hegemonic control" and even "the state") have been replaced by more mundane, lower-level concerns which focus on local and even micro-level case studies. "Local government" has replaced "the local state," and "urban management" with its undeniably technocratic overtones is beginning to replace "urban planning" (and its romantic vision) as a focus for research. As some researchers have argued, these trends may be a reflection of "post-modern" directions in all areas of intellectual life. A second and related element derives from the much greater individualism in research direction that is visible during the 1980s. Researchers have moved into a wide variety of subjects, increasingly undertake interdisciplinary projects, and are less associated in terms of what could have been called "schools of thought" during an earlier period. If all this activity looks like "pulverization" at one level, at another, more general level, it is very difficult to characterize in a coherent fashion. Some researchers have ventured the explanation that the new, more differentiated character of economic life (both nationally and internationally) explains this new pattern of research.

(4) New Research Modalities

The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and non-traditional forms of research in the urban field is the fourth variable element in our survey of urban work throughout the developing

areas. During the so-called "statist" period of the 1960s and 1970s, almost all support for research came from governments, and almost all research took place from within universities and government-supported research institutes. Overseas agencies were more concerned with training than with the support of research projects as such, and the physical and intellectual prerequisites for local research were more or less in place. With the advent of military governments in Latin America that were inimical to university-based research, and the increasing restrictions on both universities as such and free intellectual enquiry in general in many other parts of the developing world, a number of diverse patterns began to emerge. In some countries, for example, formal, orthodox research gave way to more "action research" and to the increasingly common organizational form of the "research NGO." In other countries — such as Mexico and Indonesia — government support for university-based institutions has remained strong.

Unfortunately, continued support for university-based institutions has not been the case in most of our sub-regions during the 1980s. National granting agencies have reduced their role in research funding, and many universities which in the past granted research funding to their staff on a regular basis have reduced this funding to a trickle or eliminated it entirely. In place of these national agencies, international donor agencies have begun to play a more active role, particularly in the poorer countries. These international agencies — such as the Ford Foundation, Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC), International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the various German political foundations — have been operating more and more through the intermediary of NGOs rather than university-based, or government-sponsored institutions. One of the most interesting new forms of "research NGO" is the so-called "service organization" in South Africa. These organizations, which were established in the mid-1980s to give support to the struggling grassroots civic groups in the South African urban townships, now number 15 with an overall level of professional support of about 160 staff members. To further their work — much of which is financed on a non-profit basis by outside agencies and foundations — they have funded a popular development magazine and formed an "urban service network."

Other forms of NGO activity in the field of research can be found in almost all the areas covered in our research network. Generally, the lowest level of NGO activity (at least in the urban field) is found in Africa — outside South Africa — while the highest level is found in the countries of South America. The low level of urban NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa may be explained by two main factors: the relative neglect until recently by donor agencies and by researchers themselves of urban areas as a focus for development activity;[6] the general difficulty of carrying out good work in urban areas. The second factor may be related to the resistance (often implicit) of national government agencies to a range of topics and ideas that are seen to be linked to political opposition, or to overly "sensitive" questions. As the recent experience of Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Kenya and Tanzania has shown, the drive for multiparty elections, and the success of opposition parties at the current time, is much more an urban than a rural phenomenon. Whatever the reasons for the low level of growth of urban research NGOs in Africa — and we can only count three of these groups[7] today — they will probably be increasingly important in the future.

By contrast with sub-Saharan Africa, research NGOs have had an important role in Latin America for some time. Thus, during the 1970s and early 1980s, when most countries experienced military government and when support for universities (which were commonly perceived as subversive or at least involved in oppositional movements) was waning, official sources of financial support for urban research diminished. At the same time, NGOs, which had been permitted to occupy the narrow political niche between universities and formal institutions in the domain of social services and the promotion of local development, became active. Many did not carry out research, but managed the development programmes of overseas charitable institutions. In some countries, these organizations helped to maintain political

pluralism; in other countries, they kept authoritarianism at bay. In the urban field in Latin America, research-oriented NGOs (some of which have also been involved in the direct administration of local development projects) proliferated. Notable examples (though there are many others) are the International Institute for Environment and Development (America Latina) (IIED-AL) in Buenos Aires, the Centre for Urban Investigation (CIUDAD) in Quito, the Centre for Studies and Promotion of Development (DESCO) in Lima, the Centre for Social Studies and Education (SUR) and the Latin American Social Science Faculties (FLACSO) in Santiago. In Chile during the military period (1973-1989), research on urban problems took place in private research centres and was supported almost entirely by international donor agencies. To the extent that NGOs are a valuable institutional form for both research and action-oriented urban programmes, we need to develop a better understanding of the conditions that support their growth and successful development, as well as the characteristics of successful and unsuccessful organizations.

