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**COLLECTIVE ACTION, ENABLEMENT, AND PARTNERSHIPS:
Issues in urban development**

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Mijnheer de Rector Magnificus, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Introduction

This Chair is devoted to urban studies in developing countries.

Why should we be concerned about urban development? There are a number of reasons.

(1) Cities have been around for more than six thousand years. Until recently, they held only a small fraction of their country's population, and were considered mixed blessings by their governments and by people from rural areas. This situation has changed dramatically in the last half century and continues to do so today. Now, half the world's population lives in cities (www.urbanobservatory.org/swc1999/cities). The level of urbanisation varies by region. In Latin America, already more than three-quarters of the population live in urban areas, but in Sub-Saharan Africa and in Asia, this is only 40%¹. Although developing countries are less urbanised, their urban growth rate is much more rapid. They are catching up, and in less than another generation, half of their population will also live in urban areas (www.urban21.de).

(2) Cities² are 'motors of economic development'. Many industries and services are concentrated there, because inputs and markets for products are widely available. There, people are searching for employment opportunities, and skills and knowledge are quickly spread, promoting mobility (World Bank, 2000: 126-128).

However, city governments are feeling the effects of global integration (World Bank, 2000: 3). More liberal trade policies, advances in information and communication technology and global financial markets make it easier for companies to establish themselves wherever they like. This means that cities have to compete more with each other in attracting them (cf Sassen, 1994).

(3) A third reason is less positive; the living environment in cities is under threat from poverty and environmental degradation. In developing countries, almost a quarter of the urban population lives in absolute poverty, and another quarter lives in relative poverty³. Large groups of poor people in cities have no access to basic shelter and infrastructural services, except what they produce on their own.

The negative effects of increasing pollution of water, land, and air in cities are felt disproportionately by the urban poor. Richer inhabitants simply move away from affected areas (Hardoy et al, 2000).

(4) A final reason, is that local power relations are becoming more important. National governments are delegating new powers to city governments. City dwellers themselves are actively organising and making new demands on local governments. They develop new socio-cultural identities in the process (Kloos, 1999).

In cities, global and local processes come together. This poses a major challenge to everyone living in cities – local governments, citizens and the private sector. How can people benefit more from the advantages of living in a city, and suffer fewer of the negative effects? This

¹ World Report on the Urban Future 21(www.Urban21.de)

² Cities are defined as those areas that are classified as urban within the country concerned. The definition of urban varies between countries and across time, referring to settlements with a minimum of 2,500 to 25,000 and a concentration of non-agricultural employment and production. City is a legal entity associated with specific administrative or local government structures. (World Bank, 1999).

³ Relative poverty is the poverty line as defined in the country concerned (NAR Advies, 1994).

depends on progress in three areas: reducing poverty, strengthening the economy, and protecting the urban environment – in short, promoting sustainable development⁴.

Although government has been considered the prime mover in this area, experience shows that local governments cannot solve the problems of fast-growing cities by themselves (Devas and Rakodi, 1993). They need support from the many other actors in the city; private companies, local communities, civil society organisations, and international funding organisations. Partnerships⁵ involving two or more actors working together, are increasingly seen as an effective way to manage urban development (Schübeler, 1996; Baud et al., forthcoming).

Common types of partnerships are;

- Those between government and private sector companies, and
- Those between communities and the private sector
- Those between community-based organisations (CBOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local government

City partnerships are often part of wider networks. International networks of local governments work widely through twinning processes (such as the IULA). Separate international networks of UN agencies and local governments also stimulate local partnerships in participatory environmental planning (ICLEI, through the Local Agenda 21 processes). There are international networks of CBOs and NGOs, which support each other locally, as well as lobbying national governments and international agencies.

So far, national governments have been important background partners in industrial development. However, what will their role be in the future? Some authors feel that globalisation will put an end to the role of the nation-state (Ohmae, 1996); others doubt that there is any significant difference in current globalisation trends (Hirst and Thompson, 1996). I do not believe that states will disappear; I do believe that they may lose their dominant position as actor in the global arena. If this is so, developing new alliances becomes more essential for national governments to protect the interests of their populations. However, it is too early to predict what shape the re-alignment between local government, private sector and civil society will take, especially on longer time scales.

Working together in ‘partnerships’ need not be a harmonious process, as we all know. In cities, there is great competition for scarce common resources. People who already have access to such resources will not readily admit competitors. Even in established partnerships, serious conflicts occur about the way benefits should be distributed.

Research on urban partnerships must improve our understanding of how they work under different conditions, and what one can realistically expect from them in practice. In my work

⁴ I use here the concept of sustainable development, as developed by Satterthwaite and Mitlin (1997). This incorporates elements of (ecological) sustainability, as well as requirements for meeting the needs of current generations through economic growth and social equity.

