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Promoting Sustainable Human Development in Cities of the South: A Southeast Asian Perspective

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Acronyms

	General
DPU	Development Planning Unit
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	gross domestic product
GNP	gross national product
GTZ	(German Agency for Technical Co-operation)
ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources —now known as the World Conservation Union
IULA	International Union of Local Authorities
LA21	Local Agenda 21
NGO	non-governmental organization
ONG	organisation non gouvernementale / organización no gubernamental
PO	people's organization
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCHS	United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
	The Philippines
BDC	Barangay Development Council
DENR	Department of Environment and Natural Resources
LDC	Local Development Council
LGC	Local Government Code
LGU	Local Government Unit
NEDA	National Economic Development Authority
PCSD	Philippine Council for Sustainable Development
	Thailand
AFP	Area Functioning Participatory Approach
BMR	Bangkok metropolitan region
MoI	Ministry of Interior
NESDP	National Economic and Social Development Plan
OEPP	Office of Environmental Policy and Planning
UCDO	Urban Community Development Office
	Indonesia
BAPPENAS	(National Development Planning Board)
DPRD	(Legislative Council)
FKLH	(Environmental Communication Forum)
FKPB	(Sustainable Development Forum)
FKS	(Surabaya Urban Forum)
ITS	(Surabaya Institute of Technology)
KIP	Kampung Improvement Programme
KKN	(corruption, collusion and nepotism)
SUDP	Surabaya Urban Development Project
URDI	Urban Research and Development Institute

(Titles in brackets are English translations of original names)

Summary/Résumé/Resumen

Summary

This paper considers the frequent discrepancies between theory and practice in Third World urban development programmes. Drawing upon three Southeast Asian case studies (the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia), it highlights the importance of understanding the challenges posed for sustainable urban development by current processes of urbanization, democratization, decentralization and economic liberalization.

Urbanization in Southeast Asian countries is extremely complex and fluid, raising difficult social, as well infrastructural and financial, questions. Very different groups of people must be drawn into a common planning process. Furthermore, complex relations between cities and their hinterlands must be taken into account. Decentralization and democratization serve to complicate the picture. In most cases, local and regional institutions are ill-prepared to meet the new responsibilities implicit in decentralization, and central governments are reluctant to give up their power over lower level authorities. Effective democratization of decision making is also hampered by local political structures hostile to participation. In some cases, however, democracy is growing, and potentially serves as a focus for sustainable development planning and management.

The paper questions the poverty alleviation powers of economic liberalization. It points out that neo-liberal policies undermine development efforts by weakening government responsibility in key areas of public concern. In addition, free-market reforms lack environmental sensitivity and encourage deep splits within communities, as income gaps grow larger.

The experience of the Philippines provides insight into these issues. Rapid urbanization and a high incidence of poverty, combined with sub-optimal urban management, have lead to problems with water provision and pollution. For the poor, deeply embedded legal problems of land tenure constitute a key concern. The administrative structure of the Philippines, where legislation has encouraged decentralization of powers and resources to the municipal and community levels, has the potential to facilitate the implementation of sustainable development initiatives. However, the continuing strength of powerful local bosses blocks many efforts to address the needs of the poor and to consider paths to sustainable urban development. The development of physical infrastructure tends to be granted priority over smaller participatory community projects.

Thailand is the least urbanized of the three case countries, and urban poverty is less prominent than in the Philippines or Indonesia. Urban water supply is generally good, but industrial waste, pollution, land tenure and access to services are serious problems. Although the aim of sustainable development features in Thai economic and social policies, and some headway has been made in the environmental sector, there is virtually no progress towards this goal at the local level. The new Thai constitution provides for strengthening of

local government; but, with the exception of strong private sector involvement, participatory forms of local planning required by the constitution are slow in materializing. In part, this is because of the overarching powers of the Ministry of Interior, which is determined to maintain its control over local affairs. It is also because structures of political patronage slow the devolution of power from central to lower levels. NGO and community representation in local development processes is relatively weak and a long-term vision for local level development is absent.

Although some highly structured urban development programmes have been implemented over the past few years in Indonesia, urbanization is still uncontrolled, predominantly informal and characterized by high poverty incidence—especially following the collapse of the economy after July 1997. As in the Philippines, environmental pollution and land tenure problems are serious. But continued economic crisis dominates the policy agenda, and sustainable development planning remains weak at the local level. Post-Suharto-era legislation could allow Indonesia to do better than Thailand in terms of decentralization, but the current fluidity of the legal situation can work against, as well as for, sustainable development initiatives. Immediately following the collapse of authoritarian government, the co-operation of local level groups in consultative processes was limited by their fear of government co-optation. More recently, however, there are some signs that NGOs and community groups are engaging more effectively with recently elected councils and the municipal machinery.

The concluding section of the paper draws attention to the role that may be played in sustainable development initiatives by the new urban middle class of Southeast Asia. The collapse of authoritarianism has brought to the fore aspirations for a greater say in political processes. However, the dominant economic model is also breeding more divided societies.

Two distinct kinds of local development initiatives are emerging. On one hand, poor communities are being assisted by international development agencies, local governments and NGOs to improve their quality of life. On the other, middle class groups are organizing to improve the way that local governments are run. Yet these initiatives are not enough in themselves to overcome the deep divisions in these societies and to promote sustainable human development. Furthermore, this situation supports the survival of local patronage politics, which in turn militates against the success of any broader movement towards significant improvement in the processes of urban development.

Democratization has opened up spaces for progressive forces for change. In such a context, international development agencies can increase their support for community organizations—not only to promote self-help initiatives, but also to strengthen their voice in local political processes. It is also necessary to provide simultaneous support at the level of the municipality.

Too often, however, external support has been given on a short-term basis and targeted to local level interventions. So far there has been relatively little support for integrated urban programmes. Furthermore in the current climate of economic and social crisis, considerations of sustainable development can

too easily be pushed into the background. External agencies need to focus attention on how to organize and operate such programmes and to commit themselves to longer term and more flexible interventions that are effective in rapidly changing conditions. More thought should also be given to the national level context that would ensure that local level activities make genuine progress. Such support includes reinforcement of the decentralization process—and also devising defences against the social and environmental effects of neo-liberal policies.

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Résumé

Cette étude porte sur les fréquents décalages que l'on constate entre la théorie et la pratique dans les programmes de développement urbain au tiers monde. S'inspirant de trois études de cas réalisées en Asie du Sud-Est (aux Philippines, en Thaïlande et en Indonésie), elle montre combien il est important de comprendre les problèmes que posent les phénomènes actuels de l'urbanisation, de la démocratisation, de la décentralisation et de la libéralisation économique pour un développement urbain durable.

L'urbanisation dans les pays du Sud-Est asiatique est extrêmement complexe et fluide et soulève de difficiles questions sociales, mais aussi financières et d'infrastructure. Le processus de planification doit réunir des groupes d'individus très différents. De plus, il faut tenir compte des relations complexes entre les villes et leur arrière-pays. La décentralisation et la démocratisation ont encore pour effet de compliquer la situation. Dans la plupart des cas, les institutions locales et régionales sont mal préparées à assumer les responsabilités conséquentes à la décentralisation et les gouvernements centraux sont réticents à céder leur pouvoir à des autorités d'un échelon inférieur. La démocratisation de la prise des décisions est aussi ralentie par des structures politiques locales hostiles à la participation. Dans certains cas, cependant, la démocratie avance et peut servir de fil conducteur dans la planification et la gestion d'un développement durable.

L'auteur doute que la libéralisation économique ait le pouvoir d'atténuer la pauvreté. Il fait observer que les politiques néolibérales sapent les efforts de développement en affaiblissant la responsabilité du gouvernement dans des domaines d'intérêt primordial pour le public. De plus, les réformes allant dans le sens de la liberté de marché sont insensibles à l'environnement et favorisent la fracture sociale en creusant les disparités de revenus.

L'expérience des Philippines permet d'approfondir ces questions. L'urbanisation rapide et une forte incidence de la pauvreté, alliées à un aménagement urbain qui laisse à désirer, ont entraîné des problèmes d'alimentation en eau et de pollution. Pour les pauvres, le régime foncier et les problèmes juridiques très profonds qu'il pose constituent une préoccupation cruciale. L'appareil administratif des Philippines, où la législation a encouragé

un transfert de pouvoirs et de ressources à destination des municipalités et des collectivités, pourrait favoriser la réalisation d'initiatives de développement durable. Cependant, la puissance de patrons locaux met en échec de nombreux efforts entrepris pour satisfaire les besoins des pauvres et s'engager sur la voie d'un développement urbain durable. Le développement de l'infrastructure physique a tendance à l'emporter sur les projets communautaires participatifs plus modestes.

La Thaïlande est le moins urbanisé des trois pays étudiés et la pauvreté urbaine y est moins prononcée qu'aux Philippines ou en Indonésie. Les villes sont en général bien alimentées en eau mais les déchets industriels, la pollution, la structure agraire et l'accès aux services posent de graves problèmes. Bien que le but du développement durable figure en bonne place dans les politiques économiques et sociales de la Thaïlande, et malgré quelques progrès réalisés dans le secteur de l'environnement, on ne constate guère de changement au niveau local. La nouvelle constitution thaïlandaise prévoit un renforcement du pouvoir local mais, à l'exception d'une forte participation du secteur privé, les formes participatives de planification locale qu'impose la constitution sont lentes à se mettre en place. Cette lenteur est en partie imputable au Ministère de l'Intérieur, résolu à garder la haute main sur les affaires locales. Elle est due aussi aux rapports de patronage ancrés dans les structures politiques, qui freinent le transfert du pouvoir du gouvernement central aux échelons inférieurs. Les ONG et les collectivités sont assez peu représentées dans la prise des décisions relatives au développement local, qui ne s'inscrit pas dans une vision à long terme.

Bien que des programmes très structurés de développement urbain aient été mis en oeuvre ces dernières années en Indonésie, on assiste encore à une urbanisation sauvage, le plus souvent spontanée, caractérisée par une forte incidence de la pauvreté, surtout depuis l'effondrement de l'économie après juillet 1997. Comme aux Philippines, la pollution de l'environnement et le régime foncier posent de graves problèmes. Mais la politique n'en a que pour la crise économique qui s'éternise et la planification du développement durable reste faible au niveau local. Avec la législation de l'ère post-Suharto, l'Indonésie pourrait faire mieux que la Thaïlande en matière de décentralisation mais l'instabilité actuelle de la situation légale peut aussi bien se révéler contraire aux initiatives de développement durable que les favoriser. Immédiatement après la chute du régime autoritaire, les groupes locaux n'étaient guère coopératifs lors des consultations, craignant qu'elles ne fussent récupérées par le gouvernement. Récemment, cependant, il semblerait qu'ONG et groupes communautaires coopèrent davantage avec les conseils fraîchement élus et avec les autorités municipales.

La dernière section de l'étude relève le rôle que pourrait jouer la nouvelle classe moyenne des villes du Sud-Est asiatique dans les initiatives de développement durable. Après la chute de l'autoritarisme, les aspirations à une plus large participation à la vie politique reviennent en force mais le modèle économique dominant est aussi générateur de divisions sociales.

Les initiatives de développement local qui sont prises depuis peu sont de deux sortes. D'une part, des collectivités pauvres cherchent à améliorer leur qualité de vie avec l'aide d'institutions internationales de développement, des autorités

locales et d'ONG. De l'autre, des groupes de la classe moyenne s'organisent pour améliorer la gestion des affaires locales. Pourtant, ces initiatives ne suffisent pas à surmonter les fractures de ces sociétés et à promouvoir un développement humain durable. De plus, cette situation tend à maintenir des rapports de protecteur à protégé dans la politique locale, qui à leur tour bloquent tout mouvement de quelque ampleur militant pour une amélioration sensible des modalités de gestion du développement urbain.

La démocratisation a ouvert de nouveaux espaces aux forces progressistes du changement. Dans ce contexte, les institutions internationales de développement peuvent épauler davantage les organisations communautaires, non seulement pour promouvoir les initiatives d'auto-assistance, mais aussi pour donner à ces organisations plus de poids dans la vie politique locale. Il est en même temps nécessaire de leur fournir un appui au niveau municipal.

Trop souvent, cependant, l'appui extérieur est de courte durée et axé sur des interventions locales. Jusqu'à présent, les programmes urbains intégrés en ont peu bénéficié. En outre, dans l'atmosphère actuelle de crise économique et sociale, les considérations relatives au développement durable peuvent facilement passer à l'arrière-plan. Les institutions extérieures doivent concentrer leur attention sur les moyens à employer pour mettre sur pied et gérer de tels programmes et s'engager à plus long terme en faveur d'interventions moins rigides et plus efficaces dans des situations très fluctuantes. Il faudrait aussi réfléchir au climat national propice au progrès au niveau local. Une telle aide devra consister alors à renforcer tant le processus de décentralisation que les mécanismes destinés à protéger la société et l'environnement des retombées des politiques néolibérales.

