



**BLAVATNIK**  
SCHOOL *of* GOVERNMENT

Challenges of Government Conference 2014

# FLOURISHING CITIES

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## CONFERENCE REPORT



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# FLOURISHING CITIES



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## FOREWORD

By Ngaire Woods, Dean of the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford

Dear Friends,

Cities have become the hot topic of almost everyone with an interest in government and public policy. Exciting initiatives are popping up in cities—in education, policing, health, and the fight against climate change. By 2050 two-thirds of the world's population will be living in cities and in the meantime, they offer great opportunities for testing and learning about new policies, as well as places where great leaders can emerge and demonstrate their ability to deliver. For these reasons, the Blavatnik School of Government decided to explore “Flourishing Cities” at this year's annual Challenges of Government Conference.

As with each year's conference, we brought together leading policy-makers, academics with state-of-the-art research findings, commentators and firms. The conversations uncovered some fascinating and important trade-offs and challenges. For example, it is clear that cities are best planned in advance—get the plumbing, roadways, and housing all sorted and ready before people arrive. But this is virtually impossible in today's world. Put simply, people are moving to cities at a rate which far outpaces the capacity of governments to plan and build. Governments must find ways to build, run, retrofit and adapt cities at the same time.

The digital era promises a wealth of information and data for more rational decision-making but the image of a clean and well-run “digital city” in which citizens can participate digitally without leaving their homes is mistaken. The digital and data-rich era gives policy-makers new tools but the old methods of political engagement are still crucial. Experiments show that town-hall and in-person meetings are not substitutable if you wish citizens to build trust, to deliberate together and to advance deeper goals and values. Public (non-digital) spaces are very important. As the Mayor of Medellín reminded us, a beautiful city park is a place where every citizen can enjoy the space equally with his or her fellow citizens. The social success of cities requires creative thinking about how education, health and resilience



Ngaire Woods

are planned and implemented, and more innovative ways of measuring success.

The lessons for all participants were rich. This report gives you glimpses of the conversations from the point of view of various researchers and students in the Blavatnik School of Government.

The Challenges of Government Conference is able to bring people from across the world to share and learn lessons together in one place. This is made possible by the generosity of partners who share our desire to improve government. I would like to take this opportunity particularly to thank our strategic partner McKinsey & Company, and our partners ARUP, the Louis Dreyfus Foundation, and the Lemann Foundation. Their ideas and support made this a very special event.

I hope you will enjoy this report and join us for Challenges of Government 2015.

*Ngaire Woods*



## INTRODUCTION

**By Shahana Chattaraj, Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Comparative Public Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government**

We live in an urban, and continually urbanising, world. In 2012, China became a predominantly urban nation, the massive migration of its population from countryside to cities constituting the largest population movement in history. India will follow suit, adding more than 400 city dwellers to its urban population over the next decades<sup>1</sup>. Sub-Saharan Africa is the fastest urbanising region in the world, with futuristic new cities and proliferating slums embodying the aspirations and challenges of modern Africa.

Half a century ago, New York and Tokyo were the only cities in the world with more than 10 million people. There are 28 such megacities today, most of them in Asia, Africa and Latin America. But the bulk of the world's population will live in the "ordinary" cities of the developing world. These cities, large and small, will be crucial arenas in global efforts to promote sustainable development, tackle climate change and reduce poverty and inequality.

The urban transformation of societies around the world is much more than a demographic change. Modernisation theories, based on the historical experience of the industrialised west, link urbanisation to economic development, social modernisation and democratisation, yet much of the world today is urbanising without industrialising, in the context of global interconnectedness and serious environmental pressures. The social, economic, political and environmental dimensions of contemporary global urbanisation are still unclear and contingent, varying from country to country.

Cities are celebrated for their dynamism, diversity and resilience, and their potential for creativity and innovation. Cities and urban networks play a key role in globalisation, argue theorists like Manuel Castells and Saskia Sassen. Globalising cities across the world are becoming intricately connected to each other, even as they disconnect from their hinterlands. A city-dweller from Mumbai today will

1. <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/news/population/world-urbanization-prospects-2014.html>



likely have much in common with a Londoner, even as rural India and England remain worlds apart.

Reflecting changing ideas about cities, giving in to the urban imperative or merely seeking to emulate China, official discourse and policy in developing countries has shifted from decrying and controlling urban growth to promoting it. Cities, characterised by size, density and diversity, support economic growth by concentrating capital and labour and intensifying the sharing of information and knowledge. For governments, it is easier to provide public goods in urban settlements than in far-flung rural areas, and effective urban planning can make city-living more environmentally sustainable and energy efficient.

For women, disadvantaged groups and immigrants, cities provide channels for economic and social advancement, cultural expression and political participation that may be unavailable to them in rural settings. Slums and informal settlements, despite deplorable living conditions, are often spaces thriving with entrepreneurship. Growing urban poverty, according to urbanists like Ed Glaeser, is not necessarily a bad thing, at least in developing countries. It indicates a movement of people to cities, and thus offers prospects for economic betterment absent in rural areas.

