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ESD Studies and Monographs Series no. 5 (Forthcoming)

Enabling Sustainable Community Development

Ismail Serageldin, Michael A. Cohen, and Josef Leitmann, Editors

Bonnie Bradford, Editorial Consultant

An Associated Event
of the Second Annual Conference
on Environmentally Sustainable Development
held at The World Bank
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Cover photograph by Ronilo Villanueva. At the launching of the Paco Environmental Enhancement Project, a fish vendor who is a member of a community-based organization helps a citizen place his waste in the proper color-coded container. Paco public market, District V, City of Manila, June 1994.

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Preface

Urgent environmental problems are faced by millions of people, including the half of the world's population that is projected to live in cities by 2005. To focus global and national attention on this problem, the World Bank convened its Second Annual Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development, The Human Face of the Urban Environment, in Washington, D C., in September 1994. This was the first global conference to bring together leaders representing four perspectives—international institutions, national and local governments, the private sector, and community groups—to examine the challenges posed by urban environmental problems; identify models of good practice in environmental management; and mobilize global, national, and local energies and resources to address these problems.

While cities may be the loci of a range of environmental problems, their communities, which face the challenges of degradation on a daily basis, are also the sources of many of the most successful solutions. “Enabling Sustainable Community Development,” an Associated Event of the Second ESD Conference, was designed to explore this phenomenon through dialogue with community innovators, students of neighborhood dynamics, and external supporters of local initiatives. Community leaders focused on relations with the private sector, negotiating change and building political coalitions, gender, and the interface between community initiatives and local government. Recent global and regional studies on how communities have contributed to the development of environmentally friendly cities were presented. Finally, lessons were shared from nongovernmental and official aid programs that support environmental management at the community level.

More than 200 community, environment, and development specialists participated in the forum on Enabling Sustainable Community Development. This publication documents the wisdom of the participants, often in their own words. Key themes that emerged from their dialogues include differing world views of community development and environmental sustainability, local effects of globalization and free trade, the importance of a range of urban indicators, community empowerment as part of good governance, and the varied roles of donors. Among the lessons learned were, first, that despite the importance of community organizations, municipal governments are the key partners for community action. Second, external support will require more trust and consultation. Finally, more attention needs to be paid to gender issues. The World Bank fully embraces these important messages as it expands its financing of urban development programs, which already reach nearly 12,000 cities and towns of the developing world.

Ismail Serageldin
Michael A. Cohen
Josef Leitmann

Special Address

Ismail Serageldin, World Bank

..there is
no record
of modernization
without urbanization
— Ismail Serageldin

American writer Henry David Thoreau once wrote that cities are places in which many people can be alone together. This is an important insight into the nature of the urban phenomenon, where diversity can flourish, networks can and do transcend neighborhoods, and the scale of space and time can be expanded and collapsed at will. Cities are the unique invention of people to cater to that strange duality in human nature that Jacob Bronowski so cleverly identified: human beings want to think alone; on the other hand they must act and create in relation to others. They need the space to be themselves, but they cannot be themselves in the sense of acting in accordance with that defining self, except in the presence of others.

It is this unique characteristic that finds its expression in the city. Urban neighborhoods are not small villages. They have a different social texture than the rural communities whose arcadian names developers sometimes try to appropriate. Urban links among neighbors are often frail, despite proximity. These links are even now being assaulted by what Charles Correa rightly called a brutalizing and dehumanizing environment.⁵ People not only do not know their neighbors as well as they once did; they also are increasingly afraid to go out in the streets and worried about crime and vandalism. The civility inherent in the original urban phenomenon has ceded to the anonymity of form and the fear of strangers.

But what brought people together into the cities in the first place and why do they stay there? Surely it is not the brutalizing and dehumanizing environment.

It is not the alienation and anomie. It is not only the promise of better livelihoods, although that certainly plays a role. It is the space of freedom that allows people to be themselves and to interact with a much larger humanity. Even as we deal with the ills, these are the essential goods of cities that we must capture and maintain and promote—the freedoms that cities provide, their ability to tolerate the unconventional, to promote change, and to bring about modernization. And there is no record of modernization without urbanization.

