State of the World's Cities 2004/05 launched by UN-HABITAT
Cultural Diversity and Other Formidable Challenges Facing 21ˢᵗ Century Cities

Everybody is on the move. A vast, international migration of people in search of better lives and opportunities has been set in motion by globalization, according to the new UN-HABITAT Report, *The State of the World's Cities, 2004/05*. This flow of humanity, while benefiting many cities through cultural diversity could lead to greater fragmentation and larger inequalities between rich and poor.

By 2030, the Report predicts, 60 per cent of the world's population will live in cities. Nearly all of this global population growth will be absorbed into the urban areas of the world's least developed regions. But the "fruits of globalization" – multicultural cities, economic growth, higher incomes and increased longevity - are rapidly being offset by the negative aspects of rapid urbanization: increased poverty, diminishing social safety nets for the poor and rapidly expanding slums which, according to the Report, will be home to about two billion people by the year 2020.

Multiculturalism: Problem or possibility?
According to the Report, there are approximately 175 million documented international migrants worldwide. This enormous flow of humanity into the world's cities is fuelling a new multiculturalism that has the potential to broaden the cultural and ethnic dimensions of cities, but which also engenders an increasing xenophobia against asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented populations.

The more developed economies are the most notable destinations of these population flows (77 million), followed by the transition economies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics (33 million), Asia and the Pacific (23 million) and the Middle East and North Africa (21 million). In many cases these newcomers live spatially segregated lives as a result of discriminatory practices and a lack of affordable housing. They endure labour exploitation, social exclusion, insecure tenure, overcrowding, unhealthy living conditions and violence. They work in segmented job markets, in activities that tend to be refused by the indigenous population.

However, the Report emphasizes that immigrants make important economic contributions, not only to the urban economies of their host countries, but also to the countries that they leave. Remittances back home are second only to oil in terms of international monetary flows, providing an important and reliable source of foreign exchange finance. In 2003, for example, the Indian Diaspora sent back US$15 billion, exceeding the revenues generated by the country's software industry.

A race to the bottom
Globalization has opened up new areas of economic opportunity around the world. The rapid transfer of money and jobs to cities and countries where cheap labour can be found has fueled what the Report labels a "race to the bottom," in which an increasing number of urban poor compete for a diminishing share of jobs in an increasingly insecure and informal economy. This race is not limited to the developing world. Previously productive urban industrial cities in the US, for example, have lost large shares of their employment base. But wherever this "race to the bottom" occurs, it brings with it, according to the Report, an unrelenting "urbanization of poverty," along with a marked increase in homelessness, particularly visible in the developed world. The Report also cites a new "feminization of poverty," in which women are becoming increasingly marginalized by a globalizing society, rendering them the most vulnerable of urban residents. While stipulating that no direct connection can be found between globalization and rising global crime rates, the Report does detail a significant increase in urban violence.

Cashing in on culture
As more and more cities seek to sustain themselves in the wake of the industrial flight that often accompanies globalization, many are trading on culture: building museums, funding festivals, and revitalizing formerly industrial areas with multi-use cultural spaces. *The State of the World's Cities Report, 2004/05,* describes this growing trend of refurbishing and re-branding cities as cultural sanctuaries. However, these urban transformations are actually quite competitive. The race to get

(World Population in Billions)

6
5
4
3
2
1
0

1200

2000

Our greatest cities create joy through diversity

ahead in the new global economy has pitted city against city, each one actively promoting its uniqueness, positioning themselves as *"the"* destination for the discerning and cultured tourist.

The culturally-driven redevelopment of inner cities has included the preservation of historic buildings, as well as the revival of traditional crafts for enhancing the global tourism potential of cities and gentrification of inner-city residential areas. Gentrification has transformed the older sections of many cities into some of the most sought-after real estate. However, development approaches that rely on this cultivation of urban culture have been both enthusiastically embraced and harshly criticized. Not only is urban culture a tool of economic development whose benefits and costs are distributed unevenly, it can also be used as a political instrument in pluralistic societies to help define cultural identities, placing certain population groups in positions of privilege, while excluding others.

Metropolitanization in the 21st Century: Cherry-picking, fragmentation and differentiation
Changing cityscapes have spatial, institutional and economic dimensions. One of the most visible aspects of recent metropolitan development has been a huge physical expansion, with cities spilling over into adjacent jurisdictions and incorporating them within the larger municipality. In the institutional realm, this physical expansion has been accompanied by a proliferation of "administrative entities" with responsibilities for different aspects of metropolitan government.

In the political realm, the most significant impact of globalization on cities has been the weakening of national and local public institutions, relative to external private economic power. The privatization of public services in many cities is one outcome of this process, in which external investors 'cherry-pick' the more profitable services, further eroding urban revenues and leaving cities with the poorly performing services. At the same time, relinquishing responsibility for water supply, sanitation, waste collection, fire fighting and social services amongst others has also meant that local authorities are losing control over important tools needed for urban rehabilitation and renewal. These developments are leading to greater fragmentation and differentiation, as well as growing inequalities and spatial mismatches between resources and needs. In short, urban liveability is falling short of 'metropolitan expectations'.

Challenges for the planners of 21st century cities
To plan for pluralistic cities, acknowledging and supporting the full urban rights of all population groups, *The State of the World's Cities, 2004/05*, calls on urban planners to develop a new kind of multicultural literacy. An essential part of this is familiarity with the many and varied histories of urban communities, especially since those histories intersect with struggles over space and place. It is not, according to the Report, about comprehensive action or hierarchical coordination of master plans, but entails interdependent transparent processes concerned with the many dimensions of liveable cities – environmental sustainability, social justice and equity, community and aesthetics.

Finally, *The State of the World's Cities, 2004/05* stresses that this new planning culture must bring into sharper relief, the themes of urban culture, metropolization, international migration and integration. The dispensation of public space, now hotly contested in cities, must be managed with an eye toward inclusivity in the face of increasing diversity. The Report calls for an understanding and appreciation of the value of planning for **cities of difference.**