While NGOs are flexible instruments for outside funding, the link between research and training (or reproduction of researchers) needs to be more sharply drawn. The same observation can be made for the increasingly widespread phenomenon of "research consultancy." Since both local but particularly external agencies need research-based information on a regular basis for project purposes and for more general orientation, they are increasingly drawn to academics to carry out specific, time-bound investigations. These investigations are generally constrained by very limited terms of reference, require a report within a short period of time and normally preclude publication. External agencies can profit from these studies in view of the fact that, in many of the poorer countries, little published research or general information on urban patterns exists. For their part, researchers benefit by the fees (often paid in "hard" currency), particularly in light of their very low salaries as lecturers or administrators. Some NGOs charge a fee for such studies which supports their institution, thus in effect operating in a consultancy mode.

The widespread practice of research consultancies during the 1980s and early 1990s has tended to have three unfortunate effects. First, it has contributed to the "pulverization" of both research ideas (because of the highly focused nature of the work) and the research community (because of competition among researchers for research contracts). Secondly, the practice tends to transfer the process of selection of research topics from the researchers themselves to the agencies that are financing the work. Since many of these agencies are driven by national and international agendas that may not necessarily be consistent with the full range of needs as expressed by local researchers and policy coalitions, the research focus is diverted from alternative activities. Finally, since consultancy-based research is rarely published, and only in the most indirect fashion supports training, long-term capacity-building needs are overlooked. While there is room both for consultancies and for more traditional research in the urban field, because of the harsh economic climate researchers in many countries are emphasizing the former rather than the latter.

3. The Changing Context of Urban Research

With the advent of the 1990s, the context of undertaking and supporting urban research in developing countries had become significantly different from previous decades. This changing context has stemmed from factors at many levels ranging from the international to national and local levels. They have resulted in urban research being placed higher on the political and development agenda than ever before. The more supportive environment for urban research and development in these countries may be ascribed to at least eight factors, as briefly summarized below.

First, as we have seen above, all statistical forecasts point to an increasingly urbanizing world, with the developing world figuring more prominently in the years ahead. Even more conspicuous is the pronounced concentration of very large cities in developing countries. In 1990, of the 28 largest urban agglomerations in the

world, 22 were located in developing countries. The prominence of urban population and very large cities in these countries will persist in the rest of the 1990s and beyond to the next century. The sheer size and growing trend of urban populations in the developing world simply mean that they cannot be ignored.

Secondly, the end of the Cold War signified by the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe that culminated in the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 further advanced the process of globalization. This process began to gain momentum in the 1970s as a result of the oil crises and was accelerated throughout the 1980s with the conjunction of several important factors. These included the steep fall in the prices of oil and other primary commodities and the concomitant rise of capital as an engine of economic growth; the enhanced importance of comparative advantage in the location of industrial production; and the breathtaking technological change spearheaded by microelectronics, telecommunications and biotechnology. The links between globalization and urbanization are increasingly recognized. In particular, the pivotal roles played by a special class of cities — often called world cities — have come to the fore in the global economy, although globalization influences permeate far and wide in almost every country in the world.

Thirdly, in part the result of the pervasive reach of globalization processes, the world community as an entity has never been more closely knit together. In an increasingly interdependent world, the shared experience in economic and cultural life has become more vivid and real. The Olympics, the Wimbledon tennis tournament, various civil and even international conflicts (such as the Gulf War), and other major events are beamed via CNN and other means instantaneously around the world. The stock market crash of 1987 is an example of how quickly the world could react to any adverse economic signal of import. When translated to the cities, there is much greater interest than before in learning more about the successes and failures of urban polices and strategies in other countries, especially where there is a commonality of cultural and economic backgrounds. Comparative urban studies thrive, particularly in the sharing of south-south experiences.