⁵ Although I use the term ‘partnership’ here, it does not imply equitable power relations between the actors participating in a ‘partnership’. Personally, I prefer the term ‘alliances’ or ‘coalitions’ to indicate that such relations inherently contain both elements of conflict and co-operation. However, here I conform to the more general usage of the term ‘partnership’.

here at the Vrije Universiteit, I would like to stimulate research on partnerships in cities, and look at their effectiveness in relation to the goals of sustainable development.

This area of research involves several questions. First, how can partnerships take the views and demands of the urban poor more into account – i.e. become more inclusionary? Secondly, can partnerships increase trust and co-operation, reduce conflicts and competition, and increase accountability? Finally, how effective are partnerships in reducing urban poverty, promoting economic growth benefiting the majority of people, and in protecting the urban environment?

To come to grips with these questions, I would like to discuss how researchers have looked at ‘ways of working together’ in urban areas the last ten years. This comes under the so-called ‘*local governance debate*’. It asks how planners, the private sector, and citizens can work together to make urban management more effective (Stoker, 2000; Putnam, 1993).

Cost effectiveness has been a major standard used for assessing partnerships. But we need to include other standards – namely, the three elements of sustainable development that I have just mentioned. My contention is that we should integrate our knowledge of how poor households cope with urban life on the one hand, and how private sector enterprises provide urban services on the other hand, in the debate on local governance. Only then can we really begin to answer the question of effective partnerships.

This sounds very logical, but I quote from a paper by Devas on ‘who runs cities?’ from 1999 to show that this is by no means a foregone conclusion;

“ urban government and management studies tend to assume that the state is in a position to control what actually happens. Studies of the urban poor and NGOs/CBOs tend to see the state as irrelevant or oppressive. There has been relatively little research which explores what actually takes place between these two approaches, in terms of interaction between the various actors and interests involved. ” (Devas, 1999)

Therefore, I will look at two sets of research before coming back to the local governance debate. The first looks at life in the city ‘from the bottom-up’. It starts from the point of view of the urban poor, who carve out living and working environments by themselves. This type of research centres around the *livelihood strategies of the poor*, and how they (poor) organise to improve their physical habitat, employment and level of security, through *collective action* and partnerships with others.

The second set of research looks at urban development from the ‘top-down’ planning perspective. Local planners aim at providing infrastructure and services more efficiently and effectively to large groups of people. Current ideas are that government should move away from direct provision of basic infrastructure and services, and become a regulator, setting the framework for the private sector to carry out direct provision. This type of research emphasises *privatisation – the so-called enabling framework*.

Then I will come back to the questions I have raised above, to look at gaps in what we know about effective partnerships ‘at the interface’ between city planners, the private sector and urban citizens. There I will suggest the beginning of a research agenda for my work here. This lecture forms a starting point for the discussions, which I hope to have in the coming years with students, practitioners, and researchers here at the Free University and at the Institute of Housing and Urban Development Studies.

2. Livelihood strategies of the urban poor

Let us start with the bottom-up perspective.

In research on livelihood strategies, we study how poor urban households pursue more secure living and working environments. Their ideas, strategies, and goals must be the starting point if partnerships with local government and private sector are actually to support their demands, rather than being irrelevant or worse, making life more difficult.

We no longer look at households the way we did a decade ago. In the 1980s, economists generally considered households to be ‘black boxes’, with common goals and an equal distribution of assets⁶. We no longer work with this assumption. Household members differ in their life goals, and these influence the ways in which they spend time, energy and money (Meertens, 2000)⁷. This leads to both co-operation and conflict between household members, and to an uneven distribution of benefits (Sen, 1990). Gender inequalities in the distribution of money and goods are particularly sharp, and make it difficult for women to ensure sufficient levels of care and well-being for their families (Folbre, 1994; Kabeer, 1994). The interests of older generations, and of male household members are often given preference, even though women channel a higher % of their income back into the household, manage their local environment (water, sanitation, SWM), and maintain social networks (Douglass, 1998; Baud, 1992; Moser, 1998; Lind, 1997).

We have also come to look at poverty in a different way. Researchers long considered poverty the result of a lack of income and employment, and focused their attention on ways to increase them.

Since the early 1990s, this view has changed. In the new thinking, the combination of strategies that households use to survive is the point of departure – their livelihood strategies. Such strategies are aimed at increasing basic security and ‘assets’ across various domains; (1) employment, (2) health and well-being for all family members, (3) shelter and local environment, (4) and inclusion in social and political networks (Wratten, 1995; Douglass, 1998)⁸. This integrated approach combines areas of research which were previously quite distinct, with little interaction between those working on respectively employment, habitat issues, and community development.

We also recognise that poor people have ‘assets’, which they try to use as effectively as possible (Moser, 1998). These include labour, knowledge, skills and experience, physical and financial capital, and their rights and claims – or as we say, capabilities and capitals

⁶ With the exception of researchers working in gender studies, who had recognised conflicts within households much earlier, such as work found in Young, K., *Of Marriage and the Market* (1983).