Yet with the exception of China and other East Asian countries, urban growth in much of the developing world is characterised by burgeoning slums and widespread informality. Empirical evidence on the advantages city-dwellers have in terms of economic opportunity and well-being is mixed, particularly once you compare residents of slums and squatter settlements with rural residents. Globalisation has seen some cities flourish, but sent others into a spiraling decline, and even successful cities are becoming more sharply unequal and socially polarised.

The ability of cities to realise their potential for sustainable growth and prosperity is thus far from assured, contingent on a host of interrelated factors that we do not yet fully understand. Questions about whether cities are good for health and well-being, or what sorts of cities are innovative, sustainable, equitable or resilient, and whether these goals reinforce or at odds with each other, remain to be resolved.



Conference participant

The challenges of government in cities today are complex and multi-faceted, while city government and civic institutions in much of the world are weak and under-resourced. For scholars and policy-makers seeking to make sense of and shape contemporary urban processes, cities are a moving target. Empirical and theoretical accounts of cities outside the West are still rudimentary, but these cities are a fertile ground for multi-disciplinary research and engagement between researchers and practitioners. New technologies, better data and design, innovations in urban planning and governance, learning networks between cities across the world, private sector and community engagement will play an important role in shaping our collective urban future.

These are some of the issues and questions that were discussed at the Blavatnik School of Government's conference on "Flourishing Cities".





Paul Collier

THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER

## SUCCESSFUL CITIES: PROSPEROUS BUT UNEQUAL?

**Rafat Ali Al-Akhali**, Minister of Youth and Sports, Government of Yemen

**Sir Paul Collier**, Professor of Public Policy, Blavatnik School of Government

**Patrick Le Galès**, CNRS Director of Research and Professor of Political Science, Sciences Po, France

**Tony Travers**, Co-Director of LSE London and Professor of Government, London School of Economics

**Ngairé Woods**, Dean, Blavatnik School of Government (Chair)

Urbanisation is both a blessing and a conundrum. While it provides developing countries with economic opportunities many governments are struggling to support their booming population of city dwellers.

In the opening session of the conference, Dean Ngairé Woods chaired a scintillating panel of experts to explore what makes a city successful and how policymakers can create robust urban economies that improve quality of life and standards of living for all citizens.

Paul Collier described cities today as mega versions of factories in the industrial revolution. At the core of any city, he explained, is the density of population, market, and production, which bring about high productivity and improved standard of life.

This grandiose picture would, however, be dimmed by a dark side of cities, to which Rafat Ali Al-Akhali, Minister from Yemen, certainly had a lot to add. As the only country where people had to be evacuated from the capital city because of a shortage of water supply, Yemen struggles to catch up



with the demands of a growing population in its cities. An annual population increase of seven percent in its capital, Sana'a, puts enormous pressure on infrastructure planning and basic service delivery. Such rapid population growth begs the question for its government: should urban expansion be encouraged or actively discouraged to slow it down until policies and services can be put in place?

Tony Travers, drawing lessons from the city of London, was primarily concerned with keeping the balance within the city and distributing the benefits fairly among various neighbourhoods, rich and poor. Furthermore, a big city like London also has to grapple with multiple levels of government—the national, the city, and the borough—and the tension between city-wide interests and local community interests calls for discretion in virtually every aspect of policymaking, such as taxation, expenditure, infrastructure.

On the other side of the Channel, Paris is also dealing with redistribution problems, in particular, the increasing fragmentation between the city centre and the *banlieues* (suburbs). The smart, classy central *arrondissements* seem to be the utopia that every city would wish to build—until one reaches outside of these chic neighbourhoods and lands in the largely ignored, seedy outskirts of Paris. Obviously, political and economic interests are factors in the fragmentation, and achieving Patrick Le Galès's vision of an integrated city requires government endeavour in effective planning, community engagement, and private sector involvement.

The discussion provided five key insights for consideration:

- 1. Cities flourish because they create density of population, market, and productivity.** Urbanisation is the best opportunity for developing countries to lift themselves from poverty, although governments may struggle to strike a balance between supporting the new city-dwellers and sustaining those who remain in the rest of the country.
- 2. The problem of planning ahead: cities grow faster than we can plan.** As Travers pointed out, government policy in city planning is always a process of catching up. Although it makes more economic sense to build the infrastructure before people pour into the space, city officials either underestimate future demands or face political and economic barriers to investing in the future.



Rafat Al-Akhali

- 3. Many problems lie in the distribution of power among various levels of government.** Cities rely almost entirely on the central government for their finances; on city government for infrastructure and provision of water and electricity; and on communities for the many specific needs of local residents. These interests don't always fit harmoniously together, and policymakers need to take this diversity of need into account, while also making sure that their city doesn't become too fragmented as it grows.
- 4. Is there an ideal city size? Mega cities like London, New York, and Hong Kong are experiencing different issues from their smaller peers.** While these super-cities continue to attract work force and investment, is there a point at which pollution, congestion, and skyrocketing house prices will make them stop being enjoyable places to live? Professor Le Galès has his eyes on smaller cities, such as Birmingham and Manchester, for their vast opportunities and potential.
- 5. Robust institution and government: necessary or auxiliary?** Not all economist agree that to deliver infrastructure and services while distributing the benefits fairly requires strong institutions and a highly capable city government. According to Collier, There is also a possibility that the private sector, with some regulation from the government, might do the job just as well.