If we want to protect and promote the precious feeling of links to others in cities, we come back to the question of the community in an urban setting. The essence of the question is how to reinforce the sense of community within cities. This is what this forum is all about. Of all the losses that a rampant and dehumanizing urbanization has cost us, the most important is the loss of a sense of community—whether it is the old neighborhood, the extended family, or the guild quarters of the old traditional cities. All are being replaced by the anonymity of the large metropolis, with numbered streets and the scale of the motorized expressway. This is where the alienation, the angst of the contemporary urban condition, originate.

What is this word “community” to which we keep returning? To commune is “to be one with,” “to act with others.” Using today’s dictionary definition, a community can be either an interacting population of various kinds of individuals within a common location (and here we are back to neighborhoods and the geographic definition of space) or a group of

people with common characteristics or interests. The latter is also a network.

I was fascinated by the cases being discussed during the forum. We here are referring to both kinds of community: communities as networks of people and communities as people in contiguous space. Networks are, of course, essential. Within cities, multiple overlays of networks create exciting possibilities of accumulating knowledge, strengthening alliances, and building all those different things that enrich our lives. The networks make urban life exciting and so different from the stultifying reality of village life despite the latter's frequent romanticization. A vibrant urban environment that addresses the needs of people must be rich in these network communities. We must encourage and nurture them. They are the essence of the urban condition.

However, at the same time, we also need the geographic variety of community, which promotes feelings of kinship among neighbors, enables action to take place on the ground, and allows communities to reclaim their geographic space. The result is to maintain and humanize cities rather than dehumanize them.

During the opening plenary of the second ESD conference, U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros spoke about the pervasive sense of dislocation and disjointedness and the need for social justice to be the cornerstone of a sense of community.⁶ It is this sense of loss of community that has become a metaphor for a lost quality of life.

We decry the lack of interaction with other people, whether because of being caught in the "rat-race," not having enough freedom to have quality time with cherished ones, or losing common purpose. The metaphor for the lost quality of life is precisely that lost sense of commu-

nity, since we can argue that on the level of material well-being there have been improvements. Undoubtedly, in the period between the 19th and 20th centuries, there have been massive improvements in the physical conditions of countless neighborhoods, but many decry the loss of that strong sense of kinship and belonging that characterized the past.

We need to go beyond the physical manifestation of lifestyle toward the importance of reinforcing these links that make us whole. To me perhaps the most important distinction is between what the speakers mean when they talked about a community and what developers mean when they talk about planned communities. Developers are thinking in terms of a nicely organized physical space to which other people are going to come from somewhere and be deposited into.

In my day as a practicing urban planner about twenty-five years ago, this was called planned urban development. It was not really urban, but it was development, and it certainly was planned. It was not, however, "community" in the sense that we use the word today. Now I see "planned communities" of the developer variety everywhere. Community in the sense of linked people is not common enough.

When we go back to this importance of community in the city, we need to reverse the process that developers use. Rather than start with the physical space and then bring in the people, we must start with the people, nurture the invisible links among them, and encourage them to take charge of their physical environment, reclaim it, and humanize it.

The last series of case studies that Mona Serageldin showed us were compelling examples of how situations of challenge can be mutually reinforcing in both senses of "community." The ability

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— Ismail Serageldin

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community members
to reclaim the space
in which they live.
This is not just
desirable;
it is necessary
— Ismail Serageldin

to reclaim the space between those ugly slab blocks of the public housing environment that she illustrated can unite people, regenerate that sense of community, and transform the neighborhood. These situations became entry points that jump-started a process of innovation and renewal in the city to which support could then be provided from the outside.

By reasserting the importance of community, in the sense that we are talking about it right now, we assert the key solutions to many problems. One additional example recently in the press was a midwestern U.S. city that adopted the designs of a distinguished American architect. Simply redesigning the street alignments and putting in a few fences, lights, and cul-de-sacs lowered the crime rate by over 70 percent. What the architect did, in fact, was to stop the fragmentation of the thoroughway—the grid of streets that enabled the cars to cut through the physical fabric of the neighborhoods, thereby encouraging strangers and criminals to enter and drive-by shootings to take place—and to reclaim the space for people. The realigned clusters grouped a relatively small number of households, enabling the people to get to know one another and to establish common ground.