⁷ Meertens terms this the ‘life project’ of people, which includes the dimensions of life experience, identity and perceptions, with the articulation of future proposals and hopes, both at the individual and collective level (quoted in Hordijk, 2000).

⁸ Employment includes all forms of formalised and casual work, as well as self-provisioning (Lind, 1997; Baud, 1992). The habitat and environment includes access to land, tenure rights, housing and basic services, and communal infrastructure (Hordijk, 2000). Social and political networks range from daily forms of mutual help among (women) neighbours, to more large-scale networks of community self-help, and links with outside organisations.

(Chambers, 1997/1999:163; Wratten, 1995)⁹. Whether people are able to stay out of poverty depends also on the long-term stresses and sudden shocks which they experience, and their ability to recover from them (Moser, 1998). Examples are sudden illness, or the stress involved in caring for terminally ill family members (the effect of widespread aids).

Take a family in an illegal settlement in Lima, Peru. When the settlement has just been invaded, families and their neighbourhood organisations have to struggle to have the boundaries of the area recognised, and to get temporary water and electricity connections. Then they have to get a second neighbourhood plan approved, and finally, individual land titles. Only then can they get access to credit schemes and start to build their homes of durable materials. This process can take three years – or up to twenty years. Meanwhile, water provision, local sewage systems, road improvement, schools and health clinics are organised locally.

Because poverty is now seen as the result of deprivation in different areas, we can take a broader range of factors into account, and look at how they influence each other. Many poor urban households live in illegal settlements or slums. They need to be sure that their living space – their tenure - is not threatened, before they are willing to invest in shelter, basic services and neighbourhood networks (van Lindert, 1997; Mitlin, 1997). Their investments in better housing and basic services over time improve health and quality of life, making more time and energy available for productive activities by household members (cf. Satterthwaite, 1997). For women, with their triple responsibilities of care, employment and community management, such improvements are particularly important.

3. Collective action and community-based partnerships

Collective action by poor households in urban areas to organise shelter, basic services, employment, and security is widespread, without government assistance and against numerous constraints (cf. Rakodi, 1993). I want to look briefly at our knowledge about how such collective action takes place, and how partnerships are built up.

The debate on collective action by local communities follows from a much older discussion on community development (cf. Abbott, 1996 for a good overview).

The basic idea is unchanged; communities can improve their living and working environment through collective action. Definitions limit community to people living in one geographic area, identify with it, and share an interest in improving it (Yap in Lee, 1998; Warburton, 1998). Older approaches emphasise the homogeneous character of ‘communities’. Current approaches recognise that people have multiple identities, and identify with more than one ‘community’. For example, when women want to improve food security by exchanges of ragi and vegetables for a daily meal in Madras, they limit mutual support to direct neighbours. When they want to set up a mutual savings fund (chit fund) they draw on a wider circle of family, friends and colleagues from work. Therefore, each time collective action occurs, we have to ask which ‘community’ we are talking about; who it includes and who it excludes.

⁹ This approach has been utilised mainly in rural farming systems, disasters, and management of environmental resources, where de Haan (2000) has most recently distinguished 5 types of capital: human capital, natural capital, physical capital, financial capital, and social capital. It is increasingly being used in an urban context (Moser, 1998), where it builds on longstanding ideas among anthropologists concerning social networks among poor households.

Current approaches also recognise that communities are not necessarily harmonious. There are social divisions and conflicting interests within any community – between men and women, between young and old, between leaders and inhabitants. Consequently, the views of socially less powerful groups may be ignored when collective action is undertaken, and the benefits of collective action unevenly distributed (de Wit, 1993; van der Linden, 1997; van Kampen, 2000).

Under certain conditions, collective action can include a wider variety of views and interests – that is, become more inclusive. This happens when partners identify strong common interests, promoting a collective identity beyond local divisions. This happens particularly in cases where the whole community is threatened from outside.

Studies of community-based organisations focus on widely different issues, but I will limit my remarks here to shelter and environment. Many authors have studied self-help housing initiatives by residents in slum and squatter settlements (Gilhuis and Volbeda, 1992; van Westen, 1995; Baken and van der Linden, 1992). Earlier studies focused mainly on housing as such. Current studies include two more areas. The first concerns the negative effects of the commercialisation of land markets, which reduce access of the poor to housing plots. The second concerns alternative housing finance systems which give them more access to credit for housing (e.g. Baken and van der Linden, 1992; Baken, 2000; Mitlin, 1997).

Other studies focus on community-based activities in neighbourhood environmental management (Lee, 1998; Hordijk, 2000). They show how CBOs play an essential part in neighbourhood consolidation processes; negotiating over long periods of time to obtain secure land titles, basic services and local infrastructure (Hordijk, 1999, 2000; Huysman, forthcoming). They also show that the character of CBOs changes over time, shifting from a neighbourhood focus to a focus on more specific themes – such as obtaining parks and providing communal meals.

