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Best Practices for Spatial Planning and Development Control in Developing Countries

Geoffrey Payne

Geoffrey Payne and Associates
34 Inglis Road, Ealing Common, London W5 3RL, UK
gkpayne@gpa.org.uk

Abstract:

The increasing international trend in favour of market based economic development strategies has significantly affected the options available to central and local governments to influence the ways in which land is transformed from rural to urban use and developed for residential and other functions. Under these conditions, it is vital that government agencies increase their understanding of the behaviour of land and property markets and the different options available to influence growth and development in ways which are consistent with macro economic and social policy objectives and the public interest.

Unfortunately, the regulatory frameworks of planning standards, regulations and administrative procedures are often a barrier to the development of more efficient and equitable land markets. If the costs of conforming to official norms is higher than many people can afford, the inevitable response will be a growth in unauthorised settlements. Spatial planning policies which segregate residential, commercial and industrial activities and impose low densities also require large areas of rural land, impose high transport and environmental costs and inhibit opportunities for local economic initiatives which can help lift communities out of poverty. Development control policies are also frequently based on imported or inherited norms, rather than traditional practices and local climatic conditions.

The paper will identify some of the key issues and review selected experiences with innovative approaches in spatial planning and development control. Among the issues to be covered are:

- How can the spatial expansion of urban areas be constrained so as to reduce their ecological footprint and put existing urban land to the most effective use?
- How can spatial planning enable low-income groups to live in, or develop, areas where opportunities for sustainable livelihoods are maximised?
- On what basis should planning, building and infrastructure provision standards be formulated, disseminated and enforced?
- How can development control balance the need to stimulate economic investment and protect the public interest?
- What elements of the urban land development process should be subject to development control?
- What forms of control are appropriate under conditions of market led development and limited public sector financial and human resources?

The paper will review options for reducing unit costs of officially sanctioned urban land development, increasing public participation in urban land development, including multi-stakeholder partnerships and increasing the influence of planning within existing resource constraints, including planning and design briefs.

Introduction

The increasing international emphasis on market based economic development strategies has significantly affected the options available to central and local governments to influence the ways in which land is transformed from rural to urban use and developed for residential and other uses. No longer is it feasible, except under exceptional circumstances, for the public sector to control either the rate of urban growth or the forms which it takes. Even draconian powers, as adopted in China during the Cultural Revolution, have failed to contain the trend for urban areas to attract migrants and for the indigenous urban population to increase at rates frequently higher than the institutional or financial resources of government can control. In any case, there is increasing evidence that urban growth is associated with increasing levels of social and economic development and that the poor make a significant collective contribution to this process.

The challenge facing governments is therefore not how to contain or control urban growth. Instead, it is how to harness the creative forces operating and channel them in ways which facilitate investment and development by others in ways which benefit the majority and are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

Planning methods and spatial planning

Traditional approaches to spatial planning and development control in many developing countries are based on assumptions, interests and methods inherited or imported from Europe or north America. The most obvious of these is master planning, by which projected requirements are spatially distributed within differentiated zones for residential, commercial, industrial and recreational or institutional uses. The intention of such plans is to secure the planned and efficient use of land consistent with long term policy objectives and provide a lead within which private capital should be directed. Unfortunately, the implementation of such plans within developing countries were originally intended to isolate activities and social groups and benefit the colonial communities. Their implementation since independence has often remained strongly influenced by this colonial legacy and has operated to the clear benefit of the social and political elite and the disadvantage of incoming migrants and the indigenous urban poor who are unable to conform to official norms and standards.

A further limitation of master plans is that they are prepared independently of the economic resources required to implement them and are unresponsive to changes in the economic environment. D'Souza (1989) has claimed that during his years as civil servant in India, he hardly saw a city plan which gave any idea of where the funds for implementing it would be found. A further limitation is that plans make public the areas where investment may be encouraged or discouraged, so that land-owners in areas where potential profits are perceived to be less than anticipated, may sell to a developer who will pre-empt the plan by developing an area for more profitable use. The corridors of the Ankara Metropolitan Planning Bureau in Turkey are lined with master plans for the city, none of which have been implemented. In fact in each case, the plan has followed development rather than anticipated it. The static nature of master plans also means that they are only likely to be appropriate at a specific point in the development of a city; before and after that, they are increasingly inefficient.