The article commented on the fact that the plan was initially considered a joke: “You mean you are going to actually lower the crime rate by painting some fences, putting up some lights, and creating a few pedestrian areas?” The answer is yes. Why? Because doing these seemingly mundane things can help to create real communities.

We want to see thousands of such efforts to reclaim the neighborhood, to reclaim the city; efforts arising from the grassroots, building from the bottom up, not from the top down. What do we need

to bring them about? Articulation of a community is best done not through some ethnic, religious, cultural, or other manifestation, but through joint action.

Bringing people together for a common purpose through joint action creates the kinds of bonds that enable community members to reclaim the space in which they live. This is not just desirable; it is necessary. It is a necessity because governments cannot meet all the needs of the people; therefore, whether nongovernmental entities or multilateral international agencies, we need to create partnerships with local people to solve problems. It is necessary because governments have become too small and too big. They are too small to deal with the global problems of trade, and they are too big to deal with the problems of their people as individuals and as members of households.

We need to assert the role of citizenship and joint action with and within communities because they empower individuals. They also strengthen civil society, and we have ample evidence that the strengthening of civil society is itself the best guarantor of a responsive government. A strong civil society is also the best guarantor of a long-term and sustainable form of socioeconomic development, not just for the local community but for a society as well. The quality of civil society lays the foundation for real civic action and a sense of civic awareness. Civil society is not only about rights but also about public responsibility.

The evidence for the benefits of a healthy civil society is overwhelming. Robert Putnam's book, *Making Democracy Work*, is an empirical study of twenty years of variations in regional government in relation to civil society in Italy.⁷ This fascinating study makes clear that if a sense of community has developed

through horizontally based, voluntary associations of people, such as choral groups or soccer clubs, these bonds create a framework that not only keeps governments accountable but also generates an enabling environment for people, local groups, and businesses to flourish.

Let me discuss the role of the World Bank in this process. Statutorily, the Bank is an intergovernmental organization whose mandate is to lend to the governments of its member states—not to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) but to the national governments of its members. When the Bank wanted to deal with the private sector, it had to create a wholly separate institution called the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which was statutorily mandated to lend or provide equity to the private sector without government guarantees.

Nor will the Bank ever become a large-scale NGO. That is not its function nor its comparative advantage. Nevertheless, the Bank as an institution has a major role to play in the context of what we are discussing here. It can help to create an enabling environment on an international scale for the poor and the weak among nations. Through its dialogue with the governments of each of its member states, it can also help to create an enabling environment within which a partnership can take place between the public and private sectors, between the national and the local levels, and between the government and nongovernmental organizations.

The World Bank as an institution is fully committed to the fact that an economy cannot be effectively managed centrally. We also believe that the ruthless efficiency of the market as an allocative mechanism has to be tempered by a nurturing and caring state. We want the state to create an enabling environment to

allow local communities to flourish, to allow the private sector to work, and at the same time to protect the weak and the vulnerable in that society.

The Bank has a role in this, but, ultimately, what is the limit of our intervention? In 1989 the World Bank introduced the idea of good governance, about which there was a major debate at the time.⁸ Good governance was seen as a bit of a departure from our mandate, which states that we have no right to interfere in the domestic political affairs of member states.

However, we did not define good governance in the specific terms of whether a member state has a single chamber or bicameral chambers, a presidential system or parliamentary system, or a number of political parties. We defined governance in terms such as transparency, accountability, rule of law, institutional pluralism, and participation. For each of these we could make an unassailable case that, if our mandate is to promote economic development in the narrow sense of the term, then economic development is best served by a government that has these attributes.

The creation of an enabling environment is another area in which we can intervene with our member governments. If you believe in sustainable development, the last thing you want people to do when they think about development in a country is to look to an outside agency, the Bank or otherwise, because whatever is going to happen has to happen locally at the grassroots. Sustainable action, we know, has to be “owned” by the people, and by the people at the local level.

Only in this way will there be real development that is sustainable. Outsiders can come in and can support and help, but only support and help. I have

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... your experience—
we want to learn
from it.
Your dedication—
we want to emulate it.
And your example—
we are inspired by it
— Ismail Serageldin

frequently used the metaphor that development is like a tree. It can be nurtured in its growth only by feeding its roots, not by pulling on its branches. We can all help to create that enabling environment to feed the roots, but, ultimately, the tree has to be homegrown. It is not one that can be imported. It is not a plastic tree; it has to grow in the real soil of that society.