Community-based organisations are important in tackling problems at neighbourhood levels, but their resources and local base usually do not allow them to do more (Lee, 1998). Therefore, they have to enter into partnerships with external actors.

The last fifteen years, many researchers have studied the activities of NGOs (non-governmental organisations) working with local communities¹⁰. In this period, governments withdrew support for social provisions as a result of structural adjustment programmes, and NGO/CBO combinations became a partial substitute (cf. Environment and Urbanization, 1993; 1997).

This has led us to recognise the following advantages of such partnerships. Again, I limit my remarks to partnerships in the area of habitat and environment.

(1) NGOs improve access to funding for local communities (Mitlin, 1997; Arrossi et al., 1994). This is done through rotating savings and credit schemes of poor households themselves, or by linking them to larger external sources of finance (needed, for instance, for housing construction) (Mitlin, 1997).

(2) non-governmental organisations also provide technical assistance to communities in managing basic services. However, they need to work with small-scale private enterprises in designing and installing them¹¹ (Hardoy, Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2000).

¹⁰ Examples include Desai (1995), Edwards and Hulme, (1995), Nelson and Wright (1995).

¹¹ The design and installations have to be adapted to the low funding levels and incremental improvements which poor households prefer.

(3) Finally, NGOs can help to include the views of a wider range of people by promoting the participation of excluded groups (Moser and McIlwaine, 1999).

Externally, NGOs help local communities to build strategic coalitions. These increase their access to resources from different government levels – the ‘claim making processes on the state’ (Lee, 1998; Mitlin, 1997; 1999). CBO/NGOs also create federations, extending across national borders. These make it possible to compare experiences internationally, and to support each other’s activities locally. This makes local combinations more effective in negotiations with government and private service providers (Mitlin, 1999). Federations are also gradually being accepted as serious partners in international discussions. For example, a major NGO from Bombay – SPARC - and the international coalition to which it belongs are negotiating with the World Bank to change its tendering procedures. This would make it possible for it and other NGOs to become contractors in housing projects (Sheela Patel at CORDAID Meeting, June, 2000). We need a better understanding of the conditions making it possible for such coalitions to ‘upscale’ effectively – especially when it makes such radical changes possible.

This type of ‘upscaling’ is a difficult process, and many CBO/NGO combinations find it hard to achieve. In India, we found that many NGOs organising activities on urban environmental issues remained local and small-scale in operation, with limited benefits to the communities with whom they work (Schenk, Baud, Ramaneshwari, 1998; Huysman, forthcoming). Analysis of the conditions which prevent ‘upscaling’ processes from taking place, should also be part of a future research agenda.

Although the literature often suggests that the existence of CBOs and NGOs is widespread, this remains to be seen. Current examples are drawn mainly from a small range of very large cities, where research has been done (e.g. Lima, Buenos Aires, Manizales, Porto Alegre, some cities in India, Karachi, a few South African cities, one or two cities in Indonesia). We need to study to what extent we can extrapolate those experiences between regions.

We also need to look at the question to what extent CBOs and NGOs are active in secondary and smaller cities. In recent work on innovations in urban SWM in secondary cities in Tamil Nadu, we found such initiatives limited to the larger Corporations, and absent in the smaller municipalities. What factors can stimulate their becoming more widespread?

I come back to my original questions.

The recent research on livelihood strategies and households gives us a better understanding of the ways that poor urban households think and act, so that their views can be included in urban partnerships. However, the greater the social divisions are within communities the less likely partnerships are to include the views of the urban poor.

Community-based collective action is effective locally, but requires partnerships with NGOs to promote action at wider geographic levels. Currently, our knowledge is limited regionally and to large cities, and focuses on successful cases. We need a better understanding of the conditions which both allow and prevent CBO/NGO combinations to emerge. Particularly, we must look at the processes through which trust and co-operation are built up, or those which generate conflict, preventing them from becoming more effective.

4. Enablement and public-private partnerships

Now I turn to the top-down planning approach, in which local government administration plays a central role. Major changes have taken place in the divisions of responsibility the last two decades. These have consisted of two strands; decentralisation from national to local

levels of government, and a shift from government to private sector provision of infrastructure and services.

The rationale for decentralisation is that local government is in direct contact with citizens, and therefore should be more responsive to their needs and demands¹². In the last ten years, national governments of 63 developing countries have shifted administrative powers to lower levels of government. However, more funding has not always been provided, and it also remains to be seen whether local government is in fact more accountable to its citizens. This depends on how strong local political processes are, how much the civil society organisations I have just talked about can influence politicians and local administrations, and the quality of local government (World Bank, 2000: 121).

The second, more important strand of thinking concerns the relation between government and the private sector. In the 1980s the World Bank and the IMF have strongly promoted a neo-liberal paradigm. The new truth was that the private sector would implement urban development policies more efficiently and effectively than the public sector. Therefore, government should move away from direct provision of services, and limit itself to setting the regulatory framework for private sector companies. This has been called the 'enabling approach'¹³.