Fourthly, although still beyond absolute scientific proof, there is growing evidence to suggest that the global environment — and its commons (air, water and land) — is seriously at risk, a result, paradoxically, of advanced technology and the narrow pursuit of economic growth. Global warming, depletion of the ozone layer and reduced biodiversity are some of the concerns requiring urgent attention. It has been shown that the heavy concentration of population in cities and the policies they adopt can have a vast effect on the immediate urban environment and beyond. Energy policies detrimental to the environment, pollution and chlorofluorocarbons (CFC) emissions know of no boundaries, political or urban. The concern for the urban environment has never been more acute, and "sustainable development" has become a new catchword in policy fora.

Fifthly, given the global nature of many of the concerns outlined above and the inevitability of the urban transition in developing countries, a new climate of international development and assistance that has taken a far more realistic view of urban problems in these countries has emerged. It has dawned on many that, left to their own, many cities in the developing world would be unable to overcome their difficulties and dilemmas because of a lack of resources and of necessary expertise. After decades of attention and assistance primarily to the rural sector, international assistance agencies and bilateral donors have recently become more ready to channel resources and manpower to the needs of the urban sector in developing countries. Many innovative programmes are already in progress that promote capacity building and sharing of experience among cities in these countries.

Sixthly, at a more local level of the nation or the city, a new political and social environment appears to be emerging in many countries in the developing world. Evidently encouraged by the more relaxed international political situation, people in these countries or cities clamour for greater democratization, more grassroots representation, a bottom-up approach, and a decentral-

ized decision-making process. Globalization influences have made people more socially aware and have encouraged them to seek their human rights. Gender studies, particularly in the ways how women can contribute to the evolving socioeconomic environments, are being given the due recognition they fully deserve. In view of this strengthening groundswell of social awakening, a tendency of enlarging the policy community has appeared. This tendency is particularly marked in cities. In this process, the roles of NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) are increasingly recognized as vital links between the government and the people.

Seventhly, while economic growth has been uneven across countries in the developing world, it is equally uneven within their cities. Sharpened disparities between the haves and have-nots, the rich and the poor have persisted and, often, deteriorated. Urban poverty is an intractable problem in many cities, despite a tendency to be more region- and country-specific. This societal problem has been given due attention by governments and international assistance agencies. Moreover, as a variant of the general problem, certain groups have been identified to be especially in need of assistance and attention, including the aged, the street children, the single mothers, the homeless, and so on. Special policies and resources appear to be necessary to target these "at risk" groups.

Finally, only a few years remain of the 20th century and it is opportune for many cities and countries to envision what their cities should be, functionally, economically and culturally in the years ahead leading to the 21st century. It has therefore become a vogue for many cities to engage themselves in the forecasting of their roles and aspirations. Urban futures in the remaining years of this decade will become a popular and, in some cases, a useful exercise for many city governments to think ahead and be prepared to marshall the needed resources to realize their development goals.

4. Toward an Urban Research Agenda for the 1990s

It is perhaps overly ambitious even to attempt to spell out the urban research agenda for the developing world in the 1990s, considering the diversity and heterogeneity of this vast area. However, building on the regional agendas that have been constructed and given the changing context in which urban development and research have already been identified, a global agenda emphasizing the commonalities of urban problems in developing regions might consist — at least at a minimum — of seven major elements.

(1) Globalization

This appears to be one of the most important dimensions affecting urban life in cities in developing countries in the 1990s as an extension of previous trends. In certain countries, globalization has been impacting in positive ways, resulting in rapid growth and widened opportunities. New urban forms and reconstituted urban agglomerations are important from both the policy and management viewpoints, as are world cities which have emerged as a new class of cities in their own right. In other countries, structural adjustment programmes have been having their impacts on cities and these have to be investigated. For example, how have the urban poor fared in the face of these programmes?

(2) Governance

This idea — which involves the relationship between civil society and formal government institutions — is not new, dating back to medieval Europe. However, an orientation towards growing democratic representation; greater accountability and transparency; new partnerships of shared decision-making along with new responsibilities in urban management between government and informal groups; and different modes of metropolitan gov-

ernment in cities in the developing world *are* new. Notions such as constituency and legitimacy are of relatively recent vintage in these cities, yet they are increasingly being raised, depending on their cultural and historical traditions, size of cities and their degree of openness to globalization processes.