More direct methods of intervening in urban land development have met similar fates. For example, many sub-Saharan African countries attempted to control urban growth through the nationalisation of all land, whilst some cities, such as Delhi, experimented with land banking. In most such cases, the allocation of such lands for officially sanctioned development lagged well behind demand and actually forced up prices in areas still available in the market. Land price ceilings also failed to achieve their objectives. The ability of the public sector to control development in such ways has therefore been shown to have limited success and has often been counter-productive.

Alternative approaches have been introduced to overcome these limitations, of which structure plans are perhaps the most widely applied. The advantage of these is that they provide a strategic framework, within which local proposals can respond to changing needs and resources through action planning or participatory planning approaches. Such combinations can serve to strengthen good urban governance through the active involvement of civil society in decisions regarding urban development and thereby enhance the legitimacy of government action and the planning process.

Regulatory frameworks and development control

It would naïve to assume, however, that the introduction of new spatial planning methods will be simple. Mabogunje (1989) has cautioned that 'although the stated task of urban planning agencies has been changed, their institutional framework and their staff remain largely unaltered in terms of professional preoccupations and training. Moreover, the 1940s planning and building regulations under which these agencies operate have not been revised in any significant manner, leaving an unclear relationship between their new terms of reference and their persisting, though less relevant, legislative base'.

Forms of development control have also been shown to have failed to achieve their objectives of ensuring orderly development. By emphasising a preoccupation with order, rather than needs, regulatory frameworks have imposed planning and building regulations, standards and administrative procedures to which only a minority of urban populations are able to conform. Official requirements regarding minimum land use zoning, plot sizes, road widths, standards of construction, residential density levels, building height limits and infrastructure provision standards are all the subject of detailed attention in planning practice and minimum acceptable standards are generally enshrined in law and regarded by their professional defendants as sacrosanct and therefore not open to discussion.

Unfortunately, such standards, regulations and procedures are generally derived from some abstract and well intentioned notion of what individual households require, irrespective of what they can afford. To meet such requirements has therefore required subsidies sufficient to bridge the gap. Yet even before market based development strategies became pervasive, the drain on public resources was sufficient to limit the extent of planned development to a minority who enjoyed preferential access to those controlling resources. Dependence on subsidies intensifies existing distortions in land and housing markets and reinforces a culture of dependency among the poor. It also makes it impossible for the formal private sector to compete and meet the needs of

lower income groups, even if they are willing to accept the lower profit margins and higher risks.

As with planning standards, the problem with planning regulations lies not so much in their intentions, but their outcomes. Whilst few would object to the need to prevent polluting industries operating in residential areas, it is another thing altogether to prevent households opening shops or cottage industries. Land use zoning regulations originated in the industrial cities of northern Europe and America, where they were intended to separate polluting industries from residential areas. Whilst the separation of major industrial and commercial activities can be justified, zoning regulations have all too often become rigid bureaucratic techniques for imposing arbitrary forms of order in areas where a degree of interaction between different land uses increases both livelihood possibilities and the quality of urban life. The tendency in Jakarta to separate residential from other uses has been described by Leaf (1994:355) as reflecting official policy objectives of creating “islands of homogeneity and wealth, set in a sea of diversity and poverty”.

Experience with the Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) approach to development have shown that a major component of urban economic development has been generated through the informal clustering of related informal economic activities in urban areas. In India, Solomon (2000) has demonstrated that such processes cannot easily be anticipated or initiated by government agencies, though inappropriate attempts to control them can prevent them from flourishing. Amis (2000) has also indicated that municipalities have a far greater negative than positive role, suggesting that restrictive regulations may restrict, rather than encourage social and economic development.

As McAuslan (1989) has shown in the case of Madras, “so concerned have the authorities been to close every loophole against illegal development, corruption, exploitation of scarce urban resources, the exercise, and therefore the possible wrongful or non-exercise of discretion, that the principal aim of the MMDA - to get orderly and equitable development underway in Madras and its environs - has been lost sight of”. As a result, “laws were not being observed or enforced, illegal and unauthorised development was widespread and plans were not being followed”. McAuslan went on to claim that the legal regulations in Madras lack consistency and the more complex they became, the more likely this is to happen. By attempting to control all aspects of land development, particularly land use, planning regulations have therefore restricted access to land and the options for those who do gain access. Similar findings are reported for building regulations in Ibadan, Nigeria, where Acrimah and Adeagbo (2000) found that most violations of regulations took place when residents built according to their needs and not the detailed regulations concerning setbacks, room size and plot coverage, etc.