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Resumen

En este documento, se analizan las discrepancias frecuentes que hay entre la teoría y la práctica en los programas de desarrollo urbano del Tercer Mundo. Apoyándose en tres estudios de caso del Sudeste Asiático (las Filipinas, Tailandia e Indonesia), el autor destaca la necesidad de entender los desafíos que se derivan de los procesos actuales de urbanización, democratización, descentralización y liberalización económica, para lograr el desarrollo urbano sostenible.

La urbanización en los países del Sudeste de Asia es sumamente compleja y fluida, por lo que suscita interrogantes difíciles de orden social, así como infraestructural y financiero. En un proceso de planificación urbana se tiene que involucrar a grupos de personas de diferente condición social. Más aún, deben tomarse en cuenta las relaciones complejas que se establecen entre las ciudades y sus zonas de influencia. La descentralización y la democratización vienen a complicar más el panorama. En la mayoría de los casos, las

instituciones de nivel local y regional no están suficientemente preparadas para hacerse cargo de los nuevos compromisos implícitos en la descentralización, y los gobiernos centrales no quieren aflojar el poder que ejercen sobre las autoridades de niveles más bajos. Se ponen trabas también a la democratización efectiva de la toma de decisiones, debido a las estructuras políticas locales que se oponen a la participación. Sin embargo, en algunos casos, la democracia avanza y puede servir de base para la planificación y administración del desarrollo sostenible.

En el documento se ponen en tela de juicio las posibilidades de la liberalización económica para reducir la pobreza. Se señala que la liberalización socava los esfuerzos para lograr el desarrollo al reducir la responsabilidad gubernamental en áreas claves de interés público. Además, las reformas para liberar al mercado no toman en cuenta el medio ambiente y fomentan divisiones profundas al interior de las comunidades, en la medida en que la brecha en la distribución del ingreso se hace más profunda.

La experiencia de las Filipinas permite tener una idea sobre esos problemas. La urbanización acelerada junto con una incidencia elevada de la pobreza, en combinación con un manejo urbano inadecuado, ha generado problemas de contaminación y para el abastecimiento de agua. Entre los pobres, los graves problemas relacionados con la legalidad de la propiedad de lotes urbanos constituyen una preocupación fundamental. El Poder Legislativo de las Filipinas ha impulsado la descentralización de poderes y recursos, transfiriéndolos hacia el nivel municipal y de la comunidad, y la estructura administrativa estatal tiene la posibilidad de facilitar la aplicación de iniciativas relacionadas con el desarrollo sostenible. Empero, el poder persistente de los caciques locales obstaculiza muchos de los esfuerzos para satisfacer las necesidades de los pobres y para tomar en consideración formas más eficientes de lograr el desarrollo urbano sostenible. Se tiende a dar prioridad al desarrollo de infraestructura, por encima de proyectos más pequeños de participación comunitaria.

Tailandia es el menos urbanizado de los tres países analizados, y la pobreza urbana se destaca menos allí que en las Filipinas o en Indonesia. El abastecimiento de agua en el ámbito urbano es generalmente adecuado, pero los desechos industriales, la contaminación, la tenencia de la tierra y el acceso a los servicios constituyen problemas graves. No obstante que la meta para lograr el desarrollo sostenible está incluida en las políticas económicas y sociales de Tailandia y se ha logrado algún progreso en lo que se refiere al medio ambiente, a nivel local no se ha logrado avanzar efectivamente hacia el desarrollo sostenible. La nueva constitución tailandesa permite el fortalecimiento del gobierno local; pero la participación en la planificación a ese nivel, prescrita por la constitución, se lleva a cabo con mucha lentitud, salvo en el caso del sector privado, cuya participación es más activa. Ello se debe en parte, a los poderes extensos del Ministerio del Interior, institución que ha decidido mantener su control sobre los asuntos de orden local. Se debe también a que las estructuras de patronazgo político retrasan la transferencia de poder desde el centro hacia los niveles más bajos. La representación de las ONGs y de la comunidad en los procesos de desarrollo local es relativamente reducida, y hace falta una visión de largo plazo sobre ese nivel de desarrollo.

En Indonesia, no obstante que en los últimos años se han aplicado algunos programas de desarrollo urbano sumamente estructurados, la urbanización no está controlada todavía, es predominantemente informal y se caracteriza por una fuerte incidencia de la pobreza, especialmente a consecuencia del colapso económico que hubo después de julio de 1997. Como en las Filipinas, en Indonesia los problemas de contaminación del medio ambiente y de la tenencia de la tierra son graves. Pero la prolongada crisis económica domina la agenda política, y la planificación del desarrollo sostenible continúa siendo escasa al nivel local. La legislación de la era posterior a Suharto podría permitir a Indonesia funcionar mejor que Tailandia en cuanto a la descentralización, pero la fluidez actual de la situación legal puede ser desfavorable a las iniciativas de desarrollo sostenible. Inmediatamente después de la caída del gobierno autoritario, la colaboración entre grupos sociales a nivel local quedó limitada por su temor a ser cooptados por el gobierno. Sin embargo, más recientemente, hay algunas señales de que las ONGs y grupos cívicos se están comprometiendo de manera más efectiva con los nuevos concejos y con la maquinaria de gobierno municipal.

En la sección de conclusiones del documento, se llama la atención hacia el papel que puedan jugar en el desarrollo sostenible las iniciativas procedentes de la nueva clase media urbana del Sudeste de Asia. La caída del autoritarismo ha traído a la palestra las aspiraciones a una mayor participación en los procesos políticos. Sin embargo, el modelo económico predominante está generando también sociedades más divididas.

Dos tipos distintos de iniciativas de desarrollo a nivel local están surgiendo. Por un lado, las comunidades pobres están recibiendo ayuda de las agencias internacionales de desarrollo, de los gobiernos locales y de las ONGs para mejorar su calidad de vida. Por el otro, los grupos de la clase media se están organizando para mejorar la forma de funcionamiento de los gobiernos locales. Empero, estas iniciativas por sí mismas no son suficientes para superar las divisiones profundas que afectan a estas sociedades ni para promover el desarrollo humano sostenible. Más aún, esa situación permite apoyar la sobrevivencia de la política de patronazgo local que, a su vez, impide el éxito de cualquier movilización social más amplia que tenga como meta un mejoramiento significativo de los procesos de desarrollo urbano.

La democratización ha ampliado el espacio para que las fuerzas progresistas promuevan el cambio. En ese contexto, las agencias internacionales de desarrollo pueden aumentar su apoyo a las organizaciones al interior de las comunidades, no sólo para promover las iniciativas de autoayuda, sino también para fortalecer su participación en los procesos políticos locales. Se requiere también apoyar simultáneamente el nivel municipal.

Sin embargo, con demasiada frecuencia, se ha otorgado ayuda foránea a corto plazo y sólo para intervenciones a nivel local. Hasta la fecha, el apoyo a los programas urbanos integrados ha sido escaso. Más aún, en el clima actual de crisis económica y social, el reconocimiento del desarrollo sostenible puede ser fácilmente relegado a un segundo plano. Las agencias foráneas necesitan concentrar su atención en la forma de organizar y de operar dichos programas, y comprometerse a realizarlos a largo plazo, interviniendo de manera más flexible y efectiva, en condiciones de cambio acelerado. Se debería dar más

atención al contexto nacional a fin de garantizar que las actividades a nivel local avancen efectivamente. Este apoyo implica reforzar el proceso de descentralización, así como proteger a la población de los efectos negativos de las políticas neoliberales en lo social y en el medio ambiente.

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I. Introduction

This paper analyses progress over the past few years in realizing sustainable development in cities of the South. Reference to sustainable *human* development in the title indicates that the focus of attention is not only on physical development, which tends to characterize "environmentalist" approaches to sustainable development, but also on the vital human dimension involved. The case material from three countries in Southeast Asia provides a basis for some generalization in this part of the world. While conditions and progress in the countries of the South vary widely, it is hoped that the lessons drawn here will be useful also for organizations and individuals working elsewhere.

In the following section of the paper some insight is provided into the various ways in which the term "sustainable development" is being interpreted. This includes a brief history of the concept, a discussion of various ways of understanding what it might mean and finally a sketch of how it is being used in the context of urban planning and management, together with some of the main difficulties that arise. A major issue is to highlight the importance that participatory forms of decision making have come to possess in initiatives designed to promote sustainable urban development.

Sustainable development is being pursued against a broader context of socio-economic change and of ideology and politics. The third section of the paper sketches salient points that are of importance for a proper understanding of the chances of sustainable urban development ever being implemented effectively. The major issues here are the rapidity of the process of urbanization in the South; a genuine change in the political climate that is fostering democratization and decentralization; and the politico-economic force of liberalization. The analysis points to the contradictory impacts that these contextual conditions are having on the fortunes of sustainable development.

The case material focuses in the first instance on Southeast Asia as a whole. It then provides detail on various dimensions of progress in three countries—the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia. In recent years all three have experienced the collapse of authoritarian regimes and some progress in democratization and decentralization. They have also suffered from the severe economic crash of 1997. All have some experience in the formation of participatory approaches to urban environmental planning and management, but it is evident that there is still a long way to go before these become widespread or effective. As yet the concept of sustainable development remains an extremely ill-defined and remote goal.

The conclusions of the paper focus attention on social changes taking place in Southeast Asia—in particular the importance of a growing middle class that is bringing a new approach to politics—which hold some potential for a more coherent approach to sustainable urban development in the coming years. However, at the same time poverty remains a serious problem—one that is not being adequately addressed by the new middle classes and that is clearly an impediment to the achievement of anything approaching sustainable *human*

development. The paper concludes with an examination of what external agencies might do to address the impediments to sustainable human development in urban areas of the South.

II. Interpreting "Sustainable Development"

This section focuses attention on the meanings of and the reality of attempts to achieve sustainable urban development. It is divided into three subsections. The first provides a brief history concerning the way in which the term and its conventional interpretation have entered development discourse. The second looks at various interpretations of the concept, showing that people and agencies using the term often mean very different things and that major misunderstandings can easily arise. The last subsection looks into the methods that are being applied in urban areas to address the problematic of sustainable development and the main problems that these methods are encountering.

The emergence of the concept of "sustainable development"

It was the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)—through the World Conservation Strategy of 1980—that brought the term "sustainable development" into development discourse. Their concerns, as a conservationist organization, were with the evident deterioration of the ecological and resource base that was a consequence of "conventional" approaches to development. Hence their focus was on the physical environment rather than on showing a concern for the human side of achieving sustainable development and the potential social impacts of the management regimes that might be employed to achieve sustainable development in the way they understood it. This "flavour" stayed with the term until well into the 1980s.

It was, however, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987)—generally known as the Brundtland Report—that popularized the term "sustainable development". The conventional development path was seen as being in danger of destroying the environment and depleting resources to the point where development could no longer be sustained and could go dramatically into reverse. The path would have to be revised in order to achieve sustainable development, defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987:8).

The WCED report spent little time analysing the disparities in resources available to different constituencies within and between different societies and so did not make any significant recommendations concerning redistribution or any great augmentation of aid between the countries of the North and the South. The major thrust of the report was to promote more investment in the South, generally with a view to augmenting economic growth, suitably regulated with regard to negative environmental impacts, to take the world into the era of sustainable development.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, was an important milestone in the promotion of the idea of sustainable development. It resulted both in proposing three international agreements—on forests, climate change and biodiversity—and in tabling an "agenda for sustainable development in the 21st century", entitled Agenda 21.[1] This document, signed by most of the heads of state who attended the conference, set out in 40 chapters and 600 pages an analysis of the growing—mainly environmental and resource—problems arising in the process of global development. A range of solutions to these problems, including the allocation of responsibility between a wide range of actors, was proposed.

Agenda 21 started with a focus on economic disparities and poverty, but promoted the same solutions of free-market economics and economic growth, as had the Brundtland Report. Much of the rest of the focus of the document was on problems and solutions of a technical nature, rather than on addressing the social and political issues that underlay many of the problems identified. Nevertheless, there was an analysis of the roles and responsibilities of all the actors from international agencies, national and local governments and the private sector—as well as of a variety of "civil society" actors—in developing a solution to the problematic of unsustainable development.

It should be noted in parentheses that there were critics of the process of generating both the Brundtland Commission recommendations and the general approach of Agenda 21. It is clear that these remained firmly within the prevailing political context of neo-liberal free trade and the promotion of economic growth as being essential to sustainable development and without reference to any need for redistribution. Indeed, the involvement of major corporate interests in financing Agenda 21 would seem to have influenced this orientation (Schmidheiny, 1992; Hawken, 1993; Chatterjee and Finger, 1994)—leading to the omission of any effective structural suggestions with regard to the organization of a regime or framework to achieve sustainable development. The result thus promotes a voluntaristic approach to achieving sustainable development where each stakeholder group should find its own path and make a contribution in its own way.