Summary by Sarah He



THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER: 'DEEP DIVE' PARALLEL SESSIONS

## HOUSING AND SLUMS: BUILD ANEW OR REGENERATE?

**Shahana Chattaraj**, Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Comparative Public Policy, Blavatnik School of Government

**Michael Keith**, Director, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford

**Peter Kemp**, Vice Dean for Academic Affairs and Professor of Public Policy, Blavatnik School of Government (Chair)

With about a third of the world population living in slums and the pressures of urbanisation increasing in many parts of the globe, cities face serious challenges tackling expanding slums and sub-standard housing.

Michael Keith emphasized the trade-off between the need for increasing density of population as a way of accommodating growing numbers of people and concerns over the ecological impacts and architectural form of booming cities. In trying to square this dilemma, the interests of local people should be prioritised, while multiple levels of governance should engage in a transparent and deliberate process of improving the living conditions of people in disadvantaged parts of cities.

Shahana Chattaraj offered her answer to an intriguing question: Can cities grow without slums? Looking at China, she highlighted the importance of coercive state power, prior urban planning, and infrastructure construction, as well as the availability of industrial jobs that allow cities to expand without degenerating into vast slum areas. However, as the countries experiencing the highest rates of urbanisation today mostly lack such capacities, the chances are low that this can be successfully emulated in other parts of the world. African states, in particular, should look instead towards Latin America, where strong local leadership and deliberate engagement with local communities led to substantial improvements in the urban quality of living.



Michael Keith

Finally, the panellists agreed that slums are flexible forms of housing providing an important safety net in places where no safety net exists. They both can and should be rebuilt and regenerated, with the strong involvement of local governance.

*Summary by Andrea Garaiova*





THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER: 'DEEP DIVE' PARALLEL SESSIONS

## HIGH TECH CITIES: HOW CAN WE HARNESS DIGITAL INNOVATIONS TO INFORM, ENGAGE AND INFLUENCE CITIZENS?

**Charlotte Alldritt**, Secretary, RSA City Growth Commission

**Anna Livia Arida**, Executive Director, Minha Sampa, Brazil

**David De Roure**, Director, Oxford e-Research Centre, University of Oxford (Chair)

**Kate Jackson**, Knowledge Expert, McKinsey Center for Government, McKinsey & Company

Cities are well positioned to leverage new data-driven methods and technologies to effect positive change. "Data" by itself, though, doesn't mean much. In this session, chair David De Roure stressed the importance of distinguishing between big data, open data, and personal data. Can we pinpoint the value of each at the level of the city? Furthermore, how can we best understand—and articulate—their benefits and harms?

Anna Livia Arida offered several positive case studies as food for thought. Using Minha Sampa's Pressure Cooker platform, Brazilian citizens are able to engage directly with city governments to make their grievances known. In this manner, municipal leaders are able to harness the datasets that are most relevant to their citizens.

Such a platform holds immediate value—but only if the infrastructure exists with which to manage it, such that neither citizens nor city governments are made unnecessarily vulnerable. Charlotte Alldritt emphasised the importance of investment in technology infrastructure, especially in the public realm. Only then can cities drive up efficiencies, make sure policy interventions are working, and make themselves available for citizen engagement.

As the discussion progressed, it became clear that a theoretical framework is just as important as a physical one. Kate Jackson stressed that information and computing



Charlotte Alldritt and Anna Livia Arida

technologies are no longer a backend function. She cited four critical roles of government with respect to data: that of policymaker, provider, user, and catalyst. Understanding how cities fit into this framework will prove crucial for making the most of our data, she argued.

Three "take-aways" from the session:

1. **The best data-driven relationships work both ways:** City governments' data provision offers value to citizens, and citizens' data collection and reporting offer value to governments.
2. **Datasets must be useful.** Provision of city-level data – like provision of all types of data – rests on an understanding of the technological capabilities of the data users.
3. **Truly pursuing open data-driven solutions requires uptake, and uptake requires changing perceptions.** Pressure (to change municipal policy) is a natural part of democracy, but part of this pressure must come from highlighting the benefits of open data.

Summary by Clayton Aldern



THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER: 'DEEP DIVE' PARALLEL SESSIONS

## REVITALIZING THE CITY: HOW DO URBAN SPACES INSPIRE US?

**Pedro Henrique de Cristo**, Partner and Co-Founder, +D Studio // Design with Purpose, Brazil

**Jerome Frost OBE**, Leader of Global Planning Business and UKMEA Consulting Practice, Arup (Chair)

**Gascia Ouzounian**, Co-Director, Recomposing the City, Queen's University Belfast

**Edgar Pieterse**, South African Research Chair in Urban Policy and Director for the African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town

Moving from slums in Brazil to sonic planning in Bonn, this session invited staggeringly wide debate among the panellists as they discussed ideas for revitalizing urban spaces.

Running throughout the conversation, however, were two principal themes: Firstly, how do cities and urban spaces engage societies and shape democracy? Secondly, how can policymakers balance the importance of space, growth and investment?