Finally, the formulation and presentation of planning regulations also have a pernicious aspect. Their obtuse language, complexity and comprehensiveness force the general public to depend on professional advice, access to whom is restricted to more affluent groups.

Administrative procedures

Among the factors influencing private sector investor investment in urban development time and risk are critical factors. These become more critical when domestic inflation is high, so administrative procedures which delay decisions on urban development proposals result in substantially higher costs, which are then passed on to residents or other land users. Kitay (1985) has observed that in many developing countries, it takes many years to record a land transaction on the official title register and concludes that such delays are a major impediment to the involvement of private sector developers in low income housing. In Peru during the 1980s, it took nearly seven years to obtain legal permission for house development and 207 steps were involved in adjudicating undeveloped state land. Struyk, Hoffman and Katsura (1990) also noted that in West Java, land transfers took an average of 32.5 months for title issuance and that this added between 10 and 29 percent to the cost of land acquisition.

The inevitable outcome of these regulatory constraints is that a large and increasing proportion of urban land development in developing countries is being undertaken outside the formal, officially sanctioned process. Durand-Lasserve (1996) estimates that over 40 percent of the world's population are excluded from formal land and housing markets, including between 15-70 percent of the urban population of developing countries. It is also increasing more rapidly than any other category.

A major consequence of market based development strategies is the increasing commercialisation of land and housing markets. For rapidly growing cities in developing countries, competition has raised land prices and forced the poor to settle in peripheral locations, often many kilometres from employment opportunities. Whilst access to marginal sites was once available through social networks, these have been weakened through the penetration of market forces and even plots in unauthorised settlements without formal tenure or services command a market value.

Options for more appropriate spatial planning

The problems with traditional attempts at spatial planning listed above have been exacerbated by the adoption or intensification of market based approaches to economic development. Public sector agencies now have less resources at their disposal for capital expenditure and subsidies are no longer so easily available. Public land and property, previously seen as a non-economic asset, are increasingly seen as a portfolio to be managed in the same way as they would be in the private sector. As private sector interests become more influential, options for harnessing and channelling investment in ways which are consistent with public policy objectives change. However, this should be seen as an opportunity as much as a threat, since it provides the prospect of more sustainable and inclusive approaches which are financially viable.

Countries and cities which are quick to change to this more pragmatic, market sensitive and inclusive approach are most likely to stimulate investment by all sections of society. However, such new approaches require an understanding of the behaviour of urban land and housing markets and the different options available to influence the direction and form of growth in ways which are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

At the wider urban scale, international experience suggests that the most effective way of achieving this objective is to create pluralistic systems of supply which can respond to changes in demand and needs (see Fig 1). The role of the public sector in this context is to create and maintain a 'level playing field' on which different suppliers of land, services, credit and building materials can compete on equal terms. This suggests the reduction of subsidies, or their concentration on elements which stimulate secondary investment without reinforcing distortions in land markets. This can most readily be achieved by subsidising the supply of clean water, sanitation and drainage systems, which improve the health of the poor and their livelihood opportunities.

A general objective of spatial planning should be to ensure that all available urbanised land is put to the most efficient and intensive use consistent with social, cultural and climatic conditions. In most cases, this suggests that spatial planning policies should encourage proposals which create more compact urban areas. These will reduce the rural land required by urban expansion and population growth and also minimise pressure on transportation systems. Permitting and even encouraging mixed land use and medium rise developments will also enhance social interaction and livelihood opportunities as well as creating more diverse, dynamic and efficient urban areas. One way of achieving these ends is to remove or substantially reduce transport subsidies. In South Africa, such subsidies are imposing an ever heavy burden on public authorities and are creating urban sprawl on a vast scale.

Governments in developing countries have pioneered a number of approaches designed to address these issues and encourage the active participation of all stakeholders in urban society. These include the following.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Throughout countries at all levels of economic development, interest in partnerships between public and private sectors has increased dramatically in the last decade. This is due to several factors - the increasing acceptance of the failure of conventional attempts to impose control through direct intervention and reactive controls; the impact of market based development strategies through structural adjustment programmes or government policies, a perception that the private sector is more efficient in meeting diverse and changing needs and, possibly, their incorporation as a central element of the Habitat Agenda.