In principle, heads of state attending the Rio conference were to take Agenda 21 home, where it was to be used as background for national, perhaps regional and then local agendas. In practice, most countries have by now produced some kind of response and it is notable that relatively little has happened in terms of actual implementation (Dalal-Clayton, 1997). This result is of less concern to this paper than the fact that, almost entirely independent of national government responses, there was an immediate response to Agenda 21 in the form of *Local* Agenda 21 (LA21) processes. By the late 1980s, there were several thousand localities where an LA21, or a related process, was under way.

Local Agenda 21, as a process of local participatory planning and management for sustainable development, is briefly defined in Chapter 28 of Agenda 21. There, it is stated that local authorities should reach a consensus with stakeholder groups in the community to initiate a sustainable development

[1] Agenda 21 has been published in various versions. For a useful summary, see Keating (1993).

planning and management process, and that local initiatives should network with one another to exchange experiences. In fact UNCED was preceded by a series of conferences, organized by international local authority associations and others, aimed at impressing upon the Rio process the claims of local authorities and communities to play a major role in achieving sustainable development. Chapter 28—the shortest of all the chapters—was the result.

These conferences produced various declarations and guidelines that indicated in much more detail than Chapter 28 did the approach to be taken by local actors in pursuit of sustainable development. A further development was the founding—supported by the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)—of an international NGO, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). The role of this organization has been *specifically* to promote the spread of LA21 processes and other approaches to local sustainable development.

In fact, with the spread of the environmental movement in northern Europe particularly, by the late 1980s a number of local participatory sustainable development planning and management processes had already been initiated. By the mid-1990s most European local authorities had some initiative of this kind under way (Lafferty and Eckerberg, 1998).

At first, however, there was little response in cities of the South. A few initiatives were supported by development assistance agencies—for example, the Dutch-sponsored "green towns" project in Kenya and the German government-supported "urban environmental training materials project" in Asia, discussed further below. Some projects were also initiated through town twinning arrangements between Northern and Southern municipalities—usually with the assistance of national and international municipal associations. Indeed, the transfer of local experience from North to South has been an important force in promoting LA21-type initiatives in the South, rather than any initiative growing directly out of the UNCED recommendations.

As the 1990s progressed, however, and the concept of sustainable development became more broadly accepted, more local sustainable development planning and management initiatives sprang up in cities of the South—both with external support and, particularly in Latin America (Allen, 1999), through efforts initiated within the countries themselves. At the same time a few community development projects gained an additional dimension that focused on sustainable development. However, this was in part in parallel with a general growth in urban community development projects, most of which had little or no interest in the question of sustainable development.

What is the meaning of "sustainable development"?

It was noted above that those promoting the concept of sustainable development in the 1980s had a rather "environmentalist" approach to the issue. In fact, development agencies had used the concept of sustainability in the past in the narrow sense of the sustainability of their own efforts: many projects brought into existence with the support of development agencies had collapsed once the agency support was removed. So, in this context,

"sustainable development" meant that the initiatives started within a development project would continue after the supporting agency had left. This meaning remains in currency in parallel and occasionally confused with the more recent interpretations.

What IUCN and the Brundtland Commission meant by "sustainable development" was motivated by the worry that non-renewable resources—such as fossil fuels and minerals—which are being used to support the development process, will at some stage in the foreseeable future no longer be available. Worse yet, many renewable resources such as forests and fisheries are being overexploited to such an extent that they, too, may be exhausted in the foreseeable future. Furthermore many fragile ecosystems are being destroyed by developments that, although they may be productive in some way for human needs, are nevertheless depleting the overall capacity of nature to regenerate itself if needs and conditions change. In the extreme, the conservationist interpretation of sustainable development tends to attempt to preserve existing ecosystems against almost any kind of development, thereby denying local resources to local people.

While the environmentalist dimension of sustainable development must clearly remain important, during the 1990s, as the term broadened out from the environment and into the discourse on economic, social and political development, the emphasis shifted. Sustainable development, as a term, was adopted by agencies and organizations concerned with issues other than the Earth's atmosphere, seas, forests and ecosystems. In the case of sustainable *urban* development, the term "brown agenda" was coined to emphasize the need to deal not only with the global and rural environment (the "green agenda"), but also to improve the environmental conditions in which the urban population—and particularly the urban poor—were living.

This resulted in a common assumption that good urban environmental management—perhaps coupled with measures to improve equity and the quality of governance—will automatically culminate in sustainable development. This is not, however, the case. There are many choices with regard to improving the immediate living environment, some of which promise to lead to sustainable development and some of which do not. For instance catalytic converters on cars improve local air pollution but result in increases in energy use. Conventional waste management without regard for improving recycling and reducing the production of waste may result in a cleaner environment that does nothing, however, for sustainability.

Discourse came to focus attention on the meaning of sustainable development in the context of severe social and economic problems and more specifically the problem of urban poverty. McGranahan et al. (1996) point out that in fact poorer cities, although most in need of immediate environmental improvements, are considerably more sustainable than rich cities where major investments have been made to remove immediate environmental problems, but where the citizenry consumes resources at a much higher level. This does not, however, exempt poorer cities from considering the question of longer term sustainability even if the most pressing problems to be addressed in LA21 processes in such cities turn out to be those of the "brown agenda"—environmental problems narrowly defined.

In fact the great emphasis of virtually all the bilateral and multilateral development assistance agencies involved in urban development projects and programmes has been heavily on brown agenda problems with a rhetoric of "sustainable development" that is never carried through to any substantive analysis of what this might mean in the context of poverty alleviation. The multilateral banks focus attention particularly on "getting the financing policies right", assuming that this will solve all other problems (McGranahan et al., 1996:128). So neither the green agenda nor complex issues such as local organization, accountability, allocation of responsibility—coupled with the generation of a sense of ownership—are paid adequate attention.

In this context, Allen (1999) refers to the "natural resources approach" to understanding sustainability as "primary sustainability" and the capacity of urban authorities and communities to manage resources (and the environment) effectively as "secondary sustainability"—the point being that without radical changes in attitudes, management methods and much else besides, "primary sustainability" will not be achieved and even local environmental problems will fester on. As becomes evident later in this paper, the move seems slow and painful from a narrow functionalist approach (making money available for urban infrastructure) to solving what seem to be local problems to one that recognizes the complexity of local intervention. One is looking eventually for a situation where local populations are willing and have the capacity to create better living environments that can also be demonstrated to be sustainable into the reasonably distant future.

It might be said by way of summary that "sustainable development" is concerned with the longer term—the durability—of development in a situation were all too many development decisions are taken in a crisis atmosphere for short-term gain. In this sense, sustainable development aims to introduce a little more wisdom into the development process. But it cannot afford to disregard the very real and urgent needs of the present, or imagine that it can bypass the severe impediments it finds in the inadequate management structures and the difficult political conditions encountered in the cities of the South.

Methods and application of sustainable urban development

It is now necessary to provide a little explanation regarding the general characteristics of those local exercises in sustainable urban development that have been attempted—involving the application of various planning and management methodologies. First it is useful to set down the ideal that is described in various guidelines (GTZ, 1993; Bartone et al., 1994; ICLEI, 1996; UNCHS/UNEP (Vol. 1), 1997). Then a preliminary assessment can be made of the degree to which the initiatives generally match up to the ideal.

- A consensus is reached across the community and/or municipality between all key stakeholders to undertake a sustainable development planning and management process (this could take the form of one or more workshops or the establishment of a more permanent forum or committee); the first task is to establish

aims ("vision" and "mission") for the sustainable development planning and management process.

- An investigation (using participatory methods) is carried out into the main (economic, social, environmental) problems faced by the community; these are then prioritized by consensus with a view to addressing them in order of importance.
- Alternative solutions to the priority issues are worked out, possibly through working groups of experts and interested stakeholder representatives.
- Tasks are allocated between the local authority and other stakeholders who can provide resources or take on specific responsibilities.
- Action is taken, monitored by working groups or the forum; where action is inadequate to solve the problem, new initiatives are organized.
- Following the solution to the initial problems, new ones are identified and plans made to solve these.

There are variations on this procedure, but the main points—that the planning process be participatory throughout and that responsibility be shared between public, private and community interests—are supposed to be adhered to.

By now there has been considerable documentation of "best practice" initiatives in these procedures and so some evaluation should be possible (Gilbert et al., 1996; ICLEI, 1996; UNCHS/UNEP (Vol.2), 1997). Here are some preliminary remarks on the discrepancy between theory and practice:

- Nowhere has a consistent procedure been devised for ensuring the representativeness of the participatory processes. At the community level it is easier to ensure that the voices of the poor and of minorities discriminated against by local communities are heard as long as effort goes into incorporating them. However, in most cases the better-off citizens and interest groups continue to dominate the process with relatively little attention being paid to the concerns of the underprivileged. There is a danger that participation will become institutionalized in forms that continue to favour the powerful and fail in the ostensible aim of empowering the "silent voices" of the poor and otherwise disadvantaged.
- In Southern cities the priorities have been almost entirely concerned with the immediate local environment such as improving water supply and solid waste management. While these are *prima facie* rather serious problems in many cities, the problematic of "sustainable development", which requires an altogether broader perspective on development—although often and increasingly contained in the rhetoric—is not actually seriously addressed.
- In few if any cases have these exercises been allowed to modify in any major way the routine exercise of local government and the formal private sector. In fact, as discussed below, local government

> in the poorer countries has hardly been in a position to plan or control the development of cities and so inadequate responses to LA21 processes are simply one more case of a more general inability to respond adequately to local developments. On the other hand, businesses keep their eye on what is, or promises to be, profitable, and are generally only interested in LA21 processes to the extent that these promote business.

In fact all these problems can be related back to the broad structural context that has not generally been considered by those who have been promoting participatory sustainable development planning and management initiatives. This context is, however, crucial to the chances of success of these initiatives and will become more so if and as sustainable development is addressed in a more serious manner. The next section of the paper therefore provides an overview of salient aspects of the structural context that should be considered and effectively addressed by anyone concerned with developing new LA21 and similar initiatives.

III. The Structural Context

While sustainable urban development initiatives are attempting to establish their own approach to revising the way in which decisions are made and how cities are planned and managed, they necessarily do so within a wider developmental context. The problems and opportunities that these initiatives face need to be understood in structural terms if they are to be better confronted. Two dimensions of this context are particularly important and are discussed in this section of the paper.

First, we discuss the issue of urbanization. In much of the South, the majority—often the vast majority—of the population lives in rural areas. However, everywhere urban areas are growing rapidly and within the foreseeable future most of the world's population will be urban. This process greatly affects the approaches that need to be taken to planning and managing the sustainable development process. Second, the world is currently in the grip of a particular ideological outlook that is strongly influencing the ways in which economic and political life is organized.

On the one hand, democratization and decentralization are being introduced throughout the South, displacing the authoritarian and centralized regimes that predominated throughout most of the latter half of the twentieth century. At the same time, neo-liberalism is being promoted—and has broad political support—as the correct framework for development at the international level. The following paragraphs analyse in more detail the implications of these dimensions of the changing structural context as they affect the possibilities of sustainable urban development initiatives.

Understanding cities

While in principle LA21 processes can be applied within any community, in practice they have a definite urban orientation (there is a minority of cases

involving urban regions—provinces or consortia of local authorities). Under these circumstances, it is important to focus attention on what is meant by an urban place and the ways in which this has been changing in recent years, so as to better understand the local sustainable development planning and management process in context.

It is common knowledge that we live in a rapidly urbanizing world—the population of which was, half a century ago, predominantly living in rural areas, but where today almost half lives in towns and cities. Latin America is already as urbanized as Europe (i.e. almost fully urbanized) and it is only in Asia and Africa that we find countries where the population is still living a predominantly rural life.

The common presumption is that rural people will one day take up their roots and migrate to the city. There are cases of this kind, but urbanization is much more complicated than this. On the one hand, cities grow to a significant degree simply through children being born in them. Where rural-urban migration is a significant factor, it is necessary to understand the complex segmentation of the process—which might include, for example, rural girls taking jobs as maids before returning to get married; young men taking industrial jobs in the agriculturally slack season; or refugee/ethnic groups that have found a particular economic niche. Trying to incorporate these—and many other "poor" groups—into a local planning process can be difficult when they consider themselves to be only temporary residents or are ostracized or otherwise hidden by better established, more powerful groups.

The mode of urbanization and the changes in urban morphology are also important to understanding how to involve people in the planning process. Many towns and cities have been towns and cities for a long time and may be growing fast, slowly or not at all. Other urban areas suddenly appear, sometimes very rapidly, as a consequence of contingencies: changing boundaries, tourist developments or the location of large industries attracting a new workforce are examples. The appearance over a period of less than 20 years of a whole series of new urban places in the Pearl River Delta, following the Chinese government's decision to promote particularly Hong Kong inward investment is an extreme—but by no means unique—example (Lo and Yeung, 1995). And a significant addition to urban development is simply through the growth of villages that become towns and then cities without the local population ever moving.