The World Bank believes in participation. We can make a strong case to governments that, if they promote participation, if they involve people in the design as well as the implementation of projects, then the chances of a project's being successful are greatly increased. It is not a political matter. It is purely a matter of observation and empirical evidence—it works better this way.

In her review of 121 water projects, Deepa Narayan found that projects that involved participation performed better, and the projects that performed best of all were the ones that involved and empowered women.⁹ The least effective projects were those done in a technocratic way. Her findings underline the importance of participation and provide further ammunition for the argument that we need to talk to our governments not just about why they should tolerate participation—but why they should, in fact, support and nurture participation at the grassroots.

What are we doing beyond that? During this forum Deepa Narayan reported on the Participatory Development Learning Group, which has been an ongoing activity in the Bank. I am happy to say that over 30 percent of all the projects that were approved by the World Bank last year involve NGOs in their design or implementation.

We have also put in place some efforts to explore alternative ways of doing business including the use of pilot phases in to the project cycle as alternatives to the conventional sequence of identification, preparation, appraisal, implementation, and evaluation.

The issue of scaling-up into public policy—a point that Janice Perlman raised—is something else that the World Bank can do and can do extremely well, perhaps better than anyone else. This is the point at which the partnership between the Bank and community-based organizations is very important. The Bank has a constant, ongoing dialogue on public policy, macroeconomic policy, trade regimes, and fiscal deficits with member governments. We have the ability to feed the lessons that you learn—the experiences and observations of community-based organizations—into the policy dialogue with governments to strengthen the enabling environment that will make the nurturing of your activities not only more possible, but more accepted.

In conclusion, your deliberations here are extremely important, and my colleagues and I are listening with great interest. Exchanging the lessons of your experiences not only enriches each of you and strengthens your collective consciousness, but also educates us. I hope this also will lay the foundations of our future actions by creating the bonds of new networks—new communities in the broad sense of communities as networks—among community activists like yourselves. On behalf of the World Bank I want to say: your experience—we want to learn from it. Your dedication—we want to emulate it. And your example—we are inspired by it.

Notes

1. For additional information on this ICLEI project see Jeb Brugmann's presentation in Session 3-

2. For more information see Janice Perlman and others, *Environmental Justice: Promising Solutions at the Intersection of Environment and Poverty* (New York: United Nations Development Programme, 1995).

3. For more information on these transfers see Akhtar Badshah's presentation in Session 3-

4. For more information see Mona Serageldin, *Community-Based Development Experiences across Cities*. Prepared by the Unit for Housing and Urbanization, Harvard University, Graduate School of Design. USAID Office of Environment and Urban Programs, Publication no. PN-ABU-443 (Washington, D.C.: USAID, 1994).

5. Charles Correa, "Great City, Terrible Place," *The Human Face of the Urban Environment: Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development*. ESD Proceedings Series no. 6 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, forthcoming 1995).

6. Henry Cisneros, "Urban Poverty and Urban Environment in the North," *The Human Face of the Urban Environment: Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development*.

7. Robert D. Putnam with Robert Leonardi and Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy*

Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1993).

8. See *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth; A Long-Term Perspective Study* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1989).

9. Deepa Narayan, *The Contribution of People's Participation: Evidence from 121 Rural Water Supply Projects*. ESD Occasional Paper no. 1 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1995).

10. For additional information on this ICLEI project see the Opening Address.

11. For more information on The Mega-Cities Project see Janice Perlman's presentation in Session 2.

12. The data in Ximena de la Barra's presentation were drawn from UNICEF, *The Progress of Nations* (New York: UNICEF, 1993); UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); UNDP, *Human Development Report 1993* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and UNDP *Human Development Report 1994* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

13. Mahbub ul-Haq, Introduction to session on "Are Cities Sustainable?" *The Human Face of the Urban Environment: Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development*.

Appendix A

Program: Enabling Sustainable Community Development

An Associated Event

office Second Annual Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development

held at The World Bank

Washington, D.C.