Surprisingly, partnerships in land have received relatively little attention in the literature until recently. A recent review (Payne 1999) found that formal public-private partnerships have yet to make a significant impression on the form of urban growth and have not been effective in benefiting the urban poor. However, a number of informal arrangements have emerged which appear to have improved large scale improvements. Many of these have involved ways of enabling low-income communities to remain in areas which would otherwise be unaffordable to poor households, such as improving infrastructure and environmental conditions as in the Kampung Improvement Programmes in various parts of Indonesia, particularly Surabaya.

Partnerships work best when they can win the confidence of land-owners that they will benefit more from collaborating with government than selling their land to a formal or

informal land developer. This depends upon public agencies being able to convince land-owners and local communities that the agencies are willing and able to deliver such benefits. A major initiative in Islamabad, Pakistan, collapsed after accusations that the project was exploiting land-owners by buying land at less than its potential value in order to maximise profits for those involved.

Even many successful projects fail to expand into large scale programmes because they exclude the participation of community groups and other sections of civil society. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, on the other hand, provide for the inclusion of customary, community and other groups and provide a more comprehensive platform for the development of genuinely participatory development which can also benefit the urban poor.

Planning and design briefs

Another option through which public sector action can guide private sector investment is that of planning and design briefs. Rather than planning and developing urban land directly, this approach involves a local authority preparing a planning brief for a selected development project site and inviting others to submit proposals.

The approach is widely used in the UK and various other countries (see Punter, Carmona and Platts 1994 and Davidson and Payne (eds) 2000) but has not been adopted extensively in developing countries, possibly because local urban authorities lack the experience and capacity to prepare and manage the processes involved. However, they offer considerable potential in enabling local authorities to extract a public benefit from market based developments, if only because they allow potential developers and investors to identify at the outset the terms and conditions with which they must conform, together with the degrees of flexibility allowed in preparing proposals. This both saves time and reduces risk, factors which enable developers to reduce costs and incorporate social and/or environmental concessions in their proposals. They also offer the possibility that developments can draw upon a wider range of ideas than those available within government planning offices, leading to more dynamic and popular developments.

Whilst planning briefs are generally intended to ensure the financial viability and strategic acceptability of proposals, the actual design of proposals can be subject to design briefs. These may routinely indicate the mandatory and optional factors to which proposals should conform and may include building heights, land uses, the form or character of buildings and other considerations. Design briefs may be most applicable in areas of heritage value or other sites of national or local importance.

The key to the success of planning and design briefs is that they should be based on criteria which will enable land owners, investors and developers to reap a reasonable level of profit and provide the maximum public benefit. They therefore depend upon those preparing them to have a good working knowledge of the market conditions prevailing at any time and place and an understanding of the extent to which they can negotiate without deterring developers from expressing interest. This raises a number of issues. First, that officials should be capable of identifying the scope for public benefits at any time and place. Secondly, that they have sufficient authority to be able to adapt

official procedures and regulations to such varied situations and thirdly, that they are sufficiently honest and efficient in implementing such approaches on a long term basis.

Land sharing and land pooling/readjustment

Another option for influencing spatial planning in ways which balance financial and social needs is that of land sharing. An early example of this approach was the Building Together project carried out in Bangkok in the 1970-80s (Angel 1983). A recent example is taking place in central Mumbai where a combination of NGOs, land-owners, developers and municipal authorities are starting a project in which the land-owner has been granted an increasing floor space index (FSI) allowance on his land in return for re-housing a squatter community on part of the same site out of the enhanced profits.

Land sharing has much to commend it, though it is easier to balance conflicting interests when land prices are buoyant and profits are easier to achieve. It also requires a flexible and transparent administrative system to operate effectively.

Options for improving development control

In formulating development control standards, a planning authority will have to take cognisance of the economic and social realities which apply at a given time and place. If conditions are imposed which prevent financially viable development, land will remain less developed than would otherwise be the case, or will be developed fully, but without permission. The challenge is therefore to encourage individual and corporate investments but at the same time extract a public benefit. Secondly, development controls should concentrate on elements which are of public concern, such as public health, and not on aspects which are of only local interest, such as the uses to which individual plots are put.

A literature search undertaken in preparing this paper revealed a virtually total pre-occupation with the United Kingdom and northern Europe, suggesting that little has been written about the subject in developing countries. The British Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 contained the basis of all British development control and was adopted almost simultaneously in many countries of the British Commonwealth (or Empire as it was then). For this reason, European approaches to the subject are of disproportionate relevance to many developing countries, several of which have retained and even strengthened this legislation. Ironically, the British planning system has removed many of the elements contained in early legislation in favour of more flexible approaches.