Furthermore, the cultural impacts of globalization, discussed further below, are leading to changes in outlook and social praxis even in remote rural areas that essentially orient the population to urban living habits, multiply the commercial links with cities, facilitating the transition of rural populations into urban life, increasingly in terms of possessing two homes (even when one is no more than a room in a rooming house); improved transport infrastructure and cheap bus fares are reinforcing this.

In recent years there have been rapid changes in the manner of urbanization of rural migrants and of older residents of informal settlements. Different dynamics prevail in different regions and specific cities need to be looked at from a local perspective. Nevertheless, in the past greater numbers of the poor

were generally to be found in central city tenements and informal settlements. Today most of the "urban" poor reside in, or a little way beyond, the urban periphery, sometimes in vastly expanded "villages" (in Latin America, *barrios* and *favelas*) that are, in extreme cases, cities in their own right.

The implications of these changes in the processes of urbanization and social interaction—and of the fluidity and sheer indeterminacy of life decisions among the poor in particular—need to be taken into consideration in designing planning systems for sustainable development. What emerges is the inadequacy of the approaches taken so far to encompass the processes framing people's lives. Instead there has generally been an assumption that things are as in the past with residents (stakeholders) standing firm to be counted and incorporated into a planning process.

Nevertheless, in many towns and cities, established neighbourhoods—informal, middle income and affluent—contain settled populations that are potential participants in a more participatory approach to local planning and management. A major problem is the degree of segregation and isolation, particularly of the middle and upper classes. In such areas where there appear to be few immediate environmental problems (clean and green streets, clean water supply, etc.), but where the problem of less sustainable lifestyles (high consumption of resources) is all too evident, it is generally difficult to capture the interest of citizens to participate in planning exercises. Nor are the more affluent citizens very interested in assuming any kind of equality with the poor in a decision-making process.

Thus in practice the process needs to use considerable ingenuity in order to draw people from all walks of life into a common planning process. It is also necessary to ensure that the territory within which the planning process is being conducted is one in which sustainable development can be considered with some hope of eventually making it a reality; this points to city and hinterland as needing to be planned within the same framework.

Democratization, decentralization and liberalization

There are other factors that are more ideologically and politically driven that are having a major impact on the organization of life in the countries and cities of the South—those encompassed by the terms "decentralization" and "democratization", on the one hand, and "liberalization", on the other.

Although there has never been a time when, in development circles, decentralization and democracy were not seen as a "good thing", in practice, over the period of the Cold War neither of the two major powers considered it in their interest to promote them. Indeed, the majority of countries in the South possessed highly centralized regimes—with little by way of democracy—that were more or less directly installed and in most cases continuously supported by one or other of the two "superpowers". Some attempts were made by development agencies to support decentralization programmes but, by the early 1980s, these were deemed a general failure (Rondinelli et al., 1984).

Changes started in the early 1980s, first in Latin America, with the collapse of authoritarian regimes, then in the countries of Eastern Europe at the end of the

1980s and most recently in East Asia (which is the subject of later discussion). The African experience has been more mixed, but with some notable cases over the period—the most conspicuous being the collapse of apartheid in South Africa. Decentralization is a complex process that concerns redistribution of powers from central to regional, municipal and community levels, but that must also involve redistribution of financial resources if it is to be at all effective.[2] In most countries of the South where decentralization processes have been initiated—and there are now very many examples—the difficulties of implementing them have become rather evident in a situation where local government is ill-prepared to take more responsibility for local action and central government agencies are typically resistant.

Democratization—by which is generally meant the introduction of representative democracy at national and local levels—has also proved to be a difficult process to get right. Patronage systems, local mafiosi, vote buying, vote rigging and a whole range of tactics for hijacking the political process become evident; and it is clear that it will take many years for "clean" and truly representative governments to become the norm throughout the South, and for there to be systems of genuinely "good governance" where government and civil society play their role fully and conscientiously. It should be noted, however, that there is evidence in many countries of the growth of more participatory forms of democracy that are, indeed, a central focus of the sustainable development planning and management systems with which this paper is concerned.

Of course, the early 1980s also saw the resurgence of neo-liberal ideology, underpinned by a new determination of big business in the industrialized countries (and particularly the United States) to assert its interests in the political arena (Korten, 1996). The basic principle of neo-liberalism is to promote free enterprise and free trade (the "free market"), meaning that private businesses should not be restricted by governments in their pursuit of commerce, trade and profit making because, it is argued, this is the true generator of wealth in society and thus, ultimately, the alleviation of poverty.

In practice, the interpretation put upon the principle has not been either consistent or even-handed (Shutt, 1998) and it is a major contention of Southern NGOs concerned with trade issues that, while Southern countries are being compelled to open themselves to free trade, Northern countries maintain systems of protection. In any case, liberalization has created a very definite context within which development has been shaped in the countries and cities of the South and this needs some discussion in order to better understand the most serious difficulties faced by local initiatives in sustainable development planning and management.

Neo-liberalism has been promoted in countries of the South via two routes: first through the widespread adoption of the ideology by elites within the countries—which has meant that governments have been inclined to "buy into" it—and second through the influence and pressure of the international

[2] Indicative of current interest in supporting decentralization processes on the part of international development assistance agencies is the extensive discussion of the theme in the World Bank's (1999) **World Development Report 1999/2000**.

development banks, ending in most Southern countries at some stage in "structural adjustment" that has forced changes in administration that conform to neo-liberal rules—which, it is widely admitted, have in the first instance marked negative social and environmental consequences (UNRISD, 1995).

In the past, governments in the South have not, been particularly successful in planning and directing the distribution and growth of cities. It is also true that attempts to organize the development process have not been without their problems. But, during certain periods, governments in most countries of the South have succeeded in stimulating and directing developments that have improved the economic and social conditions of their populations. Indeed, once viewed as "Southern" countries, government-directed development programmes in Japan and more recently in Singapore, the Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China have been spectacularly successful in economic terms.

Ignoring these examples and the possibilities that might exist for other societies to take whatever path suits them, neo-liberal rules, promoted as a universal route to effective development, remove, through "privatization", the responsibility of governments for key areas in the planning and direction of development. The results for most Southern countries are rather clear in terms of the social consequences, where all indications show the consistent rise in the incidence of poverty with, at the same time, the emaciation of what small welfare programmes were available in the past.

On the surface, there has been concern that the environment (and sustainable development) should not suffer as a consequence of "deregulation" of the economy. Environmental ministries and/or agencies now exist in most countries and in some even local environmental agencies have been established. These are mandated to control the impact of the development process on the environment and it is usually these agencies that have been responsible for the follow-up to UNCED. The contradiction between neo-liberalism and effective environmental protection cannot, however, be avoided and the effectiveness with which environmental issues and any meaningful interpretation of sustainable development have been sidelined in the international systems promoting free trade (the GATT Agreement and the operations of the World Trade Organization) is rather clear.

At the level of theory, Rees (1998) has analysed the clarity with which mainstream economists reject the very existence of the problematic of sustainability, asserting that whatever resources are exhausted or despoiled will always be replaced by substitutes (the important issue is at what price; the social and environmental impacts are not seen as relevant to economics). At the level of practice, as already noted, sustainable development is promoted as a voluntary activity of all actors with little attempt to provide structures within which the various actors can work towards the same ends. Environmental ministries and agencies are universally on the margins of the development process and their capacity and remit even to regulate environmental impacts adequately—and certainly to be proactive in indicating directions for development—are restricted by the neo-liberal ideological and political context that puts the interests of economic actors first.

There are, however, many contending theoretical tools that might be applied to counter the depredations of the free-market approach to development. In the environmental sphere, attention is being focused on "common property regimes" for the sustainable management of resources (Berkes, 1989). Some acknowledgement is given by the World Bank (Jodha, 1992) to the potential effectiveness of such forms of protection for the sustainable management of particular resources over free-market pressures to exploit resources in whatever way the market actors see fit.

On the social side, concern is being expressed at the way in which social support networks, particularly in rural areas, are falling apart in the face of modernization, commercialization and the spread of ("liberal") individualistic attitudes and practices. Looked at as a dimension of capital—alongside financial, economic, environmental and others—"social capital", which embodies these traditional forms of life support, is seen as becoming depleted. Some individuals may be becoming better off (gain in economic capital), but communities (and with them other individuals that are usually less conspicuous) are becoming less well off (loss of social capital).

While it may be useful to understand the processes of change that are taking place—particularly in the countries of the South—these concepts and others are not as yet recognized as anything but marginal to the development discourse. Economic growth in general remains the central purpose of development, with liberalism as the mechanism according to which it should be pursued. Unfortunately the critique emanating from rather obvious failures remains marginalized.

So what light do these considerations shed on the potential for success of participatory local sustainable development planning and management initiatives? It should be clear that in principle these efforts directly contradict the neo-liberal ideology, with its presumptions about competition, rather than co-operation, and its disinterest in any genuine moves to reorient the development process along lines of sustainability. It would thus seem that, if these initiatives are to become more effective, there will have to be a progressive abandonment of neo-liberalism: the two approaches to development have entirely different ideological bases, orientations and institutional requirements.

IV. Focus on Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia comprises 10 countries. The largest, Indonesia (the fourth most populous country in the world, with around 200 million people), is a sprawling archipelago along the southern boundary of the region. The next largest country is Viet Nam—a long, thin strip of land along the eastern boundary of the main landmass with a population of just over 100 million. The Philippines, comprising an extension of the Indonesian archipelago up the eastern side of the region, matches Thailand, at the centre of the region, as the next most populous (around 70 and 60 million, respectively). Malaysia has a population of just 20 million, followed by five other small countries—which include the affluent micro states of Brunei and Singapore.

Concerning recent political development of the region, with the exception of Malaysia and Singapore, which have possessed democratic regimes over a longer period, the abandonment of authoritarianism has been slower than in other regions of the world. The Philippine dictatorship collapsed in 1986, followed in 1992 by Thailand (which has had a mixed history of quasi-democracy alternating with military dictatorships going back to the establishment in 1932 of a constitutional monarchy). The Suharto regime of Indonesia, although nominally democratic, was (as we shall see below) in practice a regime of strong social control that collapsed only in 1998 after 32 years in power. Several more or less authoritarian regimes remain in the region.

In terms of economic development, the region demonstrated throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s a very rapid rate of growth, albeit with great variations. Singapore was already a significant industrial and commercial centre and Malaysia and Thailand were transformed from predominantly primary producing countries to countries with a significant manufacturing base. Indonesia, starting from a lower level of economic output, also grew fast, with rapid development of manufacturing industries in the subregions of the two major Javanese cities of Jakarta and Surabaya. The Philippines was the only major country to miss out on the industrial development boom (Viet Nam, developing along its own path, was also growing rapidly).

All this changed dramatically in July 1997 with the collapse of the value of Southeast Asian currencies. There are clearly many dimensions to this collapse involving structural problems of the Southeast Asian economies and the way in which these had been developing (Evans, 1999). We can be fairly certain, however, that the mechanism most responsible for the dramatic nature of the collapse was the decision, emanating from the advance of liberalization, to float the exchange rates of the Southeast Asian currencies.

The currencies of all the countries of the region that participated in this action (and including the Republic of Korea) dropped more or less precipitately. A broad swathe of industries went directly into bankruptcy as a consequence of their inability to afford inputs or to service interest payments on capital borrowed in hard currencies. Unemployment, in a situation of inadequate or non-existent social security systems, coupled with sudden rises in the prices of even basic commodities, expunged within two months a decade or more of gains that had been made in reducing the numbers of people living in poverty.

By the end of 1997, the currencies had been stabilized and began to climb back towards their previous levels. On the whole they re-established themselves somewhat below their pre-July 1997 levels. Long-term damage had been done and the ordinary citizens of the East Asian countries were considerably worse off than before the onset of the crisis. And yet the remedies put forward remained those of neo-liberalism, underlain (particularly in Indonesia) by continuing *ad hoc* emergency "social safety net" measures.

No significant debate arose as to whether the form of the development path—especially the continuing liberalization of the economies—was a good thing for the countries and in particular the majority living in impoverished or modest circumstances. It was against this background that the discussion in the

following pages, of the development of local attempts at sustainable development planning and management in the urban context, must be understood.

Following this brief overview of developments in South-East Asia as a whole, three major countries of the region are analysed in more detail, focusing attention on participatory approaches to urban development. The Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia are all countries that are undergoing significant political changes following the collapse of authoritarian regimes. There are some similarities but also many differences in recent social, economic and political evolution as they impact upon development of initiatives in local sustainable development planning and management that are interesting to compare. It is hoped that, together, they provide a significant general view into progress and problems in this respect that contain lessons that are very broadly applicable.