All the panellists spoke about the importance of cities and art as inputs to democratic processes. The point was made that many modern cities are planned around commuting by car, typically something that is experienced individually. Cities that prioritise investments in public space see dividends in collective trust and social capital. A further point was raised about the social value of public spaces coming in large part from the discussion about what they should represent, rather than the end product in and of itself. As a corollary to this, the panellists agreed that when decision making over space is undemocratic, the democratic process as a whole is eroded.

The panel engaged in a lively discussion about the challenges faced by policymakers when thinking about space, growth and investment, particularly in the developing world. Current economic thinking favours the



Gascia Ouzounian and Jerome Frost

need for satellite cities to solve the issues created by slum dwelling. The panellists tended to agree, however, that bringing existing slum dwellers onto the city grid presents a far more socially beneficial investment. This creates tension between residents, who often don't hold title rights to their properties, and investors and governments. Fundamentally, it was argued, big cities in the developing world require a much greater degree of decentralisation in decision-making. While this might bring greater uncertainty to investment, the social dividends could be significantly higher.

The audience also contributed to the discussion, raising questions on seeking community engagement for infrastructure projects, the importance of green spaces and the possibilities of using art to "nudge" people towards socially constructive behaviour.

*Summary by Yannick Spencer*



Thomas Hale and Steve Rayner

THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER

## SUSTAINABLE CITIES: CAN URBAN LEADERSHIP ON CLIMATE CHANGE MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

**Thomas Hale**, Associate Professor in Public Policy, Blavatnik School of Government (Chair)

**Barbara Hammond**, Chief Executive, Low Carbon Hub

**Xue Lan**, Professor and Dean, School of Public Policy and Management, Tsinghua University, China

**Steve Rayner**, Co-Director, Oxford Programme for the Future of Cities, University of Oxford

With an increasing sense of resignation that international negotiation among states could lead to concrete and pragmatic steps for addressing climate change, more

people are turning to cities for solutions. This session explored the role of cities in creating a positive difference in climate change; ways of mobilizing effective horizontal and vertical cooperation; and the challenges cities face in achieving sustainability.

Steve Rayner highlighted the importance of the 'bottom-up' approach that cities play. Given the complexities of climate change, cities provide a platform at which a variety of responses can be tested, targeting specific problems. Cities can also have global influence by forming international networks such as C40 and ICLEI\*.

\* The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) is a network of the world's megacities committed to addressing climate change. ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability is the world's leading network of over 1,000 cities, towns and metropolises committed to building a sustainable future.





Barbara Hammond explained that cities are important because of their interaction with people. Cities are habitats in which people live out their private lives. They are more directly accountable and amenable to the influence of people residing within them.

Learning from the role cities played in China's development, Xue Lan suggested that a well-designed governance system between the central and sub-national level is important. It should be flexible enough to empower local governments' sustainable initiatives and include regulatory measures against non-sustainable practices.

The discussion raised five key issues to consider:

- 1. The bottom-up approach led by cities provides direct, immediate and context-specific responses to climate change.** State-led or global responses to climate change are not always effective because they deal with climate change as a whole, which is complex and invisible. The impacts of climate change at the city level are context specific, and, therefore, cities can introduce more immediate and concrete actions addressing the problem they face.
- 2. Cities, when working together in networks, can better solve their own problems and also achieve influence at global level.** Since cities represent a significant proportion of the global population, they can scale their influence to the global level by joining up as networks. Engaging suburbs and working with surrounding localities is also important considering the expansion of cities in many places.
- 3. Coordination between the central government and sub-national authorities is key.** Central governments should empower cities and local authorities to take initiatives. This can be done by well-designed statutory, legal, financial, and administrative arrangements.
- 4. Remember that cities are habitats where people live, work, and prosper.** The key distinction between city- and state-level actions is the proximity to people and the extent to which people can own and influence climate change in their sphere of lives. Local authorities can be more creative, innovative and efficient in responding to local needs.



Xue Lan

- 5. Perceptions of city life should change. Living in a city is often associated with carbon-intensive activities, such as owning a car.** Societies should openly discuss their aspirations for sustainable cities and cultivate sustainable values as the core of city life.

*Summary by Sangjung Ha*



THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER: 'DEEP DIVE' PARALLEL SESSIONS

## FEEDING CITIES: CAN AGRICULTURE KEEP UP WITH URBAN DEMAND?

**Dickson Despommier**, Founder, Vertical Farming Project, Columbia University

**Tara Garnett**, Director, Food Climate Research Network, University of Oxford (Chair)

**Alain Guinebault**, Director, Groupe Energies Renouvelables, Environnement et Solidarités (GERES), France

How should we feed the ever-expanding cities of the world? This parallel session covered a diverse set of sustainable solutions for hungry cities—the use of urban farms and vertical gardens, greenhouses for inhospitable climates, and a wholesale re-think of our consumer habits.

Given that food production currently uses 40 percent of productive land worldwide, there are compelling reasons to increase the efficiency and resilience of urban food supply. Dickson Despommier, a leading advocate for urban farming, addressed critics' claims that in practice animal rights may be at risk, and that the output is less nutritional. As with all farming, the use of quality, organic inputs, and stronger regulation can mitigate these risks. Furthermore, urban farms allow for the most unpredictable aspects of farming, such as temperature, disease, and waste, to be controlled. Negative effects of outdoor farming, such as pesticide run-off leading to the acidification of the oceans, are also avoided under this model.