The different international agencies vary in their ideas on 'enablement', but, not surprisingly, World Bank views have dominated the discussion (Burgess, Carmona and Kolstee, 1994).

I am limiting my discussion here to the area of habitat and urban basic services, where privatisation has been widespread, offering us the possibility to look at the arguments for and against it¹⁴.

There are several models of public-private partnerships which urban local governments use¹⁵. From the studies by Batley¹⁶ and his group (1996), we find that;

¹² Other reasons include maintaining political stability in the face of pressures for greater local autonomy (WB, 2000). A reason against decentralisation is that it can lead to greater macro-economic instability, as national governments retain less control over public resources (WB, 2000:111).

¹³ The enabling approach for promoting urban development in general has come from a much earlier discussion on public sector housing provision, in which Turner (1976) strongly promoted the idea of urban residents being given more room by government to organise housing provision for themselves. The later, more general, concept of government enablement was brought forward by several international agencies (UNCHS, World Bank, UNDP). Although there was agreement on the basic condition that government should remove constraints on urban productivity, there were differences in the emphasis on the actors to be involved. The World Bank stressed the role of the (large-scale) private sector, and privatisation as a major strategy. UNDP included a wider variety of actors, emphasising the informal sector, NGOs and CBOs, and the role of women. It advocated more inclusive ways of promoting economic development, supporting activities of the urban poor in employment and production, in collectively building shelter and local infrastructure, and protecting the physical environment (UNDP, 1991:2).

¹⁴ The main areas of government-provided urban basic services include aspects of physical habitat (shelter, water, sanitation and solid waste management, electricity and roads), social infrastructure (education and health services), and provisions to promote entrepreneurial activities (Amos, 1993). Some basic services cannot be privatised because they concern natural monopolies. Other services can be made into private goods, but because these services provide essential benefits to society at large - by improving the quality of life and safeguarding public health - many governments retain them within public provision¹⁴. Then there are services which can be privatised easily, and where users can be excluded if they do not pay without endangering society at large. Examples include private house connections for water, electricity, and sanitation.

¹⁵ The World Bank (1994) identifies four 'broad' options through which responsibility for ownership, financing, operation, and maintenance is distributed. These include:

- (1) several forms of public ownership and operation, with private operators competing for contracts for (parts of) operations;
- (2) public ownership and private operation, through lease or concession;

Contracting out gives government a high degree of control, but it makes higher demands on its capacity to co-ordinate activities by private firms.

Concessions and leases give firms a wider discretion, and shifts the financial risk more to them. However, it also allows governments to retain some public control.

In licensed competition, firms and users compete through differences in prices, and government limits itself to setting conditions.

There is another important model, although it is largely ignored in the planning literature. It concerns arrangements between households and private sector companies, not involving government at all (Batley, 1996). Such ‘unplanned privatisation’ occurs widely in cities, especially in those areas where local governments exclude unauthorised settlements from basic provision. This leaves local inhabitants to their own devices. They buy such services mainly from local, small-scale private enterprises.

I use some examples to illustrate this from SWM, one of the important urban basic services affecting public health (the others are water and sanitation). In Nairobi local government has almost totally stopped providing solid waste management services, and residents are totally dependent on private providers to pick up their household waste. These providers are currently re-dividing neighbourhood provision among themselves, so they can make their work more efficient and profitable (Karanja et al., 2000).

In the public-private models, there has been an implicit bias against small scale, local enterprises as partners. Local governments prefer to contract large scale or foreign companies, because they can use legal sanctions if they do not comply with contracts, and they derive more prestige from large-scale projects (Rakodi, 1993; Baud et al., 2000; Post, 1999). Such partnerships are also more likely to provide certain financial advantages to government officials (Batley, 1996; Baken, 2000).

The result is that local knowledge and experience embodied in small-scale enterprises is at best largely ignored, and at worst is pushed out of the market, destroying existing assets. This is a major area of latent conflict in urban services, which still receives very little attention in the literature.

Another example in urban SWM illustrates this point. There is extensive recovery of waste materials by itinerant buyers and traders from households, which are sold to recycling enterprises. In our studies in India and Peru, and those by WASTE in the Philippines, these systems reduce the amount of waste for disposal, provide extensive employment, and thus contribute significantly to sustainable development (Baud et al., 2000; Baud and Schenk, 1994; Dhanalakshmi and Iyer, 1999; Furedy and Kulkarni, 2000; Baron and Castricum, 1996; cf UWEP Programme Papers).