The Philippines

The Philippines is being urbanized rapidly—an estimated 60 per cent of the country's population lived in urban areas in the late 1990s.[3] There are around 65 urban places classified as cities, with the greater Manila area (Metro Manila) containing almost a third of the total urban population in the early 1990s. However, the cities are not the major attraction for rural population and it is in fact the emergence of new urban areas out of erstwhile rural settlements (a rapid growth of towns exceeding 50,000 population) that is the most significant component of urbanization in the Philippines at the present time.

As administrative centres, and generally possessing more dynamic economies, the urban areas have inevitably attracted a population seeking a way out of a declining rural economy. A significant proportion of urban development is informal in nature. In the early 1990s, almost 50 per cent of the country's population lived below the official poverty line and even in urban areas over 40 per cent were living in poverty (UNCHS, 1996).

This clearly means that much of the population has little or no resources to contribute towards any general improvement in urban conditions. Although the Philippines was not hit as badly as other countries in the region by the currency collapse of July 1997, the backwash of the regional depression, nevertheless, also affected it—with a general retrenchment of living standards and a significant return of the urban poor to the countryside.

The efficiency with which the urban areas are working and the quality of life for most of the population are clearly sub-optimal. Attempts to redress this situation inevitably become the main focus of attention with regard to the efforts of local authorities (referred to in the Philippines as "Local Government Units"—LGUs) and communities alike. Here is a list of what are generally deemed to be the most serious environmental problems faced by the inhabitants of towns and cities in the Philippines (DENR, 1997).

Municipal water supply systems serve only a portion of the population with the poor having to buy water from private vendors at inflated prices; virtually all

[3] Unless otherwise noted, information in this section is derived from Samol (1998) and of the author's own experience.

water supplies are contaminated. Totally inadequate wastewater management leads almost everywhere to the gross pollution of urban waterways, groundwater and coastal areas. Only 40 per cent of urban solid waste is collected—the rest being informally burned (adding to local air pollution) or dumped. Flooding (due to both inadequate drainage and inadequate flood protection measures) is perennial particularly in areas occupied by the poor. Urban air pollution is chronic—most significantly from "jeepneys", which form the main means of transport for the poor.[4] It is no coincidence then that in many urban areas respiratory ailments top the list of health problems.

For the poor, however, a high priority issue is insecurity of tenure as a consequence of both confused land right laws and squatting. But above this is clearly the preoccupation with the exigencies of poverty: where the next meal is going to come from. In the context of these urgent preoccupations, it is difficult to generate any broader initiative towards participatory urban planning and management among a substantial proportion of the urban population.

Looking now in general at the issue of "sustainable human development", it must be emphasized that at the level of national policies and programmes the Philippines has displayed considerable concern (Meyrick, 1999). On the one hand, as discussed further below, policies, especially in the new framework of democratization, focus considerable attention on poverty alleviation. One of the most important initiatives of the central government is the Social Reform Agenda, formally adopted in 1996 by Executive Order. Within this, LGUs are directed to lead the implementation and monitoring of their local Social Reform Agenda in co-ordination with the basic sector organizations.

Concerning "sustainable development", it is notable that, even before UNCED, much attention was being paid to the subject. Already in 1989 the conceptual framework for the Philippines Strategy for Sustainable Development was approved and the principles of the strategy were formally integrated into the 1993-1998 Medium Term Philippine Development Plan. Following UNCED, the Philippines Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) was established. It was chaired by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), operated in close partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and included a wide range of civil society stakeholder interests. Overseen by the PCSD and following wide consultation, a national Agenda 21 was published in 1997, followed by a government memorandum directing LGUs to incorporate the principles of the Philippines Agenda 21 into their Social Reform Agenda.

However, at the level of the Local Government Unit and local community, urgency of immediate exigencies, described above, has crowded out any strategic thinking about what might constitute sustainable, as opposed to unsustainable, solutions to local problems. The national and regional offices of the DENR have supported certain campaigns in co-operation with national NGOs—for instance regarding the rehabilitation of urban rivers and moving from a solid waste disposal regime to one of "zero waste" (reduction, reuse,

[4] Newly purchased, these ubiquitous public transport vehicles possess second-hand diesel engines imported from Japan where, beyond a certain number of running hours, their pollution standards are no longer legally accepted.

recycling). However, the impact of national agencies has receded considerably in recent years with the implementation of the Local Government Code (LGC).

Following the collapse of the Marcos regime in 1986, a major concern was to disperse power from the centre to the localities and to provide political space for voices from within civil society. In the first instance this was enshrined in the new constitution, adopted in 1987, which stipulates a greatly augmented role for Local Government Units, and in which an important role is envisaged for NGOs and POs (people's organizations).

With regard to empowering LGUs, this was legislated for via the Local Government Code, enacted in 1992 and implemented from 1994. Of this law, running to almost 100 pages, it has been said that it is "…one of the most comprehensive and progressive decentralization policies in the developing world" (Samol, 1998:12). On the one hand, provincial governors, urban mayors and *barangay* captains (*barangays* are neighbourhood units) are elected and act in conjunction with elected councils at each level. Various other advisory councils also came into existence, the most important of which were the Local Development Councils (LDCs) and Barangay Development Councils (BDCs), which are intended to formulate local development plans with the participation of key local stakeholder groups. The LGC stipulates that at least a quarter of the total membership of these councils should comprise NGO and PO representatives.

The responsibilities of LGUs are greatly augmented and there has been a major reallocation of government personnel aimed at facilitating the carrying out of new functions. The budget allocated to LGUs has risen from 20 to 40 per cent of government revenues. In addition to providing LGUs with the remit and resources to organize local development—and with an emphasis on addressing the needs of the poor—further legislation has been passed (the Urban Development and Housing Act, 1992). This was followed by the repeal of the anti-squatting laws (1997), which directs LGUs to address more coherently one of the main problems of the poor—namely, access to land and security of tenure.

It would seem that, in terms of deciding on those components of development that are within the scope of local government, the basic structures are already in place with which, in principle, local forces can determine their own future. Thus within the limits of local decision making, they seem to be in a position to determine their own route to sustainable human development.

In part this presumes that local government will work actively in co-operation with the various organizations and interests of civil society. In fact, among the three countries surveyed here, the Philippines has the most active NGO community with a notable proportion of the urban population engaged in NGO and PO activity (Webster and Saeed, 1992). National and local urban development NGOs have been instrumental in facilitating some exemplary local projects and national campaigns particularly in the area of environmental improvements. On the other hand, most poor communities have formed POs, often with the support of NGOs and particularly of church organizations. In some urban areas these have come together to form alliances to provide a

united front vis-à-vis government and the key local decision makers, who in practice are those who own or control the use of land.

However, across LGUs as a whole, recent experience is far from answering the call of the new constitution or the LGC for more participatory governance. Clearly the most important local institutions that would allow civil society interests to become involved in the determination of development priorities and the allocation of the municipal budget are LDCs and BDCs. Indications are that by 1998 relatively few LDCs had actually been formed and there were very few BDCs indeed. Even where these exist, the stipulation that at least 25 per cent of the membership should comprise NGOs and POs is not being honoured. An additional problem in some cases where it *is* being honoured is that NGOs and POs are having conflicts with one another in deciding who should be their representatives on the councils.

In general, there remain deep-seated suspicions between local authority personnel and NGOs/POs. In part this would seem to be a legacy of the past where NGOs were opposition organizations; they now find it difficult to make the transition to organizations prepared to co-operate with the authorities. For their part, local authorities find it difficult to see NGOs as constructive partners. Perhaps the main problem, however, lies in the continued functioning of patronage systems in many localities, where traditional powerful individuals and families still dominate the political scene—tantamount to authoritarianism continuing within localities. In these cases there is little chance of any interest either in power sharing or in more open government.

So local priorities and the allocation of the local budget are generally still determined internally. In practice, this has meant that additional budgets have gone predominantly to improvements in general municipal infrastructure (the first priority being roads) with a clear potential for kickbacks, which are of relatively little benefit to the poor. Implementation of the Land Development and Housing Act, which requires LGUs to inventory land ownership and find appropriate sites for low income settlements, has been only very reluctantly carried out and then under pressure from NGOs. The poor are still greatly reliant upon their own means and have yet to find avenues to put the necessary pressure on LGUs to use their newly acquired powers and resources to address their needs more directly.

Meanwhile, the concern at national level to work towards sustainable development has not percolated through to the local level where, as already noted, LGUs pursue conventional urban development priorities and projects and NGOs and POs attempt to swing municipal priorities in favour of the poor. There seem to be many reasons for this, including the fact that neither national government agencies concerned with local development, nor the local authority associations (leagues) were involved in the development of the national Agenda 21 and so feel no sense of ownership (Meyrick, 1999).

Nor is any assistance given by the PCSD and DENR to LGUs concerning how they should interpret and implement the Agenda. There is nothing by way of a national campaign around Agenda 21. Seen from the level of the LGUs, implementation of the LGC is enough by way of augmented responsibilities and no substantive link has been made between the LGC and Agenda 21 (or,

indeed, the Social Reform Agenda—albeit more emphasis is being placed upon this for self-evident reasons).

The concept of Local Agenda 21 and similar approaches to participatory local planning and management that incorporate into the local planning process participation and partnership, transparency and accountability, equity and justice, a respect for the Earth's ecological limits and a concern for future generations has so far reached only a handful of LGUs. On the one hand, there seem to be problems with translating excellent policies at the national level into actions on the ground. On the other hand, there are clear difficulties at the local level to see much beyond immediate crises and contingencies, to envisage emerging problems of the future and to plan to avoid or ameliorate these.

While NEDA's regional plans do generally consider the use of natural resources and the environment within their areas of jurisdiction, often working in close collaboration with their colleagues in the regional DENR, the major problem lies in the lack of machinery to be able to control what happens on the ground. This would require a more proactive approach to local/regional economic development (rather than the present desire to encourage almost any inward investment for the jobs that it brings and then to apply lax environmental controls for fear that it will move elsewhere). It would also require LGUs, together with urban communities, to work much more closely with the regional NEDA and DENR offices to better understand the implications of sustainable development and to collaborate on the details of implementing relevant programmes and projects.

Thailand

With little over a third of its population living in urban areas, Thailand is the least urbanized but at the same time the most industrialized of the three countries being examined here, possessing the highest per capita GNP.[5] Urbanization, and indeed economic activity, is concentrated in and around Bangkok to an extreme degree. The Bangkok metropolitan region (BMR) contains almost half of the urban population and if the Eastern Seaboard is included (an almost continuously urbanized subregion) this brings the regional population up to 80 per cent of the total urban population of the country. Outside the BMR cities are modest in size—only a handful containing populations much in excess of 200,000. But urbanization is occurring with some rapidity and it is expected that by 2008 half the population will be living in urban areas.

Although the statistics for the three countries are not comparable, urban poverty is clearly less extensive in Thailand than in Indonesia or the Philippines. In the mid-1990s there were just under 2,000 identified poor urban communities housing about 1.7 million people amounting to 8 per cent of the urban population. (Of course not all families living in low income settlements would be below the poverty line, but the numbers of families living in otherwise more affluent neighbourhoods could also be expected to subsist below the poverty line.) The distribution of poor urban households is fairly even across the urban areas, with half in Bangkok, another quarter in the

[5] Unless otherwise noted, information in this section is derived from Mitlin (1998) and the experience of the author.

outlying BMR and the rest distributed in towns and cities throughout the country. There are few urban areas of any significance without identifiable poor communities living in makeshift conditions.

The quality of life of Thai towns and cities, reflecting the better economic situation, is less obviously wanting than is the case with urban areas in either Indonesia or the Philippines. However, conditions are still far from ideal. While water supply is generally good (even some very rudimentary poor settlements have metered house-to-house water supply!), wastewater disposal is poorly organized almost everywhere. This results in the gross pollution of local waterways and unfilled land, along and upon which are located many of the low income settlements in very unsanitary conditions (Rattanatanya, 1997). Only 42 per cent of urban solid waste is officially collected, with dumping of significant amounts of industrial hazardous waste constituting an additional problem in some parts of the BMR in particular. Air pollution is also a serious problem in certain urban locations, especially Bangkok.

Although urban poverty is relatively contained, it is not insignificant, with an estimated 15 per cent of poor households squatting—meaning that they have no legal right to any urban services and that even education is provided at the discretion of the school. The environmental conditions of poor settlements were in the past very abject—houses usually being built in flood-prone areas and over paddy fields where wastewater and solid waste accumulated in a very insanitary fashion and where precarious boardwalks were the only means of access. A few areas remain in this condition although various programmes for upgrading of basic infrastructure and introducing health programmes have improved basic environmental and health conditions notably.