Alain Guinebault outlined another innovation in food production, which has increased farming productivity in some of the world's most challenging environments. The use of greenhouses for small-scale food production in Mongolia has allowed communities to grow crops for up to nine months of the year. This is a remarkable improvement on the annual average of 90 days of open-air farming, and will reduce the community's reliance on imports. More work is underway to expand the use and size of these greenhouses.



Dickson Despommier

In addition to developing new methods to expand food supply, Tara Garnett argued that more attention should be focused on the nature of demand for food. Greater consumer awareness could see a reduction in our preference for meat, the most resource-intensive and environmentally damaging food source. With political will, greater regulation and financial incentives could result in a fundamental shift in our eating habits. While innovation in food production, such as those discussed by the panel, will assist in increasing supply in developing countries, there is considerable scope for altering demand in developed country markets.

Summary by Lalita Kapur



## THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER: 'DEEP DIVE' PARALLEL SESSIONS

# BIKE, WALK, BUS: ARE WE READY FOR THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORT?

**Atif Ansar**, Departmental Lecturer in Public Policy and Management, Blavatnik School of Government (Chair)

**David Banister**, Director, Transport Studies Unit, University of Oxford

**Susan Claris**, Associate Director, Arup

Transportation is a critical focus for governments seeking to build sustainable growth while reducing emissions. Panellists in the session discussed what role transport should play in city development and how to build transport systems that can better serve the needs of people living in cities. The discussion touched on a wide array of issues like the common traits of cities with high-quality transport systems; the future role of different transport modes such as cars, cycling and walking in cities; and the relationship between transport and health.

David Banister focused on space, as a critical factor in urban transport planning. The car, he emphasized, is a big part of the problem for cities. Cars provide no financial incentive for public transport to develop, and they prevent alternative (more environmentally friendly) use of 'space'. As such, development of good public transport system should be at the forefront of any transport planning.

Susan Claris focused on walking as a vital component of transport systems that should be encouraged and expanded. Walking is a low-tech solution that improves physical and mental health. It also brings environmental benefits through reducing reliance on carbon intensive transport modes, such as the car, by becoming a key component of the public transport system of a city.

The main questions for participants in the session revolved around whether economic growth is enabling cities to 'flourish', and, in the present scenario of increasing growth and needs of cities, whether current methods of public transport can scale to effectively meet the demands of burgeoning cities.



Atif Ansar and Susan Claris

Five key "take-aways" from the session:

1. **The cities with great transport systems usually also have strong governance.** A unified organisation responsible for different aspects of a transport system in a city can help ensure better coordination and planning.
2. **More emphasis should be put on supporting walking as a form of transport.** It is a component in all transport modes, and more walking can promote public health and reduce pollution in cities.
3. **Non-state interventions, like car-sharing schemes and mobile apps** providing real-time traffic information, can be effective tools to maximise the utilisation of roads and help save commuting time.
4. **As human behaviour is unpredictable, public engagement and detailed analysis of behaviour in different segments of the city is necessary** to design transport systems that meet needs and deliver the best results.
5. **Some little changes that involve relatively low investment**, like planting more trees on roadsides and pedestrianisation, can be effective in inducing behavioural change to promote walking and cycling.

Summary by Ryan Chiu and Urmila Pullat





THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER: 'DEEP DIVE' PARALLEL SESSIONS

## SUPERSTORMS AND SINKING ISLANDS: RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

**Jo da Silva OBE**, Director, Arup International Development

**Thomas Hale**, Associate Professor in Public Policy, Blavatnik School of Government (Chair)

**Jim Hall**, Director, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford

Our changing climate is driving sea level rises and a dramatic increase in the frequency of heat waves, hurricanes, droughts, storm surges and flooding. This session addressed how policymakers and urban planners can prepare cities for the effects of climate change and natural disasters.

The panel argued that we have seen a practical shift from response to resilience in the way we deal with climate challenges. Hard learned lessons from cities across the world have strengthened institutions and catalysed governments to invest, pre-emptively, in physical infrastructure. Boosted by advances in climate change and weather modelling, at-risk cities around the world must increase the capacity of their communities to withstand and bounce back from the havocs that our shifting climate is inflicting.

Governments are traditionally reluctant to invest in resiliency, as risk reduction is less politically appealing (and rewarding) than generating growth and development. Yet, businesses may be changing this dynamic. Property destruction and the consequent insurance pay-outs, along with opportunity costs to business in post-disaster instability periods is leading local businesses to address the need for resiliency and efficient post-disaster recovery plans. Capital mobility and the increasingly global nature of business are similarly putting pressure on city governments to attract and maintain investment and trade. These financial incentives are driving cities to improve and consequentially signal their resiliency efforts and continued attractiveness to business.

Resilience is an attribute of a dynamic and complex city system, and should be seen as a continuous journey rather



Jo da Silva

than as a destination. While modelling is improving, driven in part by the need of insurance companies for more precise risk assessment tools, uncertainties remain large with regard to how both climate change and natural disasters will affect our urban environments. The “taxonomies” of hazards are loaded with uncertainties. We simply do not know how disasters will play out exactly within cities. Resilience must go past disaster mitigation. We must design cities that are adaptive and flexible to the unknown consequences of climate change events.