Let us now consider the questions raised in my introduction again. How can partnerships take the views and demands of the urban poor more into account – i.e. become more inclusionary? This is an area about which we know surprisingly little. Several arguments are made about whether large companies in public-private partnerships are motivated to extend their services to low-income areas. They may not be interested in providing services, where they feel there

(3) private ownership and operation, ranging from private monopoly (where government is likely to retain a regulatory role, to competition between private providers where government may restrict entry and regulate operation, and competitive markets where governments may support consumers/producers), and

(4) mixed categories (‘joint ventures between public and private direct providers, or where users participate in public provision)

¹⁶ In the area of service provision, comparative research in selected cities from six countries has been carried out by the Development Administration Group at the University of Birmingham on various infrastructure services (Batley, 1996).

is no profit to be had or when political instability threatens their activities (Post, 1999). When prices are adjusted to full cost recovery, this may well exclude groups and urban areas which are not able to pay such high prices. However, evidence as to these arguments is lacking.

Private-private partnerships with small-scale enterprises offer more opportunities to include the demands of the urban poor. First, small-scale enterprises are more directly accountable to local residents. Because they are local, their reputation is dependent on the quality of services they provide there (Orstrom, 1996). Secondly, small-scale enterprises can provide services at a price more affordable to poor households, as their organisational overheads are much lower than those of large firms (Taylor, 2000). Thirdly, their technology is local, and adapted to local conditions (Taylor, 2000). Finally, they provide employment to local people, usually drawing employees from groups of poorer urban inhabitants (Baud and Schenk, 1994).

There are also a number of disadvantages. In private-private and public-private partnerships with small firms, transaction costs are high. Residents or community-based organisations, or local governments have to invest a fair amount of time in managing relations with large numbers of small contractors.

A second disadvantage of private-private arrangement is that there is little accountability to the wider 'public good'. They are 'local solutions', and there may be little concern about the negative effects their activities on public health and living conditions of other urban inhabitants, or on negative environmental effects over time and space (Hordijk, 2000).

Another problem occurs when small commercial enterprises are drawn into partnerships with government. This requires formalisation of their activities, and small enterprises are very reluctant to become more formal. Government rules and regulations can easily strangle their activities and make it impossible for them to function on a sound commercial basis. In Peru, we found that small waste recycling companies had to go through four major steps to become part of the formal sector. Most were financially able to take the first two steps, but the last two steps involved such large investments in time and money that the entrepreneurs refused to take them (cf. de Soto, 1989; Baron and Castricum, 1996).

My second question was; can partnerships increase co-operation around common interests (making services work more efficiently), and reduce conflicts and competition?

Our knowledge in this area is still fairly incomplete as well. One review of public-private partnerships across a range of urban services concludes cautiously that the evidence does not support the idea that private sector provision leads to cheaper and more effective service (Batley, 1996). In fact, that study suggests that if the political will exists to let the public sector manage its services like a private company, without political interference, it can be a more effective provider by itself (Batley, 1996)¹⁷.

As we saw in answering the previous question, small-scale enterprises are an alternative. Planners generally assume that goods and services requiring large-scale infrastructure exclude small-scale enterprises from participating. Nevertheless, studies exist of initiatives in which resident groups can take care of the house and street level connections, and link up to trunk

¹⁷ Results from the DAG study showed that in terms of effectiveness the argument did not hold that privatisation improved performance – most of the better performing cases in urban services were those of pure public provision. This was the case, where there was firm management, strong investment, light administration and strong political support for service improvement. Contracting out was often in itself efficient and effective, but left residual problems for local administrations which result in higher costs for the system as a whole.

networks (in this case, for drainage provisions) (Orstrom, 1996). This makes the system less expensive, more controllable by households, and the service provider more accountable to the people being served¹⁸. However, it also requires a very high level of good co-operation between the partners involved.

Regardless of how privatisation is done, local government retains an essential role in setting the framework¹⁹. It has to set standards, co-ordinate administration and monitoring, and regulate the direct service providers, and remain responsive to consumer concerns (Batley, 1996; Gentry and Fernandez, 1997). Post (1999) takes this a step further in arguing that government needs to take a pro-active stance with larger goals in mind, such as prevention of environmental degradation, enhancing sustainable use of resources, and promoting equity among current populations and into the future.

My third question was: how effective are partnerships in reducing urban poverty, promoting economic growth, and protecting the urban environment – i.e., promoting sustainable development?

This raises a number of new questions. What are the differences in levels and quality of employment between public and private sector providers of basic services? In countries, where public sector jobs provide a steady income and important fringe benefits, as they do in India, trade unions are likely to strongly oppose privatisation on behalf of their members (Baud et al., 2000; Blore, 1999; Broekema, 2000). If public sector jobs pay very little, and payment is irregular, such as in Kenya, privatisation is likely to be welcomed.

There is also a trade-off between large and small-scale enterprises in this area. Large companies usually provide better pay and working condition than small-scale enterprises. However, the extent of employment in the small-scale sector may be much larger than by large companies. But our knowledge in this area again is lacking.