(3) Urban Environment and Sustainability

There are several dimensions to this increasingly important theme for research: resources, policy-making, the legal framework, education and the role of informal groups. It is useful to distinguish environmental degradation at two levels. At the global level are concerns of climate change, "greenhouse" effects, ozone depletion, and biodiversity, otherwise known as the so-called "green agenda." At the more micro level are immediate problems of the urban environment, such as infrastructure provision, garbage collection, water pollution — all of which are part of a "brown agenda." The relationship between economic growth and the environment, with sustainable development as a desirable goal, should be carefully explored. Greater commitments from all actors concerned are required if any real improvement in present policies and environmental conditions is to come about.

(4) Urban Poverty

Despite material progress having been made by developing countries in recent years, the problems surrounding urban poverty have deepened in some regions and countries. The issue is complex, linked to societal and historical trends in wealth distribution and opportunities for accumulating wealth. The problem will become exacerbated as societies are tending towards greater democratization and more social equity. Poverty alleviation is the avowed policy target of both national and city governments as well as of international assistance agencies. The greatest opportunity awaits them to work with informal groups to attack the

problem in multifaceted ways to bring any real change. Many of the "at risk" groups are in need of special attention and assistance.

(5) Urban Economy

In order to create a greater economic pie with which all population groups within cities in developing countries could share, it is important that their economy be better understood and strengthened. Conventional economic theories may not adequately explain these urban economies and in view of this, it is best to work with existing institutions and mechanisms that seemingly have been effective and enduring. Important among these are small-scale enterprises, segmented labour markets, and the informal, or "real" economy — all of which are vibrant and dynamic mechanisms that keep cities in developing countries at a high level of activity and provide economic opportunities for millions of their inhabitants, particularly the poorest. Rural-urban dynamics, including in-migration and remittance of funds to host villages, are reflected in the urban economy in the context of the developing world.

(6) Urban Social Structure

As cities in developing countries evolve and respond to changing economic and political fortunes, their social structure is being transformed in tandem. New social groups, informal groups, ecological movements, ethnic minority, political pressure groups, and so on come into existence all the time. Some of these new groups reflect the inevitable social change of society in healthy ways, but others are symptomatic of urban pathologies of diverse descriptions. For new social movements indicating the negative aspects of urbanization, one might cite nefarious gangs or triads who deal in narcotics, prostitution, gambling, indulge in violence and other social ills. As a result of more pervasive global influences, cities in developing countries are subject to the pernicious effects of international travel, bringing with it AIDS, smuggled

goods and illegal immigrants. Illegal immigration has now become a widespread problem in cities in developed as well as developing countries.

(7) Urban Finance

Financing urbanization is one of the most common problems facing cities in developing countries. The problem is related not only to the sluggish economy in some cases but also to the distribution of resources between different levels of government. Who has the power to tax and over what domains? How much should a city government aim at self-financing and with respect to which powers and responsibilities? The current thinking appears to be inclined towards greater financial decentralization from the central or provincial government to the city government. This is a fascinating subject for research as the variation between cities and countries is so large. The degree of financial autonomy of a city will then determine what kind of urban finance would be most effective. What is, for example, the trade-off between government subsidies and user charges? And to what extent can urban economies be considered a source of future revenues for national governments whose financial resources are becoming increasingly strained during the current restructuring phase of the world economy?

5. Conclusions: Does Urban Research Benefit Development?

To draw a convincing connection between development and any important process or institution is not an easy task. But if we conceive of development as a process of improving control over the social, economic and natural environment so as to improve the quality of life for all people in a given country or region, then it is clear that scientific research plays an important part. Scientific research (whatever the field of endeavour) collates and analyses

information on defined problems or questions, so that an informed collective discussion can take place about how best to proceed. It is our belief that this collective discussion — part of the decision-making process — will arrive at more useful conclusions about any issue or problem the greater is the range of locally-obtained information available. But for this discussion (or discourse) to take place, there are at least two implicit requirements (even if we assume that research has been completed). The first is that the products of the research (whether this involves formal published papers, or even articles in newspapers by knowledgeable people) are easily available and in circulation. The second is that those who carry out the research have a stake in the outcome of the questions they are studying — that is, they should be local scholars to the extent that this is possible. That both conditions have been under siege in some countries and over a considerable period of time is clear both from the evidence we have cited in this paper and the observations made in the three regional papers in the UMP Occasional Paper. It is more than a coincidence that the countries being least able to develop in the last decade or two are also the ones which show the lowest proclivity to support research.