The impact of currency deregulation in July 1997 was more severe in Thailand than in the Philippines with an immediate impact on industry and consequently on employment. In fact this was preceded by a major real estate crisis that had already severely reduced employment in the construction sector. Open unemployment tripled between mid-1997 and mid-1998, and the number of people living below the poverty line increased from 16 to 28 per cent (Lee, 1999). Measures were soon taken at the national level to initiate programmes aimed at alleviating the hardship caused. This included establishing a National Social Development Committee to devise and oversee augmented social programmes (already a priority in the new constitution), and collaborating with the World Bank, which instituted a Social Investment Fund aimed at funnelling money directly into projects in poor settlements.

Concerning sustainable development, it might be expected that, with less pressure to alleviate poverty in Thailand, more energy would be spent on addressing problems of the future concerned with sustainable development. This has not, however, been the case. There is wide usage of the term "sustainable development" by government agencies, NGOs and the media—and it also featured in the eighth National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP), 1995-2001—albeit not in the new constitution. However, little progress has been made towards any coherent idea of what this might mean in practice.

Government agencies concerned with the environment—the Office of Environmental Policy and Planning (OEPP) in particular—have sponsored various sectoral programmes on global environmental issues. These include global warming and biodiversity. They have not, however, been studied within any more comprehensive framework regarding sustainable development in the Thai context, or how to achieve it, nor has it involved local authorities or communities.

It is only very recently that a subcommittee of the National Environment Board, including experts and representatives of various government agencies and NGOs, was convened to oversee the generation of a national Agenda 21. The draft—entitled Policy and National Action Plan for Sustainable Development—was approved by the subcommittee in mid-1999 with the intention of gaining cabinet approval so that it can form one of the inputs to the ninth NESDP.

The concept of sustainable development has made virtually no headway at the local level. As we shall see below, there have been some initiatives in developing Local Agenda 21 processes, but these have been entirely oriented towards improvement in local environmental management without reference to the distinction between sustainable solutions and those that are questionable from a sustainability perspective.

Moving now to the issue of decentralization and democratization, following the collapse of the military regime in 1992, there was a clear popular resolve to radically reform the Thai polity, to establish once and for all a thoroughgoing democratic regime at all levels that would not be subject to frequent reversals. The issue of decentralization was directly connected with this aspiration. There was much public debate and after several years of work on the part of the constitutional commission, a new constitution was enacted in October 1997. The new constitution has much to say about an augmented role for local government and also about the right of members of civil society to participate in government decision making.

Of course implementation of the constitution requires laws and regulations and, at the time of writing, relatively little had been done to give substance to the constitutional call for decentralization. The larger urban areas (*thesaban*) have had democratically elected councils since shortly after the establishment of the constitutional monarchy. Where previously the mayor was appointed by the council, a new law requires separate election of mayors. The smallest rural administrative units (*tambons*) have now gained similar arrangements—known as "local administrative organizations"—and the smaller urban places (*sukaphiban*) have all been "upgraded" to *thesaban*, including the introduction of "local administrative organizations".

However, the linchpin of local government in Thailand has always been the provinces (*changwat*) and so far these have not been subject to any major change. Perhaps it would be useful to add a word here about the background to the politics of decentralization in Thailand (Atkinson and Vorratnchaiphan, 1994). Local government in Thailand is organized under the Ministry of Interior (MoI), which was the first to be established in the process of modernizing the Thai state at the end of the last century. It was given far-

reaching powers to establish a strong, centralized administration specifically to guard against incursion of European colonial powers leaning against all the frontiers of the country. At the time, provincial societies saw this as a process of internal colonization, but uprisings in the early years of this century were systematically crushed. Over the years, this relationship came to seem natural—it was the prerogative of the Ministry of Interior to run the provinces and of provincial societies to accept their disempowerment.

During the recent constitutional debates, many called for the election of provincial governors and the creation of autonomous units at this level. This was openly and bitterly fought by senior officials of the MoI. The main point is that provincial governors are, in terms of status, close to ministers and run provinces almost as personal fiefdoms. The goal of many ambitious MoI staff is some day to be appointed governor of a province. On the whole, the other ministries are happy with this arrangement because they administer their programmes through provincial offices that are co-ordinated by the governor, who also plays a role in determining their programmes.

Local programmes and projects are almost entirely planned and executed by central government agencies through the provinces. The budgets of *thesaban*, *sukaphiban* and *tambons* are derisory and although there has been some improvement since the late 1980s, when they were not only small but diminishing (Rüland, 1992), local budgets remain very restricted. Since the Municipal Act of 1954, municipalities have had many responsibilities that they are supposed to carry out, but without untied financial resources they are not in a position to determine their own priorities or to carry out activities that are not directly supported by national government agencies. The battle to achieve genuine decentralization in Thailand—that is progressing in both the Philippines and, as we shall see, Indonesia—is by no means lost, and the constitution, together with the eighth NESDP, lends some support to those who would pursue it. But it may be some time before the provincial nexus, and with it the centralization of government budgets, is broken.

It might be conjectured that it would require effective pressure from the local level to force the situation with regard to decentralization. Of course—as we have seen in the case of the Philippines—powers given by central government do not of themselves empower local stakeholders without their active involvement.

In fact at the local level there has been considerable development of mechanisms and activities promoting participatory initiatives in Thailand (Atkinson, 1996). On the one hand, the private sector has been invited to contribute in a structured manner to the development decision-making process at national and provincial level through Joint Public and Private Sector Consultative Committees (Laothamatas, 1992). This may be interpreted negatively as allowing business interests privileged access to development decisions involving public funds, which is denied to other civil society actors. It is notable that it was with direct United States and Japanese government "development assistance", in the spirit of liberalization, that this arrangement came into being.

On the other hand, NGOs have been somewhat slower to develop in Thailand than in the other two countries under review (Webster and Saeed, 1992). Nevertheless, there have been notable successes by development NGOs focusing on the organization of poor urban communities. Also there has been a spontaneous formation in many provincial cities of active "civic groups", comprised of middle class professionals, academics and business people to promote the improvement of the urban quality of life through pressure on municipalities and philanthropic work.

At the level of poor communities, there has also been considerable activity. This has involved not only spontaneous organization and the assistance of local NGOs, but also pressure at the central level that has precipitated experiments by the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority and the institution of a national agency, the Urban Community Development Office (UCDO), for the support of community organization and self-activity. Starting in Bangkok already in 1978, poor communities were encouraged to form community committees as vehicles for both self-help and negotiating local government improvement programmes. This became national policy in 1988 and by the late 1990s almost 90 per cent of poor Bangkok communities possessed these committees—whereas in the provinces less than a quarter had yet formed any.

Many community committees have gained support from the UCDO or other sources—including international and bilateral assistance organizations—to make improvements in the local environment, create small businesses, etc. Many municipalities now possess social development offices that work with community committees—which in some cases have formed networks—to determine municipal programmes in poor areas. However, not all municipalities are responsive to working with community committees and where communities do not organize—as is the case in many provincial towns—then they are likely to lose out on the provision of services. Also, in cases without land rights the institutional environment can be very hostile.

Furthermore, there is no monitoring of the representativeness of community committees and of whether they are serving the interests of the whole community or just part of it. As yet the emphasis is entirely on making small gains within the community with little interest in influencing the wider political process and the distribution of resources at the level of the district or the municipality. Certainly there is no consideration of the long term of "sustainable development".

One further approach to participatory planning has been taken within the municipalities. This is a process initiated by a GTZ-funded project in the early 1990s (Atkinson and Vorratnchaiphan, 1996). This was initially concerned with improving environmental management in municipalities, eventually becoming an initiative to develop a comprehensive participatory municipal planning system. The initial project helped to establish multi-stakeholder committees and trained them in problem identification, prioritization, planning and implementation.

In November 1995, a year after the end of the project, the MoI issued a directive requiring all municipalities to form such committees and to adopt the planning process as a basis for municipal budget planning. While some

initiatives were taken by other donors and by the Municipal League of Thailand—the latter using the concept of Local Agenda 21, albeit with very little attention paid to sustainable development—this was entirely inadequate. By the late 1990s few municipalities had done any more than assemble a planning committee and even these tended to bypass it in compiling the municipal budget.

As is the case in the Philippines, this of course relates back in part to the lack of interest in opening up the political decision-making process in a situation where traditional power brokers are able to wield power through patronage—with poor communities often their most loyal supporters. Some local NGOs have tried to encourage the municipalities towards greater participation, but on the whole there has been considerable hostility between municipalities and local NGOs—including civic groups that comprise precisely elements of the new middle class that feel the need for substantial municipal reform.

The bottom line, however, is the general weakness of municipalities. Even where these accept a more participatory approach to budget planning, the limited resources mean that plans cover relatively little of what gets done locally. The main decisions are still taken by national government agencies and private sector actors without any access to these decisions for civil society interests. There has been talk at the national level—around a notion termed "Area Functioning Participatory Approach" (AFP)—to introduce more participatory methods of planning at all non-central levels of government in line with the general requirements of the new constitution. But at the time of writing this had not borne any tangible fruit.

Indonesia

Although comprising a substantial landmass of some 2 million square kilometres distributed over approximately 14,000 islands, almost two thirds of Indonesia's population is concentrated on the relatively small island of Java, together with neighbouring Bali and Madura.[6] Urbanization has been progressing in recent years at a rate of about 2.2 million new urban inhabitants a year, mostly in Java. By the late 1990s well over a third of the population was urban and the expectation is that over half will be urban by 2005. Javanese culture is one of small peasantry and about two thirds of the new urban population is of peasant origin.

Although new urbanization is distributed between growth of existing urban areas and the emergence of new towns and cities in rural areas, Indonesia distinguishes itself in regional terms by the growth of very large cities. Already in 1990 there were 10 metropolitan areas (seven of these in Java) with over a million people, and there are two more or less continuously urbanized corridors within Java that already contain almost two thirds of the urban population of the island.

In recent years the Indonesian government has had strong and coherent urban development policies and programmes, but urban authorities have still failed to keep abreast of changing conditions on the ground, where significant areas

[6] Unless otherwise noted, information in this section is derived from Atkinson (1998a), as well as from the author's own subsequent experience.

have developed informally. In the 1960s and 1970s these developments were in both inner and outer urban areas, but more recently they have been predominantly on the urban peripheries where migrants are settling close to existing villages to form what amount in extreme cases to emergent cities of informal development.

In general the state of Indonesian cities is similar to that of cities in the Philippines, reflecting the high levels of poverty and informal developments. In spite of highly structured programmes aimed at improving urban living conditions, there remain everywhere shortfalls in major areas of service provision and the state of the environment (Kusbiantoro, 1997). Nevertheless, over the past 25 years, a very extensive programme (the Kampung Improvement Programme—KIP), financed mainly by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, has been organized to legalize informal settlements. This programme has provided basic infrastructure, which has had notable results in upgrading large numbers of poor settlements throughout urban Indonesia.

Over the years the proportion of the urban population living in poverty steadily declined to such an extent that by 1996 official estimates put it at just 10 per cent. This situation was reversed dramatically by the currency collapse of July 1997. The value of the currency continued to deteriorate for many months after the initial shock and the rupiah hit bottom at 15 per cent of its pre-crisis exchange value against the US dollar.[7] The impact was immediate and dramatic, resulting in the collapse of industry. For instance, in Surabaya, on one major industrial estate alone, over 10,000 workers were made redundant within a matter of weeks. By mid-1998, 20 per cent of formal sector jobs in Indonesia had disappeared and GDP had declined by 15 per cent (Lee, 1999). The prices of staple foods climbed so high that the spectre of mass starvation arose and the government initiated an emergency programme to distribute the "nine basics".

By mid-1998 government estimates put the proportion of the population subsisting below the poverty line at just under 40 per cent—and rising. The International Labour Organization (1998) estimated that this would rise to over 60 per cent by the middle of 1999 and in mid-1999 the World Bank confirmed that, in spite of superficial indications of economic recovery, poverty was indeed continuing to rise. By mid-1998 all major international and bilateral development agencies had instituted some form of emergency assistance programme for the country (BAPPENAS/UNDP, 1998) and each government agency was making its own contribution to construct a "social safety net" and other aspects of emergency relief.

Regarding the orientation towards sustainable development, it would seem *prima facie* that under current conditions it might be difficult to focus attention on the more distant future in the form of a vision and programmes aimed to achieve sustainable development. On the other hand, the circumstances should cause some introspection as to the wisdom of previous development efforts involving inward investment to develop manufacturing industry based on cheap labour under a regime of liberalization. Unfortunately, none of the

[7] By the middle of 1999 it had returned to 35 per cent of its pre-crisis level but remained unstable.

emergency programmes is interested in supporting any reconsideration of what might or might not be sustainable by way of development in the future—with the implication that the solution is to continue past efforts but to try harder.[8]

The Indonesian government did sign Agenda 21. With external assistance and under the supervision of the Environment Ministry—and the rather restricted involvement of the wider public—a national Agenda 21 was also produced and published in time for the 1997 "Rio Plus Five" conference. This is a very substantial but very technical document produced with little success in gaining the attention of actors who might be in a position to implement its recommendations. Virtually no notice has been taken of the document either by the media or by relevant government agencies (those responsible for determining the form that national development should take).