What makes cities resilient are its people, its leadership and strategic planning along with its infrastructure, in terms of both physical surroundings and levels of connectivity.

To strengthen these, cities must:

1. Maintain and intensify research, while decentralising access to findings.
2. Continue to adopt hazard specific measures.
3. Make expected risks to households clear for them to plan accordingly.

Summary by Niklas Frijs-Madsen



Aníbal Gaviria

THURSDAY 11 DECEMBER

## MEDELLÍN: A CITY TRANSFORMED

**Aníbal Gaviria**, Mayor of Medellín, Colombia

**Ngairé Woods**, Dean, Blavatnik School of Government

Medellín's is a story of a city reborn. Twenty years ago, Colombia's second largest city was known as a valley of death. It had the biggest criminality index in the Western hemisphere and its homicide rate was double the current average worldwide. Today, however, Medellín aspires to become South America's Silicon Valley.

How did Medellín achieve such an outstanding transformation? What are the main lessons derived from its experience? In an engaging conversation with Ngairé Woods, Medellín's Mayor Aníbal Gaviria Correa gave his response and a key message: To transform a city, public administration and policies require stability and continuity.

Four steps to make a city flourish:

1. **Education, education and more education.**  
According to the Mayor, inequality and violence are two interrelated factors that hinder the success of a city. The best way to tackle these problems is through education. Inequality and violence were the main difficulties when Medellín's transformation started and, in spite of the achievements in these two areas, they are still its two biggest challenges in the future. The city strives to excel in education, to close the inequality gap and take the youth out of the violent spiral. In Correa's words, in Medellín equality is written with the "e" of education.
2. **Active and engaging citizenship is important for the transformation of cities.** It is not surprising that this is the case, since cities are more than buildings and streets: Cities are the people that inhabit them. Hence, citizen participation and the involvement of the private



sector in the design and implementation of public policies is key for the sustainability of a city.

3. **Trust must be built among citizens.** For this to take place, person-to-person relationships should be nurtured through the creation of high quality public spaces. Museums, streets and parks: these are all places where all citizens meet in equality of conditions and the best scenario for strengthening trust among people.
4. **The continuity of public policies must be ensured.** A long-term transformation of a city can only take place if several good and successive administrations build on a common set of objectives and principles. This does not imply that all the mayors should belong to the same party. In fact, this has not been Medellín's case. What this really implies, however, is that they all must be in tune and seek the same objectives. This is the key of stability in long-term public policies and one of the recipes of success for Medellín's rebirth.

Summary by Diana Dajer



Conference participant





Andrew Grant

FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER

## RETHINKING CITIES: CREATING VIBRANT, HEALTHY AND EDUCATED CITIES

**Monica Duffy Toft**, Professor of Government and Public Policy, Blavatnik School of Government

**Andrew Grant**, Global Leader of the Public Sector Practice, McKinsey & Company

**Maarten Hajer**, Director-General of PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency

**Stephen Jennings**, Founder, Rendevour

The session on “Rethinking cities” aimed to explore and develop innovative ideas for tackling key challenges for urban populations, such as delivering effective healthcare for a burgeoning population, providing educational opportunities for everyone, and ensuring the safety and security of citizens. We had earlier in the conference discussed what makes cities successful, and how they can

be sustainable. Here, the focus for panellists was on what makes cities liveable.

A new way of approaching city thinking is needed both to build new cities and to make existing cities more liveable, Maarten Hajer said near the start of the session.

He argued that since the invention of the internal combustion engine, cities have been subject to telescopic urbanism – spreading out in concentric circles with arterial highways bringing workers into the centre. This process often consumes arable land and diverts water sources, cutting the city off from resources that are fundamental to its survival. He argued that what is needed is an approach which considers the systemic metabolism of cities and plans accordingly.



An interesting conversation regarding the practicality of this approach in developing countries arose between Maarten Hajer and Stephen Jennings. Stephen Jennings argued strongly in favour of the merits of new development in developing countries. In particular, Stephen argued that satellite cities built off existing cities could be the answer to slum dwelling and poor amenities. The panellists agreed that different approaches are required in different scenarios, particularly when the question of greenfield versus brownfield growth is considered.

Andrew Grant spoke emphatically about the urgent need to address issues such as climate change through the way we approach cities. He argued that addressing climate change and re-engineering cities towards sustainability are fundamental to achieving economic growth that is accompanied by employment growth. A recent report by the New Climate Economy, directed by former McKinsey & Company Director Jeremy Oppenheim, was mentioned as a blueprint for how this type of thinking can be applied. The need for “bottom-up” community engagement was frequently mentioned, and several panellists made the point that this has been poorly done, particularly in the developed world.

The audience participated actively in the discussion, raising questions about the balance between face-to-face community engagement and community engagement through technology, and exploring what sort of governance structure can best run cities. Participants were also interested in how developing cities can access mortgage finance to drive economic growth, and how the challenge of cities taking over land that produces critical resources can be resolved.