The ecological sustainability of services, - the second strand of sustainable development - is also ignored in the privatisation literature. Do service providers attempt to minimise the level of resources used? An example is the reduction of water leakages, which can go up to 30-40% of the water sent through a piped system. Does the way services are provided lead to a minimisation of wastes? Are re-use, recovery and recycling of materials promoted? And finally, do service providers maintain the level of wastes within ‘the absorption capacity of local sinks’? Can the wastes from the use of basic services be taken care of locally, or do they lead to pollution on a larger scale? Our study on the contributions to sustainable development of partnerships in urban solid waste management shows clear trade-offs between social and

¹⁸ This system was designed by an engineer, de Melo, and tried out in Recife, Brazil.

¹⁹ Even if the assumptions of the neo-liberal theory are accepted, a number of arguments remain for limited cases of direct government intervention. Batley outlines these (1996: 727-728).

The first is the public goods argument; there are some goods and services which are ‘public’ by nature, so that non-payers cannot be excluded from their use, and for which there is no competition among users, because their use does not diminish the quantity available.

The second argument is market failure under certain conditions. Reasons for such failure include:

- 1) a tendency to monopoly through economies of scale;
- 2) such large scale investments are necessary that private firms refuse to undertake them;
- 3) the wider society benefits from the extension of a service, even though direct consumers may not wish or be able to pay for it (positive externalities);
- 4) producers can pass on the costs to society, so that their prices for direct consumers remain low (negative externalities); and
- 5) consumers have too little knowledge to make informed choices.

The third argument is that of equity (or merit goods). This pertains to the basic elements which a particular society feels everyone should have, regardless of whether they can pay the market price for it or not.

ecological benefits. Partnerships between local authorities-NGOs/CBOs-small enterprises contribute to a wide range of aspects of sustainable development (Baud et al., forthcoming).

Each type of partnership for providing basic urban services, has inherent trade-offs; this remains a dilemma, for which there are no definitive solutions. However, I want to argue here that we need to examine such pro's and con's more explicitly when looking at the processes and outcomes of partnerships. The 'efficiency and effectiveness' criteria used until now are far too limited in scope to give us the answers we need to the wider questions raised.

5. Widening the scope for urban partnerships

Let us come back now to the questions I raised at the beginning of this lecture, in order to draw out an agenda for future research.

Before going to my questions, I have to make an important caveat. Partnerships have to be looked at in their local context. We have to know how local conditions affect the potential of partnerships. I will name a few.

Limited physical and financial resources lead to more competition between actors. In cities with few sources of water or few possibilities of expansion, competition for land and water is high. In contrast, existing high levels of education and good health give urban residents better capabilities to bring to partnerships. What improvements can be realised through partnerships thus varies for countries according to the local assets they have, and the more general levels of economic development. Cities in the poorest countries of the world have a double disadvantage; they start from a low level of provision for large groups of people and have less money to spend. As cities become richer, they have more opportunities to improve levels of provision (cf. Satterthwaite, 1997).

From outside, national and global pressures influence partnerships (Stoker, 2000; Sassen, 1994). Although urban governments undergo such pressures, their own policies can still make a substantial difference in reducing urban poverty (Batley, 1996; Schübeler, 1996).

Actor diversity and broader coalitions

My first question was: how can partnerships take the views and demands of the urban poor more into account – i.e. become more inclusionary?

In the research to be done, I would like to emphasise the diversity of actors who can become partners in providing shelter and urban services. Now the large-scale private sector is given priority in partnerships. I would like to focus research on the low-cost alternatives; partnerships between local communities and small-scale enterprises, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations (cf. Orstrom, 1996). I also want to focus on secondary cities, where not much research has been done.

Besides the types of partnerships mentioned at the beginning of my lecture, we need to pay more attention to broader coalitions, taking shape in many cities²⁰. They have a greater potential to provide the types of services poor urban citizens want, because the professionals

²⁰ Many have been the result of the local follow-up given to the Plan of Action called Agenda 21, adopted at the Conference on Environment and Development in Rio in 1992. They include coalitions of universities, planners, mayors, and CBOs/NGOs, and the issues they tackle relate mainly to the urban environment. Examples include the National Cities for Life Forum in Peru, and the projects undertaken in Manizales in Colombia (Velasques et al., 1998; Miranda and Hordijk, 1998). Coalitions of NGOs/CBOs organising on housing issues have combined at the national level (such as SPARC and the National Slum Dwellers Federation in India), or internationally (Shack Dwellers International). Federations of local governments working together have existed much longer, such as the IULA.

they recruit, use their knowledge in support of demands made by local communities (cf. Hordijk, 1999). This type of approach seems to have a great potential, but is unusual in putting greater control in the hands of communities themselves.

Trust, conflict, and accountability

My second question was: can partnerships increase trust and co-operation, reduce conflicts and competition, and promote accountability?

I want to focus research on how people identify common interests, and build up trust and co-operation in working together. The conditions under which partnerships prosper, but also those under which they break apart in conflict should be more clearly spelt out. We cannot learn from 'best practices' alone. Orstrom (1996) suggests some of these conditions in her discussion on partnerships in producing urban services. Partners must provide complementary technological inputs instead of interchangeable ones. Commitment to clear and enforceable contracts, promotes mutual accountability. Finally, incentives help to encourage inputs from all partners.