The term "sustainable development" has made some headway in popular discourse, as reflected by its use in the media, but has not gained any substantive meaning. Except in a few cities (as discussed below) it is not yet part of the discourse of urban planners and authorities regarding directions that should be taken by local development programmes and projects.

Concerning political developments, it is clear that it was the economic crisis (which, in fact, included a major drought and the ecological disaster of forest burning) that precipitated the collapse of the Suharto regime in May 1998. This government, masquerading as a democratic regime, was in practice a more thoroughly organized form of authoritarianism than in either of the other two countries under review (Schwarz, 1999). Of the three permitted political parties, one was the official party with the electoral system heavily favouring its continued hold on power; it in turn elected the president. The institutional framework of government down to the community level incorporated machinery, including press censorship, designed to keep the existing political system firmly in place.

Political unrest, sometimes of a violent nature, had been growing, but in the end it was probably external pressure that convinced the military to cease supporting the president—forcing him to resign. Immediate steps were taken to start the process of genuine democratization and decentralization. However, calls for constitutional reform were resisted and the decision was to continue with an interim regime passing legislation to implement the urgent demands for reform.

Among the first reform legislation, what most interested the general public was freedom of expression and opening up the electoral process to new political parties, with the aim of having new national elections take place at the earliest opportunity. However, although of less public interest, legislation concerned with the decentralization of government and the associated redistribution of government funds enacted in April 1999 has the potential to be considerably more far-reaching in impact.

[8] One USAID emergency project is entitled "Sustained Liberalization of International Trade and Domestic Competition for the Mutual Benefit of Indonesia and the United States".

Throughout the Suharto era, government was highly centralized. Provincial governors and district heads, including urban mayors, were appointed and, although there were elected councils, these only had an advisory function. Local government was essentially central government operating at the local level—their budgets were very small, not even adequately covering staff costs, and all development costs were covered directly from central government budgets with spending determined by central government agencies. Consequently, local programmes were extremely uniform in design and implementation, and therefore often highly inappropriate, resulting in wastage of considerable resources.

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, with some involvement of other external development agencies, lent support to local "integrated urban infrastructure development programmes" throughout urban Indonesia, ostensibly designed to make investments appropriate to each city. Nevertheless, in practice local involvement was half-hearted in view of the lack of any genuine local ownership of the programme (Atkinson, 1998b) and major decisions concerning methods and standards of delivery remained with the central government or with external consultants.

The April 1999 legislation—to be implemented in stages until the end of 2002—appears to change this fundamentally, leapfrogging the Thai attempts at decentralization and coming closer to the situation in the Philippines. The focus of this basic legislation is upon creating autonomous local government at the district and city levels at the expense of both central and provincial government. As in the past, elected Legislative Councils (DPRDs) are called for, but these now have a legislative function and are empowered to appoint the mayor.

Nevertheless, the umbrella legislation is very open to interpretation—seen in one analysis as still offering government the possibility to dictate local policies and programmes from the centre (SUDP, 1999). The point is that central government agencies may still issue regulations aimed at local government functions and, in practice, are doing so, but that these are now ostensibly only advisory. Local governments, unsure of how to proceed with their newly won freedom, may simply succumb to central government "advice", thereby making it equivalent to directives. This is likely at some stage to come to the courts when the more self-confident municipalities decide that they want to do things their own way.

Municipalities will also have a substantial development budget and be in a position to determine both how it should be spent and how it should be administered. Specific legislation is being enacted on combating the corruption, collusion and nepotism in government (widely discussed under the acronym of KKN—*korupsi, kolusi dan nepotism*) that was so structurally embedded in the old system.[9] Reference in the legislation to accountability and in particular the

[9] The nature of "corruption" as a system of allegiance-building within government, where inadequate salaries are supplemented by payments to staff, some legal and some illegal, made by those in a position to obtain and dispose of money, is now becoming well-understood. In this light, structural measures may be taken to destroy the system and create a more public service-oriented attitude among public servants (Manning, 1999).

involvement of the general public in the decision-making process is, however, sketchy, being referred to only in the regulations and then leaving the format of participation open. One mechanism referred to is that of "urban forums", which local governments are expected to organize periodically to promote discussion between government and the public.

As yet, the legislation is in a state where it is being digested. Elections for members of both the national parliament and local legislative councils were combined and held in June 1999. The next stage will be the appointment of the mayors. So far, however, there is little understanding of how the local bureaucracy might be reorganized to suit local needs. The budget planning process in 1999 was as in previous years (a rigid system controlled by the central government), but in future years local budgeting processes will come into operation and it will be crucial to find means of planning that will genuinely respond to local needs.

So who is concerned with these issues? Looking at organizations of civil society it is a remarkable fact that, even before the collapse of authoritarianism, there was a reasonably strong NGO movement in Indonesia (Webster and Saeed, 1992). As long as they were not overtly political (and many of them were covertly so), they were tolerated and acted in many fields including legal rights, the environment and development issues (Korten, 1987). In the field of urban development there were many initiatives assisting informal communities to organize, albeit predominantly around self-help improvements (URDI, 1999) with no ambition to influence the wider decision-making process regarding the direction and allocation of resources across the town or city as a whole.

Following the fall of the Suharto regime, the floodgates opened to debate and experimentation. Many different initiatives are being developed and the paragraphs that follow focus particular attention on the case of Surabaya, Indonesia's second city located in east Java, with a population of a little under three million in a metropolitan region of almost eight million. It is important to note that Surabaya has prior experience of participatory urban planning. In the 1970s a low income settlement upgrading programme was implemented within the general framework of the KIP (encompassing two thirds of the city's population). This was unlike other Indonesian cities where measures were determined by bureaucrats and their consultants. In Surabaya there were genuine experiments with participatory methods of determining what should be done and how to do it (Silas, 1992). The circumstances that encouraged this were an enlightened mayor working closely with the Surabaya Institute of Technology (ITS) within what is the most affluent municipality in Indonesia.

With a new mayor, appointed in the early 1990s, the participatory approach declined. After the fall of the regime, newly vocal local NGOs accused the old programme of being interested only in self-help and local improvements, rather than empowerment of poor communities to be able to make broader demands on the political system.

In the spring of 1997 a German government-supported project was initiated in Surabaya with the intention of assisting in the development of participatory decision-making processes around improvements in the quality of life at the community level; in the first instance this was to be little more that building on

and systematizing the earlier KIP experience. Four communities were selected out of an initial 12 via wide consultation. Universities were commissioned to organize rapid appraisals of the communities, including a stakeholder analysis to help bring together a "forum" that would represent main groupings within the communities and be trained in local planning. The formation of Environmental Communication Forums (FKLHs), followed by a process of training and involvement of the wider community, was organized by local NGOs and the results were twofold—the production of local plans and more aware and vocal communities able to make structured demands of the municipality.

There is always a danger that such initiatives can collapse if the plans are not implemented. While the intention was that these decision-making forums would come to occupy a place in the overall budget planning for the city, this was certainly not immediately on the cards. Some city departments co-operated, including the city water supply corporation. Then the project succeeded in collaborating with the emergency programme of the national Public Works Department, which had to disperse large amounts of money in a short period and was happy to find local ventures into which they could channel their funds.

But it was clear that these—in the first instance predominantly self-help—initiatives would die once the project ended unless there were a considerably more coherent institutional framework within which they would have an ongoing place and function. Already before the collapse of the old regime, the project was attempting to bring together key stakeholder groups at the city level. This had the intention of bringing into existence a more or less formal pressure group to voice the concerns of civil society—and promote the local community plans—at the level of the city authorities. Whether this could have worked under the old regime is a moot question.

With the collapse of the regime the intended forum—initially christened Sustainable Development Forum (FKPB)—immediately initiated debate around issues that should become the focus of reformed local government. Indeed, both the mode of organization of the community initiatives and the FKPB became the focus of attention of the now reform-minded central government and external assistance agencies as indicating possibilities for public participation in local government decision making. USAID immediately undertook to assist a number of other cities in east Java to establish FKPBs albeit with close ties to government.

However, as we have seen in the cases of the Philippines and Thailand, the abandonment of authoritarianism does not immediately bring clear reform. Of particular interest in the local debate in Surabaya is the insistence of the FKPB to be independent of government. Some NGOs accuse it of wanting to collude with government even before it has taken any substantive initiative to do anything in collaboration with local government. The fear of co-optation that was so often the experience of NGOs in the past when they attempted to promote civil society interests is strong and even private sector and university participants in the process steer a careful path. The initial preference is to advise the newly democratic Legislative Council rather than to engage directly with the machinery of local government.

On the other hand, it is clear that, at this point in time, the field iswide open to non-government initiative to help define what local government is to become in the future. If, however, local government is left to its own devices there is a real danger that entrenched interests will succeed in establishing local authoritarianism as is evident in so many local authorities in the Philippines and Thailand.

In fact, the preoccupations of the FKPB—and one might say of the local forces of reform more generally—are not yet oriented towards "sustainable human development" in any very coherent way. The initial priorities of the FKPB are environmental pollution, land and settlement including tenure, the informal economy and provision of public services. Work is proceeding actively on the first two issues partly because there happen to be people active in these issues. While it is clear that these—and particularly the issue of land—are relevant to the needs of the poor and possibly also to achieving a more sustainable city, in practice, the debates remain at some distance from the *prima facie* needs on either score.

The FKPB is not making common political cause with the poor: attempts to involve the interests of the poor (for example, associations of informal traders and pedicab drivers) have not been successful and membership of the forum is, with the exception of a very active trade union representative, exclusively "new middle class", albeit with some young and active NGO people.[10] Although originally named the Sustainable Development Forum there seem to be too many urgent issues to be dealt with to be able to focus serious attention on what might constitute a coherent and effective approach to sustainable development. The result is that after one year in existence the Forum renamed itself simply the Surabaya Urban Forum (FKS) in order to be seen as more mainstream and meriting a central position in the emerging system of local government.[11]

In other towns and cities throughout Indonesia, similar experiments and experiences are unfolding spontaneously (active NGOs working with local government) or with external assistance. Indeed, the growth in assistance programmes as a consequence of the emergency has meant that programmes are tripping over one another in all the major cities. It thus becomes advisable (this is happening in Surabaya) to hold regular co-ordination meetings among the various initiatives with, even then, a constant danger of contradictory initiatives and wastage of resources. Most of the effort (such as the massive World Bank and Asian Development Bank poverty alleviation programmes designed to channel money directly into local communities) is focused on improvements to the environment of poor communities—essentially KIP based on new participatory decision-making processes.

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[10] The importance of youth as the driving force of the reform process in Indonesia at present can hardly be overstressed, where much of the new middle class is too tainted with KKN to be seriously committed to fundamental reform.

[11] The new legislation calls for the convening of forums as a means of communication between municipalities and other stakeholder groups. In fact the legislators already had the Surabaya experience in mind; now the members of the FKS wish to ensure that *they* are seen as the legitimate body to fill this role!

Much of this experience encounters the inevitable contradictions between large-scale programmes and the need to be sensitive to local contingencies, which often takes more time to resolve and greater sensitivity to specific local circumstances than such programmes are prepared to countenance. Furthermore, they have little or no interest in empowering communities in the sense of orienting them to voice their needs in the wider political process.

These ostensibly participatory initiatives could potentially be very counterproductive. There is a tendency for agencies to bypass local authorities and work directly with the community. Some local authorities may attempt to use the freedoms and opportunities created by the recent decentralization laws by adopting new forms of command-oriented government with perfunctory measures of public consultation designed to legitimate their own activities rather than respond to locally expressed needs. But there are also various attempts to work at the city and provincial level, as in the case of the FKS in Surabaya, to devise means to ensure that the local governments of the future are held accountable and *do* have a more positive orientation towards participation and sustainable development.

V. Conclusions

There are many lessons that can be learned from the three cases presented above. While the general social, economic and political circumstances of the three countries vary significantly, they also share various common features. The most obvious of these relate back to the structural context discussed earlier in the paper. However, there are significant factors that emerge from the detailed analysis. The reality is that "sustainable development" remains a rather distant goal of the political process in the face of local realities and the dominance of more immediate economic goals. However, the changing structure of the societies in question—and in particular the rise of a significant urban middle class with aspirations to create more "modern" political and physical conditions—is a factor that needs to be further explored.

It is clear that in all the countries analysed above, some progress is being made in the development of more participatory approaches to urban planning and management, with a focus on the needs of the poor. Less certain is whether this can in any way be seen as pursuing a consistent—or meaningful—path to sustainability.