Given the importance of locally-based research as such, a second aspect has to do with the role that researchers can play, and are indeed playing, in the decision-making process. Here, we must point out that the decision-making process is itself changing. For several decades after World War II, the metaphor of the policy-making process that best fitted the available evidence could be effectively described by a linear "input-output" model in which problems were generated in the "environment" or "society," transmitted to the "policy-makers" (consisting of the political system and its adjunct, the public bureaucracy), with the result that policies were the "outputs." The role of research in this model was to elucidate and explain the problems as defined by the "policy-makers" or to explain the effects of policies on the social and economic fabric. Since the 1980s, with the emergence of the environmental movement, the weakening or blurring of national and

ideological boundaries, and the increasing span of global economic forces, it is clear that this model pays too little attention to the innumerable new actors involved in the policy-making process and is too narrow in its conception of the nature of policy itself. As to the former, the development of social movements in Southern Africa and in Latin America, the growth of the informal sector (in terms of settlement patterns and new economic forms) throughout the developing world, and the explosion in community and associational groups in civil society everywhere — all these constitute new stakeholders in an expanded policy-making process, a process that is no longer confined to formal bureaucratic and political structures based in national state systems. As to the latter, not only has the category of "policy" been severely compromised in a world of structural adjustment when the local response to external imperatives leaves little room for real choice; but to the extent there is real policy change, it is often a reflection of underlying changes taking place spontaneously in the social and economic structure, rather than a result of state action. In this new process, researchers are discovering a more active role in both making and elucidating policy choice. From this perspective, researchers have become part of an expanded "policy community" — incorporating senior public servants, politicians, private sector entrepreneurs, and important voluntary association activists — who together search for viable solutions to increasingly visible urban problems. In the next phase of the Ford project, we hope systematically to associate this policy community with the research enterprise at both the national and the sub-regional levels. International donor agencies, who are emerging as important members of this policy community through their agenda-setting activities and support for both research and substantive projects in this field, need to be integrated more effectively into this process.

At the end of this process of discovery, we would suggest that research and development are much more closely related than has previously been understood. In the new information-based economy, research is related to knowledge, a major prerequisite for

development. And researchers both influence an expanded decision-making process and as local actors (operating through NGOs, universities and government agencies) are ***themselves*** part of this process. But a third reason why research in the urban field is integral to development is that researchers — as representatives of internationally established disciplines — stand at the intersection of advanced technology and unique local circumstance. In their production of knowledge and their participation in an expanded decision-making format, local researchers are uniquely able both to apply the newest and most powerful ideas and concepts, and to protect what is of value locally. Support by international agencies of networks of local researchers can therefore serve a dual function of bringing new ideas to a local audience, and of supporting a unique and, therefore, institutionally more valid construction of these ideas. In the end, the institutional legacy of international support is more important than the immediate objectives of the research — which in any case vary over time and among sponsoring agencies. Support for local networks of researchers is central to development because it maintains a body of highly trained and committed activists and scholars in place — where their ideas are the most likely to find a response from the urban community at large.

Notes

1. Eliana Cardoso, *Seminar on Income and Poverty Measures in Latin America* (New York: Ford Foundation, 1992).
2. Yue-man Yeung, *The Urban Poor and Urban Basic Infrastructure Services in Asia: Past Approaches and Emerging Challenges* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Occasional Paper No. 7, 1991).
3. UNCHS, *Global Report on Human Settlements 1986* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) p. 28.
4. World Bank, *World Bank Policy Research Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (March-April), p. 1.

5. Caroline Moser, "Women, Gender and Urban Development: Challenges for the 1990s." Paper prepared at the Workshop of the International Urban Research Project sponsored by the Ford Foundation, 12-18 February 1993, Cairo.
6. There is, for example, no shortage of rural-oriented NGOs dealing with development in sub-Saharan Africa.
7. Environment et Developpement du Tiers-Monde (ENDA) (Dakar), Centre for African Settlement Studies and Development (CASSAD) (Ibadan) and Mazingira Institute (Nairobi).

發展中國家的城市研究：邁向九十年代的議程

Richard Stren 楊汝萬

（中文摘要）

鑑於全球急遽的城市化及世界人口增長愈趨集中於發展中國家，福特基金會於一九九一至九三年間資助了一項大型的全球性比較研究，邀請五十五個國家的研究員共同探討城市研究在發展中國家所扮演的角色。本文概述該研究的結果、勾劃城市研究的支援結構及其變化，並嘗試提議九十年代的研究議程。最後，本文亦論及城市研究與城市發展之相互關係。