I also want to study further how power relations change as partners work together. Putnam (1993) has suggested that strong social networks and democratic processes promote accountability in Europe. To what extent are partners willing to change; or are some partners dis-empowered by having to adapt to other more dominant ones? We need to find out those conditions under which all partners involved in the process are transformed, and develop a commonly held vision of the future.

Outcome – sustainable development?

My last question was: how effective are partnerships in reducing urban poverty, in promoting economic growth benefiting the majority of people, and in protecting the urban environment. In short, how effectively do they promote sustainable development?

I have been working with others in this area to develop criteria for assessing sustainable development (Baud et al., 2000). I want to study further how partnerships fit into the livelihood strategies of the urban poor, the investments they have to make and how benefits are distributed, and assess the outcomes. I particularly want a better understanding of the trade-offs involved between different choices, in order to make our assessments of partnerships more practical and realistic.

Building blocks

How should we conduct such future studies?

To begin with, it is important to study a wider range of existing local partnerships. IHS projects provide a good opportunity to work with partner researchers and practitioners to this end. In previous work, we have done just that. Ad de Bruijne and I have guided PhD research by Michaela Hordijk and Marijk Huysman, together with David Edelman and Harry Mengers of the IHS. This research has taken place in the context of development projects undertaken in India and Peru. Now we need to build up comparative knowledge across other sectors, other scale levels, and in different contexts. The position I hold with the Housing Department of the IHS provides an opportunity to integrate previous concerns with new ones.

The IHS fellowship-programme presents opportunities for PhD scholars from developing countries. Because it is an international education institution, scholars have a mid-career experience as urban planners and practitioners. Ramilis Prihananda, with whom I am already working, is an example. Her work on social networks in local pasars, provides an interesting

example of conflict and co-operation around local markets, between the different actors competing for the same locality. Her knowledge of the actual workings of local planning agencies gives such analysis new depth. This is particularly relevant in the context of the National Research School CERES, and the Working Programme on 'Enterprise, Governance and Global-Local Interaction', where already a number of researchers are working on similar issues. This is a partnership which I value highly, particularly with the other members of the management team - Bert, Guus and Sunil – and which I hope to continue in the coming years.

I undertake my research work here in the position established in recognition of the work carried out at the Free University by my predecessor. Jan van der Linden was an eminent scholar in the area of housing and development studies. He had a genuine concern with the struggles of the urban poor; and his ideas were based on a close knowledge of their situation. He wrote on people's participation in government housing schemes (notably, through his studies of the Orangi Pilot Project in Pakistan), and the dangers of the capture of benefits through political patronage. Together with Robert-Jan Baken he wrote on the issues of urban land markets at an early stage; issues, which are still reflected in the debates of today. His influence has been widespread in the Dutch research community, and many of the researchers whom he guided and worked with are still active in research or practice today (Peter Nientied, Joop de Wit, Monique Peltenburg, Robert Jan Baken and Peer Smets, to name only a few). I feel it a privilege and responsibility to follow in his footsteps.

Thanking

I would like to say a word of thanks. Your Excellency, the Chancellor, members of the Board of Trustees of the Free University Fund. I thank you for your willingness to provide a renewed impulse to the research on urban studies in developing countries, which the establishment of the Chair has made possible.

Members of the Board of the Institute of Housing and Urban Development Studies, and Director, Emiel Wegelin. My thanks goes to you for your interest in supporting the establishment of the Chair at the Free University. To all of you involved in the appointment process, my thanks for the confidence you have placed in me to carry out this work.

My colleagues of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology of Developing countries; thank you for your welcome and introduction here.

I look forward to working together with all my colleagues here; Professor Tennekes, Droger, Bax, Sutherland, and particularly Professors Winslow and Abbink. I hope to establish close links with you in developing future research agendas. I had hoped also to be able to work with Peter Kloos, as one of us in this group. His tragic death has robbed all of us recently arrived at the VU of this opportunity.

The combination of workplace at the University of Amsterdam, the Free University and the IHS allows me to maintain and expand existing partnerships. Ad, Johan, Ton and other colleagues of the University of Amsterdam; we will continue our close collaboration in research, extending it across university boundaries. Colleagues of the IHS, I hope to promote more firmly research as part of the ongoing process of generating knowledge in co-operation with yourselves, the participants and PhD scholars at the IHS.

CERES and Working Programme 3 within it, has proved to be an inspiring and fruitful network of PhD students. I look forward to continuing discussions with new generations of PhD researchers in the coming years.

Thanks to my research partners internationally; past, present and future. Thanks also to Dhana, my longstanding friend and guide in research in India. Together we have learned about the world, and about life.

I thank my family for the joy you give me – Frank, Marinus and Adriana; and for keeping my attention balanced between work and all the other things that make life worthwhile.

I dedicate this lecture to my mother; without her love, encouragement and support to go to university, I would not stand here today.

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