What is clearly in evidence is a strong desire among the "modern", urban-based middle classes of all three countries—including strong student movements—to create new political systems at the municipal level. The patronage relations of the past, with their corrupt practices, cronyism and nepotism, are deemed unacceptable. The struggle is to detach the "big men" and "big families" from their clientele among the poor and ignorant and to push the military out of politics and back into the barracks. There is a strong self-image among this class—whether justified or not—of their individual worth in successful business and professional abilities, and—in the case of students—of their responsibility to create a new society. They feel that they and their fellow new middle class citizens understand and can deal with the modern world, are not

corrupt in their practices and so have a greater right to govern. There is a clear throw-back to the rise of the middle class and the sense of modern citizenry in Europe in past centuries.

Where this remained repressed under the previous authoritarian regimes, it is now strongly visible, discussed in the media and evident in the organization of political parties, business, professional and "civic" associations, and politically oriented NGOs. Economic growth in these countries in the recent past has created these classes and the international context, promoting democratization and decentralization, is now favouring their rise to power. The process of their taking this power and deciding how it should be channelled and used has, however, only just begun and the final outcome is by no means clear.

At the same time, however, the very factors of economic globalization that created this class through the economic development of East Asia have both depended on a reserve of economically active poor and, as is so well illustrated by the 1997 economic collapse of the region, continue to maintain and even extend this sea of poverty.

Participatory urban planning and management processes (we will not at this stage mention "sustainable development"), as developed up to now and to the extent that they have achieved some successes, have two different focuses and constituencies. On the one hand, community development initiatives are favoured by many constituencies in so far as they focus predominantly on self-help initiatives among the poor. Recognition that the poor also have some rights has progressed matters from a situation where their settlements were actively destroyed, via a less aggressive policy of "benign neglect", to a point where they are on the whole given basic recognition and basic services. This does not yet amount to a recognition of full citizens' rights (access by the middle classes to power and resources is of a different order). But the poor have received some benefits at little cost to the middle classes.

On the other hand, the middle classes are becoming more aware (as did the middle classes in Europe and North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) of the need to be active in creating cities that are liveable. The activities of civic groups, while of less interest to the development co-operation agencies with their strong focus on poverty alleviation, are nevertheless aiming at the same general goal of creating more participatory forms of urban planning and management—that is accountable and that creates more liveable cities. Indeed, if more coherent initiatives are to appear in the pursuit of "sustainable development", then it is these groups that one can expect to be the carriers: there is really very little that can be done among poor communities to pursue "primary sustainability" as they already live extremely frugal lives and have little or no power to determine wider policies and programmes of urban development.

This points to a two-pronged conundrum. The first is how can the two sets of urban participatory planning and management initiatives be forged into a single system that looks after the interests of all urban citizens? In Europe we know how there came to be more egalitarian societies. This happened in part through the self-organization of the poor (in the form particularly of labour unions and, in some countries also tenants associations within the ideological framework of

socialism) and in part through the emergence of social democracies that realized that societies work better when there is less inequality, where education and a reasonable standard of living for all become a basis for greater efficiency and less social tension and eventually a greater capacity for co-operation.

Neither of the main bases of the organization of the European poor exist to any great extent in Southeast Asia: industrialization is not employing a very large percentage of the poor and most live in informal conditions where mass tenancy is not an issue.[12] So a more concerted effort will be necessary on the part of the new middle classes as they consolidate their hold on political power to realize the need for more unified societies and to help to create the bases for these. Local participatory approaches to urban planning and management provide a milieu in which relevant ideas and aspirations could be developed, but it will also take more coherent and assertive civic movements before very much will be achieved. Impetus could be given to this through greater commitment to sustainable development where the middle classes will have to rethink their own lifestyle quite radically. In the process, they will need to collaborate more closely with the poor—who will also need more resources—if they are to develop coherent, truly sustainable, alternatives with which all citizens are prepared to co-operate.

The second point concerns the context of economic globalization and, more specifically, the promotion and spread of neo-liberal ideology and practice. It seems strange that, in spite of increasing evidence that liberalization worsens the situation for the poor and the local environment in the countries of the South, it continues to be widely adhered to (Forrester, 1999). It may be in the interest of certain sectors of business to promote liberalization, but it seems clear that many social groups, including some in the business community, are not benefiting from liberalization. On the contrary, all indications are that the economies of the South—and not only post-July 1997 Asia—are continuing to deteriorate, with the incidence of poverty spreading (Shutt, 1998; UNRISD, 1995).

It should be perfectly clear that local programmes—including the plethora of emergency programmes in Indonesia discussed above—are not going to solve the problems of the poor on their own. There are no meaningful indications that these can be solved without addressing the problems arising from the continued application of liberalization. Some protection measures at national, regional and local level are necessary. Some appropriate economic mechanisms are required to add to the social and environmental concerns of participatory urban planning and management initiatives.

Finally, concerning the question of sustainable development, this concept potentially provides a vehicle with which to rethink the development process in the context of the new, participatory forms of local decision making. Perhaps this is what is needed in order to provide a new direction against the destructive tendencies of liberalization. Certainly, there are big questions

[12] Many informal settlements are the subject of quite high levels of tenancy, but this involves small landlords of relatively makeshift housing quite distinct from the large-scale construction in early twentieth century European cities that were vulnerable to the pressure of mass movements.

regarding sustainability to be asked about current trends in urban development in the countries discussed in this paper.

Indeed, with the emergence of megacities, dependent on massive throughputs of resources that at some stage could become curtailed, the sudden precipitation of a much deeper privation than is currently suffered by the poor cannot be ruled out (Atkinson, 1993). Perhaps this should be taken as a major task of development agencies in the coming years: to raise the level of debate concerning the sustainability of urban developments in the context of local participatory planning and management initiatives and to devise programmes to turn things around.

This brings us to the question of what role development agencies might play to promote the development of participatory urban sustainable development planning and management initiatives. In the first instance it is useful to summarize some of the main conclusions from the three case studies analysed above.

Decentralization is coming into its own, at least as a term and in terms of countries passing legislation concerned with decentralization. In practice, this is an extremely complex issue (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983) that cannot be discussed here in any detail. It does, however, need to be flagged in so far as it is an important background condition that must be got right if local sustainable development initiatives are to make genuine progress. Essentially, improvement in urban management that is more than marginal requires that local authorities have the resources and capacities to co-ordinate and enable actions to take place at the level of an overall development framework—including overall planning and implementation of main social and technical infrastructure. Neither central governments nor local communities can do this and decentralization must provide both powers and resources that enable local governments to perform these functions effectively.

Whether locally initiated or externally assisted, community development projects that pay inadequate attention to the machinery of interacting with local government (which is unfortunately all too common at present) run the risk of pushing local government into various bad practices. These include internal corruption due to the domination of local mafiosi and/or inadequate scrutiny on the part of local communities that are overly concerned with solving their own problems in their own way (and paying inadequate attention to making local authorities genuinely accountable). They also include programmes that are poorly designed and executed due to inadequate consultation. Urban programmes need to function simultaneously on all levels of decision making in order to become effective—namely to encourage genuine decentralization (powers and resources), encourage open local government and facilitate effective community involvement in local development.

Participation is also in fashion but can easily be construed and constructed in ways that do not empower those excluded by previous, unparticipatory, forms of decision making and praxis. It has often been noted that genuine participation is easier to achieve in rural than in urban areas. There is good reason for this where social capital in rural areas is made up of networks of family and other community allegiances—in practice usually strongly

patriarchal and hierarchical—that either predated new participatory initiatives or are otherwise structurally embedded in the local culture. In urban areas most neighbourhoods are made up of families and individuals who have come from various places and have no previous allegiance to one another and often little long-term commitment to the local community, possibly made up of different ethnic, religious and even language groups. Forging common decision-making processes and eventually consensus over development initiatives is inevitably more difficult.

It is not impossible, however, requiring sensitivity and time to create a sense of common needs and destiny before any very substantial work can be done. A marginal local project—such as a health programme or greening the neighbourhood—may help to build local confidence in the usefulness of working together, and the depth of initiatives—in terms of cost and change to the local environment and living conditions—can be increased from there. The efficacy of this approach is shown from relevant project results. However, the impatience of externally financed projects in particular, often designed to run just one or two years, to see immediate results can lead to very counter-productive reactions.

For instance in many projects participation is enshrined in brief exercises such as rapid appraisals and so dispensed with in short shrift. This allows the project to then take all the main decisions in an "efficient" manner (albeit probably not answering real local needs or engendering a local sense of ownership in project outputs). Worse still, frustration at the slowness of building effective community decision-making processes leads to an opinion that perhaps we should return to trying to get municipalities to carry out the full range of development programmes. This was, indeed, the way that urban planning and management evolved in Europe following the reform movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The answer to this lies in a better analysis of the circumstances of burgeoning cities in the South. The industrialization process and its social and political effects in European and American cities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were very different from the urbanization processes and the social and political circumstances surrounding these in the countries of the South today. Essentially, it is necessary for a new politics of cohesion and collaboration to emerge if the problems of urban sustainable development are to be solved effectively.

As noted above, in Europe and North America such a "new urban politics" emerged in the form of various social movements, including middle class civic movements and particularly unionization and tenants' movements among the poor in the framework of the ideology of socialism. Externally assisted projects cannot intervene directly in local politics, but should recognize and, where legitimate, support local movements that promise to yield effective forms of co-operation to solve local urban problems. Hence the importance of promoting decentralization and participation exercises as an essential part of improving urban living conditions.

Returning finally to the problematic of "primary sustainability", it is difficult to provide advice here. Externally assisted projects to produce national Agenda 21

documents have not been effective in the countries of the South (viz the examples provided above), but one cannot genuinely say that they have been effective anywhere. The discourse is still open and certainly it is at the local and subregional levels that at least some practical measures have started to be taken. In the context of local participatory urban planning and management programmes, the advice can only be to continue to attempt to introduce the subject of longer term sustainable development strategies into any initiatives. Hopefully, in time, when the urgencies of immediate problems have been mastered through effective solutions, primary sustainability will become a more important agenda issue.

Part of the problem would seem, *prima facie*, to be the way in which the liberalization process impacts upon local development. It seems clear that local communities and municipalities can do little or nothing to control what has been termed the "backwash effect" of global development processes (Stöhr and Taylor, 1981). Bilateral and international agencies are more in a position to influence matters in this respect. This speaks for the development of agency policies that will address the impacts of liberalization more effectively, to work with national governments to develop defence mechanisms on behalf of society and the environment (more socially and environmentally sensitive development programmes). It should then be possible to see where these can be used to advantage in developing more effective local projects and programmes.

From the foregoing discussion the following points can be extracted:

- There is still room for assistance in community development projects that bring participatory methods into the generation and execution of activities to improve the local quality of life. However, these should be undertaken as longer term development programmes that can take whatever time is necessary and operate in a flexible manner, so as to be in a position to assist in the development of local cohesion and self-confidence—and not in terms of one- and two-year projects.
- Such initiatives should move beyond self-help and be more conscious of the need to empower poor communities to participate in a more coherent and forceful way in the larger urban political process.
- These initiatives need to be systematized in such a way that all communities are capable of identifying problems, prioritizing them, planning improvements and attracting the necessary commitment from all relevant actors to participate in solving the problems.
- Participatory methods of planning and management are also needed at the municipal level—which means working with municipalities but also with a great variety of stakeholders within civil society. The aim must be to create transparency and accountability within a local government that is oriented to providing a public service rather that the all-too-common case of government providing a platform for abusing power and public resources.
- The opening-up of the municipal planning and management process should not stop at more accountable and/or efficient local

government; it also needs to make common cause with community development projects and the plans they generate; these initiatives should champion the needs of the poor as well as seek to improve the workings of the municipality and the state of the city.

- Such initiatives should also focus attention on possible futures of the city, analyse unsustainable aspects to current development and devise a future that works for everyone; this vision and mission need to be carried out as public activities, not only to obtain diverse opinions, but also to gain the commitment of all in a situation that is almost bound to require substantial changes in outlook and lifestyles.

All of these can be assisted by appropriate inputs from development agencies. This might be through country programmes, but would probably be more effective through engagement with individual urban communities and authorities. On the whole development agencies have focused most of their attention on rural development and/or financing sectoral projects.[13] As yet there is relatively little experience of integrated urban projects of the kind being suggested here (Atkinson and Allen, 1998). But there are precedents including urban programmes of bilateral agencies such as USAID, Swiss and German technical co-operation (and others), the World Bank Metropolitan Environmental Improvement Programme, the UNCHS Sustainable Cities Programme, and so on. The field is certainly wide open for agencies that are interested in gaining and then disseminating experience in this field.

[13] About 6 per cent of spending of the United Nations agency and bilateral donor agency funding goes into urban projects. Of course many other projects, including in health, education and other fields also find their way into urban areas, but not specifically recognizing the urban context. Less than 18 per cent of World Bank funding goes into urban infrastructure (Atkinson and Allen, 1998).

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