*Summary by Yannick Spencer*



Maarten Hajer



FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER: 'DEEP DIVE' PARALLEL SESSIONS

## SICK CITIES: HOW IS URBAN HEALTHCARE WORKING TO TURN THE TIDE AGAINST INFECTIOUS AND CHRONIC DISEASES?

**Marina Galanti**, President and Co-Founder, RUSH Foundation

**Sir Muir Gray**, Director, Better Value Healthcare

**Amit Prasad**, Health Economist, Centre for Health Development, World Health Organization

**Winnie Yip**, Professor of Health Policy and Economics, Blavatnik School of Government (Chair)

As cities continue to grow – and flourish – urban health policy will necessarily require re-evaluation. Context specificity is crucial: Different cities experience different relative rates of HIV/AIDS, other infectious diseases, and chronic conditions. How, then, asked session chair Winnie Yip, can we best address this heterogeneity?

Answers were plentiful. Marina Galanti focused on the cities of Sub-Saharan Africa and their struggles with HIV/AIDS. She stressed that in order to attain better value of health investments, HIV needs to be moved from its silo to a larger, developmental agenda. Only then can cities address the structural components of the disease.

The need to address structural factors resonated throughout the session. Sir Muir Gray noted that engagement with bureaucracies was not only necessary but also fundamental to addressing health problems. He suggested that the current health revolution was one of citizens, knowledge, and smartphones—and that we need to start using digital and not just talking about it.

Amit Prasad echoed these claims, and added that cross-sector engagement will prove essential for progress. Our health problems do not exist in a vacuum: They are intertwined with pollution, diets, transport policies, food authorities, the energy sector, and swathes of socio-economic variables. Tackling city health requires a whole-government approach.



Amit Prasad

Three “take-aways” from the session:

1. **The effects of cities on health outcomes are paradoxical:** The benefits of higher access to health infrastructure can be offset by increased exposure rates and overuse of medical systems.
2. **Innovations required are likely to be innovations of governance,** given the currently limited mandate for cities to affect health outcomes.
3. **We must assess the balance between direct investment in city healthcare and cross-sector engagement.** Both are necessary for improving health outcomes, but strategies must be context-dependent.

Summary by Clayton Aldern





**FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER: 'DEEP DIVE' PARALLEL SESSIONS**

**OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL: GETTING SYSTEMS TO WORK, FROM EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT**

**Tim Harris**, Director of Trade & Investment, Mayor's Office of Cape Town, South Africa

**Denis Mizne**, Chief Executive Officer, The Lemann Foundation, Brazil (Chair)

**Antonio Prado**, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations

How can a city provide education and employment opportunities to all its dwellers? That was the main question of focus in this panel discussion among experts, who have been advising, supporting or driving policies to support education, jobs and economic growth in their own cities, countries and regions.

City leaders, Tim Harris noted, face massive constraints on how much they can do. In the case of Cape Town, education policy is planned top-down from the central government, as is the expenditure budget. With city leaders' hands tied on many issues, Harris suggested that building infrastructure – from public transportation to water supply to Internet coverage – is the best way to make opportunities more accessible and drive growth in the long term.

Brazil, on the other hand, is down the path of heavily regulating its labour market. The numbers testify to its success: Even as Brazil goes through a minor stagnation of growth, its unemployment rate has dropped from 11 percent to 6 percent in the past decade. Still, according to panellist Antonio Prado, employment remains a top concern among Brazilians because most of the jobs are low-skilled and low-paid, and they lack better education and skills training to access better employment. The two places have different approaches to providing jobs and training, but in both cases education and employment are the biggest factors in mitigating inequality and promoting social mobility.

Three factors to consider in making opportunities available to all:



Tim Harris

1. **City leaders face constraints in governing their jurisdictions but they can still deliver impactful initiatives.** While mayors should always try to have an impact on policy decisions made at the national level, they can't count on their policies always working out as they hoped. Innovative programmes to encourage entrepreneurship initiated by the Mayor's office of Cape Town are one example of how city leaders can use their leverage to regulate their industries without going through the national government.
2. **Infrastructure bridges the gap between the rich and the poor.** Public transportation connects people and neighbourhoods, internet services make more information free and accessible, and a better provided city attracts investments and subsequently employment opportunities.
3. **Quality of employment is just as important as quantity.** The unemployment rate doesn't necessarily tell how satisfied the workforce is, and for developing countries in particular, the government needs to provide continued training and career services to build a more skilled labour force.

*Summary by Sarah He*



FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER: 'DEEP DIVE' PARALLEL SESSIONS

# CRACKING DOWN ON CRIME: CAN NEW METHODS OF POLICING KEEP US SAFE?

**Ben Bradford**, Lecturer in Criminology, University of Oxford (Chair)

**Pavan Mamidi**, Professor, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad

**Suzy Moat**, Assistant Professor of Behavioural Science, Warwick School of Business

**Sara Thornton**, Chief Constable, Thames Valley Police, Oxford

The nature of crime is changing – and so should the means of its policing. Sharing their expertise in various parts of the world, the panellists discussed challenges faced by the police today and new techniques introduced to tackle them.

