

TRANSFORMING CITIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY: KEY RESOURCES

Sustainable urban development has become part of mainstream work for many institutions and networks. But no single body tackles all the challenges, which range from climate change and biodiversity to transport, infrastructure, informal settlements, poverty and service provision. So resources are organised here by theme, highlighting information sources, events and key organisations working internationally.

Urbanisation and cities

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) produces the *World urbanization prospects* report every three years, summarising key trends and the world's state of urbanisation. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) provides another global outlook through its annual *State of world population* report, which in 2007 looked specifically at urbanisation. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adds to the debate by exploring trends, hosting round tables and reviewing urban policy agendas. In 2013, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) published a report on how science, technology and innovation can help address urbanisation challenges, particularly in the developing world. In July, the International Institute for Environment and

Development (IIED), a non-profit think-tank, published a working paper that dissects discussions, evidence and concepts about urbanisation. UN-Habitat (the UN Human Settlements Programme) has produced more in-depth reports on Asian, African, Latin American and Caribbean cities.

Many research institutes focus on specific aspects of urbanisation. One academic think-tank, the UK-based Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWC), explores how networks of cities work together on issues such as sustainability and urban policy.

The annual World Cities Summit brings together urban leaders from around the world to tackle challenges and share innovation.

International networks of cities, such as the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) organisation based in Spain, facilitate cooperation (and offer useful graphics illustrating urban challenges). The Urban Knowledge Network Asia and African Centre for Cities both help researchers discuss and share information on regional urban issues.

Sustainability, resilience, environment, biodiversity.

Several organisations work on sustainability, resilience, and environmental and biodiversity management in urban areas. By no means exhaustive, the collection of sources that follows highlights some key publications. A report published in 1980 by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), WWF (World

Wide Fund for Nature), UNEP (UN Environment Programme) and UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is a fascinating read that builds a history of how the concept of sustainable development emerged. In 1991, the Friends of the Earth published *Reviving the city: towards urban sustainable development*, a book that explores how cities are adopting sustainable development principles. In 2005, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report offered a global account of how ecosystems and their benefits are changing, including those in urban settings. In 2013, UNDESA explored sustainable development challenges, with urban sustainability one of the focus areas. Also in 2013, The World Bank produced a report discussing how to build sustainability in an urbanising world. The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) in 2013 developed a summary report offering policymakers advice on building resilient cities and highlighting successful case studies.

A huge effort has been made to create networks where mayors and city governments can share, learn and challenge each other around sustainability themes. One of the most active is ICLEI, a global network of cities of all sizes across 86 countries, which promotes local action for sustainability. ICLEI hosts many conferences each year, such as the World Cities Congress and Resilient Cities Conference. It also produces reports and has created a Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity with several UN agencies and others. In April, UN-Habitat,

UNISDR, The World Bank Group, the Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and Recovery, the Inter-American Development Bank, The Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative, the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) and ICLEI announced a global collaboration — the Medellin Collaboration on Urban Resilience — representing more than 2,000 cities around the world. The aim is to: harmonise tools used for assessing vulnerabilities and strengths; access finance so as to increase adaptive capacity; and build capacity to achieve these goals.

The IIED takes urban development as one of its focus areas, publishing the *Environment & Urbanization* journal. The Steps (Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability) Centre, at the UK's Sussex University, is an interdisciplinary global research and policy institution that investigates peri-urban challenges. The Meridian Institute is a US-based non-profit organisation undertaking a global resilience mapping assessment. A few other think-tanks investigate urban sustainability and resilience — including the Earth Institute's Center for Sustainable Urban Development at Columbia University in the United States, the International Institute for Sustainable Development in Canada and the US-based Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET) International. This year, US think-tank the World Resources Institute opened the Center for Sustainable Cities, aiming to bridge the divide between knowledge and practice in

urban issues. The private sector network World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) is a partner in this initiative.

Climate change, disaster risk reduction, extreme events, insurance

Probably the most important document on climate change, and its implications for urban settings, is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 5th Assessment Report Chapter 8: Urban Areas.

Key agencies and funders working where climate and urbanisation issues meet are the UK-based Climate Development and Knowledge Network (CDKN), which supports developing country decision-makers and has funded research into climate impacts in urban settings. A recent paper by CDKN discusses key actions that governments can take to make disaster reduction and resilience a mainstream part of city planning. The UN International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction group also works to reduce urban risks from climate and disasters.

The global Programme of Research on Climate Change Vulnerability, Impacts and Adaptation (PROVIA) organises a biennial Adaptation Futures Forum for practitioners, academics and government officials working to integrate resilience in development planning.

The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group is a megacity network created in 2005 to promote local action against greenhouse gas emissions. Some unusual players in the field of disaster risk reduction are two global insurance firms, Zurich

Insurance and Munich Re. Munich Re hosts a separate foundation that specifically investigates opportunities for micro-insurance in developing countries.

Transport, infrastructure, energy, housing and communications

The 2013 global report on human settlements, published by UN-Habitat, focused on sustainable transport systems — discussing a conceptual shift from planning for destinations to planning for accessibility. The World Resources Institute hosts an initiative called EMBARQ, with projects designed to help cities integrate sustainable transport into their planning.

The non-profit organisation Habitat For Humanity International focuses on how to integrate sustainable techniques and designs into housing construction. It hosts an Asia-Pacific Housing Forum every two years. A newer non-profit called Architecture For Humanity innovatively engages people in designing their own homes and works globally on providing shelters for many poor communities.

The International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), a think-tank based in Austria, coordinated a global energy assessment published in 2012 that discusses how to implement clean and sustainable urban energy systems. In 2013, the non-profit Urban Land Institute and financial services company Ernst & Young produced a report evaluating the infrastructure outlook for the globe and sharing findings on financial and infrastructural deficits in cities around the world.

The World Bank and regional development banks (Asian Development

Bank, African Development Bank and Inter-American Development Bank) are big players in financing urban change through infrastructure projects large and small. Communication technology has been integral to urban system change in the past ten to 15 years, supporting cities' ability to monitor and manage systems such as road space, and respond to emergencies. IBM for example, is leading huge efforts to make cities deliver 'smarter' services.

Informal settlements, housing, migration, food security

There are many organisations operating in these arenas, but UN-Habitat is a key player as it is specifically mandated to look at housing and slum upgrading. It also leads the World Urban Campaign, which promotes urban issues in development policies, and Habitat III, a UN conference on housing and sustainable urban development planned for 2016. Real Equity For All (formerly Homeless International) and Cities Alliance are international non-profit organisations that investigate slums, informal settlements and social housing. Slum Dwellers International is a network of community-based organisations focused on urban poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

IIED hosts an established human settlements research group that specifically address urban development. IIED's David Satterthwaite, a leading voice on urban poverty, in 2013 co-authored a book exploring how governments and international agencies underestimate the scale and depth of urban poverty. More recently he co-

authored a report on urbanisation trends and links between cities and rural areas.

An IIED discussion paper in 2013 explored the connections between urbanisation, food security and poverty. IDRC, an independent think-tank, produced a book discussing the role of urban agriculture in planning and how urban food systems can increase urban food security.

Source: <http://www.scidev.net/global/cities/feature/transforming-cities-sustainability-key-resources.html>