In this context, it is particularly relevant that traditional land use zoning regulations have given way to more flexible approaches in which any proposal is considered according to policy objectives determined locally. The factors which would commonly be considered are the impact upon employment generation and the local environment, and the likely reaction of local residents. The current system is therefore analogous to the 'traffic lights' system proposed for Indonesia, whereby red priorities are applied to areas of special scientific interest (SSIs), outstanding natural beauty, listed buildings and conservation areas, etc, amber is applied to general urban areas, where proposals are subject to planning approval and local action plans, and green is applied to enterprise

zones, such as the London Docklands and other areas where developments and investments in employment generation are being encouraged. Relaxing land use zoning regulations in routine urban areas and replacing a 'policing' approach with an 'enabling' one (UNCHS 1996:299-300) would enable official resources to concentrate on areas of strategic importance, such as heritage sites.

Permitted use development rules can specify the kinds of development not needing permission (mainly small scale developments) and those that do. Individual residential properties generally do not need planning controls and present opportunities for home based economic activities which benefit the local communities (Tipple 2000). However, multi-storey residential buildings may need careful attention to ensure conformity, as was demonstrated in the earthquakes which devastated numerous apartment buildings in western Turkey in 1999.

Unfortunately, many developing countries have not yet seen fit to review the regulatory frameworks within which development control is applied. They continue attempting to enforce controls which are invariably inappropriate to local conditions and unaffordable to a large proportion of the local population. As such, they force such groups into the very unauthorised settlements they seek to prevent.

One way out of this impasse is to undertake regulatory audits of planning and building regulations, standards and administrative procedures to identify which elements represent the most significant obstacles to affordable legal shelter and test changes on an experimental basis in new projects. Monitoring such changes can then lead to selective reform on a regular basis of the entire structure of regulatory frameworks to ensure that they are made more appropriate to the needs of all sections of urban populations. Reviews of regulatory frameworks have been proposed by Dowall and Clarke (1991) and McAuslan (1992) and the World Bank, which proposed to introduce them in Mexico during the 1990s. However, it appears that these have not yet been adopted, though their possible application in Indonesia would appear to be worthy of consideration. A major international research project on the subject is about to start and could be linked to any such initiative in Indonesia.

Transfer Development Rights (TDR)

This approach has been applied with reasonable success in Mumbai, India (see Adusumilli 1999), where it is used as a development control tool instead of monetary compensation to redirect investment away from areas where it is not considered desirable towards areas where it is wanted. It is generally used in areas where private land is designated for acquisition by public authorities. If any land is remaining after acquisition, the owner may use the TDR on the remaining land, or any other land owned, or sell the rights on the open market. Whilst TDR can be generated anywhere in Mumbai, it can only be consumed in designated areas where the urban authorities wish to encourage development.

In Mumbai, it is claimed that the approach has enabled public agencies to acquire land for public use which would otherwise be very expensive and to do so with a minimum of delay. It has also reduced urban sprawl through encouraging more intensive use of land

already urbanised. However, TDR depends for long term success on stable and growing land and property market and an effective system of administration.

Administrative procedures

Given the substantial impact which delays can have on land development costs, any savings in the time taken to process planning applications can result in equally substantial savings and enhance options for private sector intervention in lower income areas of urban development. The work of De Soto and his team have resulted in major improvements in Peru through the introduction of 'one-stop-shops', in which all the necessary administrative procedures are conducted. If combined with regulations which command popular support and approval, these can increase the incentive for residents and developers to conform to official requirements and avoid dependence on informal supply systems. All information on such regulations and procedures needs to be produced and disseminated in ways which local people, some of whom may not be able to read official languages, can understand. Well illustrated leaflets offering simple technical advice on good practice can be invaluable in meeting this objective.

Linking spatial planning and development control options

Professional planners and designers have several tools available to make spatial planning more appropriate to the needs and interests of their populations, especially the poor. Some of these options are reviewed in Davidson and Payne (1983 and 2000) and can be summarised as follows.

Settlement planning and layout design

The first objective of settlement planning intended to benefit all sections of the urban population should be to reduce entry costs to legal land, service and shelter. The second objective, is to do this in ways which stimulate subsequent improvement by local people. These aspects are a proper concern of public authorities, so standards and regulations are required which reflect achievable norms for long term, large scale application.