Witnessing a shift in criminal trends from the theft of property to the theft of information, Sarah Thornton highlighted three specific crimes that are on the rise: human trafficking, cyber crime, and organised crime. She then identified the key issues in three categories: 1) How should the police deal with the changing nature of the crimes? 2) How should the police maintain capability in the face of austerity? 3) How should the police build legitimacy and recover public trust?

In answering these questions, two unique ideas were presented. First, Suzy Moat illustrated how big data could help improve our understanding of where and when we could face crime. Big data could identify patterns of repeating behaviour in crime, and potentially achieve predictive power. For instance, research showed that if a house had been burgled, the probability of other houses on the same street being burgled would escalate. The allocation of resources would thus be determined on the basis of the need for protection, by creating hot spot maps and arranging police enforcement accordingly.



Ben Bradford and Sara Thornton

In addition, Pavan Mamidi demonstrated how the rehabilitation of rebel groups and their involvement in the Indian police helped improve policing practices. He observed that the level of corruption dropped within the police and that the ex-rebel officers were better able to engage with the locals. He also noted an increasing use of technology in crime investigations, particularly in the reporting of sexual crimes where the victims, once identified in the community, could be subject to extreme social stigma. Their identities were better protected through technical support.

Throughout the discussions, ethical questions were raised – in particular, with regard to use of technology, corruption and biases within the police, and lack of victim support in policing and investigations. Panellists illustrated



various attempts made by the police to confront these issues – for instance, balancing ethnic, racial, and gender profiles of officers. Meanwhile, they also agreed that there was no existing ethical framework concerning the use of data collection, but envisaged its rapid development in the coming years.

Three key insights on the challenges of policing:

1. **Technology:** As the nature of crime shifts from theft of property to theft of information, use of technology is key to both investigation and enforcement.
2. **Partnership:** Cooperation with other entities such as city council, charities, and NGOs is crucial to delivering effective policing and engendering police legitimacy.
3. **Organizational reform:** Traditional hierarchical structure of police forces must be reformed to effectively deal with changed nature of crimes, austerity, as well as declining public trust in policing institutions.

Summary by Eun A Jo



Pavan Mamidi





Geoff Mulgan, Ngaire Woods and Mo Ibrahim

FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER

## INNOVATING GOVERNANCE: SMARTER TECHNOLOGIES FOR BETTER POLICIES?

**Mo Ibrahim**, Founder and Chair, Mo Ibrahim Foundation

**Geoff Mulgan**, Chief Executive Officer, Nesta

**Ngaire Woods**, Dean, Blavatnik School of Government (Chair)

The closing discussion of the conference revolved around the question of how greatly modern technology has changed the possibilities, accountability, and responsibilities of governance. Bringing in a wealth of knowledge and expertise, the speakers shared their experiences in technology, innovation, and work with government to discuss pressing issues pertaining to the use of technology: governance, ethics, and accountability.

Mo Ibrahim began the talk with his insights into the deficit of democracy and the shift of standard of governance in the age of technology. Geoff Mulgan elaborated on that by highlighting a paradox between the abundance of technology and the scarcity of attention and good governance in using new technologies to improve policies.

“In an information-saturated world, the most scarce resource is attention, and certainly that is true in government,” Mulgan said.

Questions raised from the floor also varied, from how should the government regulate the emergence of a technology-enabled sharing economy to how the government should bridge the gap of access to technology



between the rich and the poor. The speakers shared their views on how safety and privacy should be balanced when technology is used to govern. They also stressed that governments around the world should increase their spending in research & development instead of military spending to develop affordable technologies that improve the lives of the least fortunate.

Five key insights from the discussion:

- 1. Ethical challenges such as privacy around personal data will continue to evolve.** Innovative technologies have provided governments with new tools for urban planning plan that have transformed governance, from monitoring air emission and traffic to containing Ebola outbreaks, by using open data and predictive algorithms. However, privacy remains a central challenge for governments. From the open data movement to the use of genomics data to drive socio-economic development and deliver better services, governments will need to address questions over privacy, particularly when there is a lack of trust in the government.
- 2. Decisions on using technology in government is not always straightforward.** There is a lack of leadership in the decision-making process to determine what technology government should adopt. Some policymakers are failing to make decisions about adopting certain technologies that are central to efficiency and enhancing the quality in public goods, such as the lack of cellular technology in the London underground system or the delay in expanding Heathrow airport.
- 3. Many practical issues in governance need to be dealt at the city level.** Urban and city governance offers the hope that democratically elected governments can be held more accountable and perhaps better use new technology to improve governance.
- 4. Technologies are enabling people to do things in the context of chaos.** Technology helps citizen to be included in city planning – such as the release of property ownership data by the UK government – so local communities can start campaigning for



Geoff Mulgan

relevant changes in their neighbourhoods. But with the existence of chaotic politics in governance and the lack of accountability in many governments, the rise of non-state actors who abuse technology also needs to be anticipated, such as cyber attacks.

- 5. Technology does not come without new tensions.** The open data movement for example, has not been very good at asking what citizens want. The movement has been driven by technology enthusiasts and data geeks without so much bottom-up advocacy. The movement has not gone out to communities to ask about what data need to be open to them.

*Summary by Jourdan Hussein*



This report was written and edited by  
MPP students at the Blavatnik School of Government  
Editor: Alissa de Carbonnel

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