

Guided Organic Growth

A Shift in New City-making Paradigms in the Global South

Heba Elhanafy

Charter Cities Institute



Introduction

Planning is a discipline of shifting paradigms, from the functional modern city to the rational-comprehensive approach, to the current return of place. But how has (or will) the discipline shift in response to the rise in recent decades of new city building around the globe? With at least 100 new cities in conception or under construction in India; dozens more under way in each of Southeast Asia, the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America; and over 600 new cities currently either being designed or being built in China—the answer to this question will affect the lives of potentially millions of individuals. As it stands, most new cities built recently or currently being developed are over-planned. Currently, urban plans often follow either the Chinese-grid planning paradigm or an American-suburban model. Those approaches leave little to no space for local adaptation, emergent market forces, and the agency of residents' to shape their cities over time. New cities can be an excellent opportunity to inject urban economic vibrancy, solving market failures, and unlocking innovation. However, until a deliberate shift occurs in the planning paradigms of these new city developments, they will continue to suffer from common challenges.

This poster aims to rethink new city making in the Global South and suggests a definite need for a paradigm shift. It conceptualizes a paradigm with three main principles. The poster examines the possibility of more community and bottom-up approaches in new city developments. It looks into how the new governance framework implicit in a charter city model can enable this more bottom-up, emergent approach in urban planning practices.

Charter Cities Values

Affordable and Accessible.

A charter city's target population should include all income segments, including low-income families and individuals in search of better economic opportunities. Affordable housing, transportation, and public services are crucial to ensure access for residents of all income levels and social classes.

Inclusive and Growth-Oriented.

A charter city is a vehicle for poverty alleviation. As such, planning decisions and policies should aim to support inclusive economic growth. This includes the effective provision of infrastructure and urban planning that is supportive of new development.

Sustainable.

The city's development must strike a balance between economic, social, and environmental considerations. For economic sustainability, the city must focus on productive economic activity that generates positive externalities and external linkages. The city must also be financially solvent and self-sustainable over the long term.

The Paradigm



New city making as shared spheres of activities between the urban developer, the host country governments (national, regional, and/or local), and the community.

Categorizing the activities needed to build a city to essential, non-essential, public, and private, can help facilitate the cooperative process of city making.

For example, when it comes to public goods, we can categorize the activities to essential and less essential development. Developments that require technical planning capabilities and financial resources like critical infrastructure (roads, electricity, and water) can be considered essential developments that the charter city developer should develop in cooperation with the national government to ensure infrastructure is developed in alliance with the host.



New city making as a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes.

Comprehensive approaches should be coupled with bottom-up planning and participatory decision-making approaches to ensure plans are not misaligned with underlying community practices, norms, and needs.

This top-down/bottom-up process is best implemented in the development of public spaces. Sites for public spaces should be demarcated in the initial city plans (top-down), and, once delineated, these sites should be developed on a collaborative basis with the local community most proximate to the particular public space in question (bottom-up).

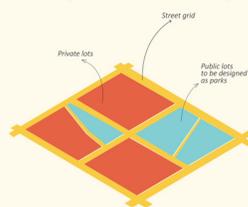
New city making as a short- and long-term process.



Charter city developers should recognize that while some elements of the city should be planned, building out the entire city ahead of attracting residents and business is both unnecessary and counterproductive to creating a thriving urban environment compared to a phased approach. For example, to attract low-income residents to the city early in its development, lower density, self-built, and temporary housing should be permitted so that affordability remains high.

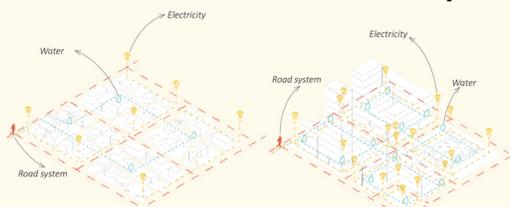
The Implementation

Demarcation of private and public functions.



Demarcating public and private attracts investments, and saves on initial upfront capital. This demarcation facilitates phased development because as the city's population grows—in turn growing both the city's financial resources and its infrastructure needs—public spaces that have been strategically demarcated can then be transitioned into sites for building new needed infrastructure.

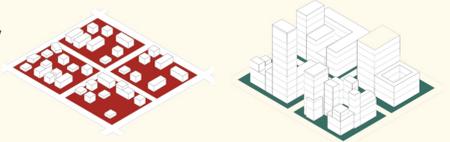
Gradual infrastructure and services provision.



To help charter cities overcome the financial challenges involved in infrastructure provision, infrastructure should be deployed gradually over time. Land should be reserved for future infrastructure expansion and planned accordingly, especially with regard to road corridors. The actual development of this infrastructure can be implemented over time, in response to demand.

Urban Planning Practices

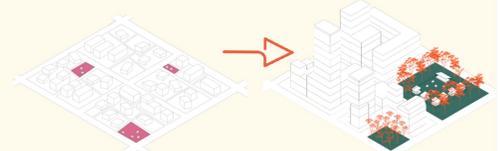
Density



Encourage higher densities and facilitate growth:

- The city should predict and provide the infrastructure needed for dense growth.
- The city should adjust to density surges through adaptive infrastructure delivery that responds promptly to the city's growth needs.

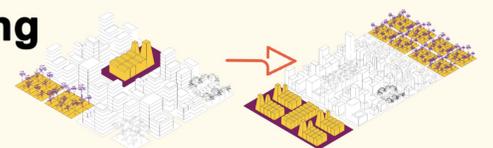
Land Use



Framework a public-private distinction

- The city should facilitate the allocation of land to its most efficient use by clearly delineating public and private spaces.
- The city should ensure that public services are widely accessible and affordable, focusing on the most essential services first.

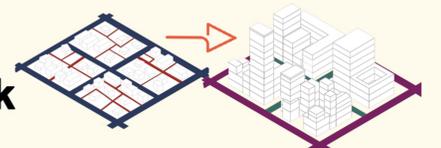
Zoning



Maintain effective zoning within a charter city

- District Zoning should respect the right of way and the functions of public spaces.
- The city should develop safe transitional spaces between special function zones and mixed-use zones
- District Zoning should not be subjected to density restrictions.

Street Network



Ensure and maintain spatial planning success:

- The street network should be responsive to the city's growth.
- The street network should not be rigid and must be open to change and review given prevailing conditions.
- The street network should not be seen as a limitation but rather as a tool to facilitate development.
- The street network should facilitate equitable access to different parts of the city.

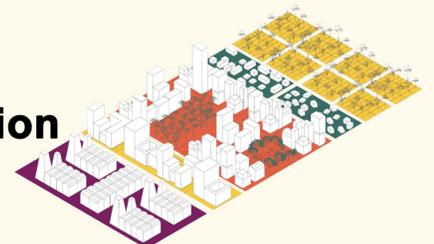
Building Regulations



Allow for grassroots planning

- the city should balance the needs of inherently riskier structures with the need to ensure regulatory costs do not prohibit development.
- The city should work with those living in incrementally built housing to ensure their development is safe.

Spatial Distribution Patterns



Encourage the most efficient use of land

- The city should look for emergent agglomeration zones and provide supportive infrastructure in a timely fashion.
- The city should plan infrastructure in the expected path of new development can ensure that the area is adequately serviced

Contact

Heba Elhanafy heba@cci.city
To know more visit: chartercitiesinstitute.org/