September 22-23, 1994

Welcome

Louis Pouliquen, Director, Transportation, Water
and Urban Development Department, World Bank

Opening Address

Jeb Brugmann, Executive Secretary, International Council for Local
Environmental Initiatives, Toronto, Canada

Session 1 Communities Speak

Chair: Alicia Bárcena, Executive Director, The Earth Council,
San Jose, Costa Rica

Presentations

Partnerships for Waste Minimization in Metro Manila

Elisea Gozun, National Program Coordinator, Metropolitan
Environmental Improvement Programme, Quezon City, Philippines

Negotiating Change: The Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi

Arif Hasan, Architect and Urban Planning Consultant, Karachi, Pakistan

Gender and Community Change: Bombay and Kanpur, Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres

Sheela Patel, Director, Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres,
Bombay, India

Building Political Coalitions: Nos Quedamos (We Stay)

Yolanda Garcia, Coordinator, Nos Quedamos (We Stay) Committee,
Bronx New York, U.S.A.

Discussant: Deepa Narayan, Social Scientist, Environment Department, World Bank

Floor Discussion

Panel Discussion: Interface between Municipal Government
and Community Initiatives with Northern and Southern NGO Representatives

Chair: Nafsiah Mboi, Member of Parliament, Jakarta, Indonesia

Community Empowerment Panel joined by:

Nancy Skinner, Director, Local Solutions to Global Pollution,
Berkeley, California, U.S.A.

Eric Duell, Associate Director, International Programs/
Washington, D.C. Office, Habitat for Humanity International, U.S.A.

Session 2 Cross-Cutting Lessons

Chair: Caroline Moser, Senior Urban Social Policy Specialist, Transportation,
Water and Urban Development Department, World Bank

Introduction

Josef Konvitz, Coordinator, Organisation for Economic Co-operation
and Development, Ecological City Network, Paris, France

Presentations

Promising Solutions at the Intersection of Poverty and the Environment

Janice Perlman, Executive Director, The Mega-Cities Project, Inc.
New York, New York, U.S.A.

Community-Based Environmental Management in Asian Cities

Mike Douglass, Professor, Department of Urban and Regional
Planning, University of Hawaii, Honolulu, Hawaii, U.S.A.

Community-Based Development Experiences across Cities

Mona Serageldin, Professor and Associate Director,
Unit for Housing and Urbanization, Graduate School of Design,
Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Discussant: David Barkin, Professor of Economics, Universidad Autónoma
Metropolitana, Xochimilco Campus, Mexico City, Mexico,
and Senior Fellow, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy,
Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Special Address

Ismail Serageldin, Vice President, Environmentally Sustainable
Development, World Bank

Session 3 Learning from International Support

Chair: K. C. Sivaramakrishnan, Senior Advisor, Urban Management,
Transportation, Water and Urban Development Department, World Bank

Introduction

Josef Leitmann, Senior Urban Planner, Transportation,
Water and Urban Development Department, World Bank

Presentations

Strengthening Community and Municipal Alliances

Jeb Brugmann, Executive Secretary, International Council
for Local Environmental Initiatives, Toronto, Canada

Lessons Learned in the Environmental Health Project

May Yacoob, Associate Director, Environmental Health Project,
Arlington, Virginia, U.S.A.

The Mega-Cities Project: Transferring Workable Approaches

Akhtar Badshah, Director of Programs, The Mega-Cities Project, Inc.,
New York, New York, U.S.A.

Discussants: Ximena de la Barra, Senior Urban Adviser, Urban Section,

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Kamla Chowdhry, Chair, Centre for Science and the Environment,
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Reflections on the Forum

Michael A. Cohen, Senior Advisor, Environmentally Sustainable
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Appendix B

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Appendix C

Classification of Registered Participants

Category	Number	Percent
Private consultants and firms	50	19
Aid organizations (public and private)	45	17
Academics (U.S. and European)	41	16
NGOs and CBOs (North American) ³	26	10
World Bank staff	22	8
U.S. government officials (non-aid)	17	7
NGOs and CBOs (developing country)	15	6
Developing country government officials	14	5
Other (embassy officials, municipal officials, developing country academics, business)	31	12
Total	261	99 ^b

a. "NGO" means "nongovernmental organization"; "CBO" means "community-based organization"

b. Percent column does not total 100 due to rounding.



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