These objectives can best be achieved by balancing costs, many of which are inelastic except for the level of provision selected, against resources, which may also be inelastic. The skill is therefore to manipulate the types and levels of provision for different components so that the project is viable. A critical factor will be the client or clients for whom the site is being developed. This will determine the type and standard of development which can be afforded initially and over a given period. The first stage is therefore to determine the target group or groups for whom the scheme is being developed and the mix of uses and standards of initial development. This can be done by estimating costs of preliminary proposals and comparing them to resources or the ability to pay. It is, of course, relatively simple to finance schemes for affluent groups, so attention will need to focus on ways of financing developments for a mixture of groups, including the poor.

A priority consideration in such approaches is to maximise opportunities for added value. This may take the form of commercial, industrial or medium/high income housing, from which a surplus can be generated to cross subsidise infrastructure provision for low-income households. The amount of such development a site can bear will depend on several factors, especially the type of development concerned.

A second consideration should be to reduce the area occupied by roads, footpaths and other public open spaces to the minimum necessary for safe circulation and recreation. All such areas will involve capital expenditure and high maintenance costs, which will have to be borne by the residents, or other users. Given the length of roads even in a relatively small development, reducing road reservations by 1.0 metre can increase the area of land available for private, revenue generating uses, which can, in turn, reduce unit costs of the development. Roads should be as narrow as possible, not as wide as possible.

As a guide, an efficient land use plan should be able to achieve 65% of available land in private, revenue generating use, with 15 percent for communal use (eg schools, religious buildings, etc) and 20 percent for public use.

Plot sizes and shapes

Large plot sizes cost money. So do square ones. Since land is a major cost component, plot sizes should be based on levels which can be afforded. However, given a choice between larger plots or pre-built construction, larger plots may be preferred, since buildings can always be improved, or expanded, later. In India, the standard official minimum plot size is 25sq metres. This may be too small for efficient land development, and cultural factors are important. However, excessive plot sizes will invariably raise costs to levels which the poor cannot afford.

International experience suggests that a width:depth ratio of between 1:2 and 1:3 is most efficient in terms of overall project costs and private plot efficiency. A ratio of 1:2.5 is therefore a reasonable optimum, irrespective of plot size.

Levels of servicing

Unlike settlement layouts and plot sizes, these can vary enormously from initial to fully consolidated levels. In fact, continuous, progressive improvement is generally the norm.

The objective should be to provide the minimum initial level to permit permanent occupation of the plots. The provision of on-plot water will be a major cost threshold, since it will lead to increased consumption and therefore the need for improved disposal systems. Initial provision should be designed to facilitate subsequent upgrading.

Building construction

This is often regarded by planning and housing agencies as a critical factor in formulating and enforcing planning and building standards. However, for most people, especially the poor, it is often the last priority. Progressive development

according to the priorities and resources of the residents should be the norm, since it is usual for extensions and improvements to be financed out of future incomes. Standards should be flexible and public intervention concentrated on advice and technical assistance, rather than conventional development control and the imposition of inappropriate standards, no matter how well intentioned.

Conclusions

This paper has sought to provide a short review of some key issues and options for policy and practice in the development of more appropriate spatial planning and development control in developing countries. Experience suggests that many of the principles and options advocated above are well known to the vast majority of the urban poor themselves and to those who develop unauthorised settlements for them. Land and other resources, is rarely wasted in informal settlements, yet officially sanctioned schemes are full of lost opportunities to enhance both incomes and other life enhancing opportunities. There is therefore much to be gained by studying the forms of spatial planning and incremental development control practised by the poor themselves before formulating or implementing standards, regulations and procedures, no matter how well intentioned, that are created by more affluent and privileged members of society.

A critical feature of urban development carried out by the poor is that of incremental development. This minimises initial costs and defers non-essential expenditure to a future date, when resources may be easier to obtain. Imposing initial high standards negates these processes. A recognition of this creative and rational approach in development control policies would constitute a first step in accepting that housing and other urban investments can - and do - constitute a vital economic developmental role in enabling vast numbers of urban households, including the poor, to enhance their social and economic status over time. Involving the population, especially the poor, in the formulation of planning regulations and standards would also increase prospects for good urban governance and give greater legitimacy to government.

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