

Strengthening CITYNET

A roadmap for goal setting and action

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ASPIRATION/GOAL:

A STRONGER CITYNET TO MEET ASIA'S URBAN CHALLENGES
AND OPPORTUNITIES

Making Citynet Stronger means making it more:

Purposeful

Relevant

Strategic

Innovative

Proactive

Influential

People biased

Poor -sensitive

Developing country focused

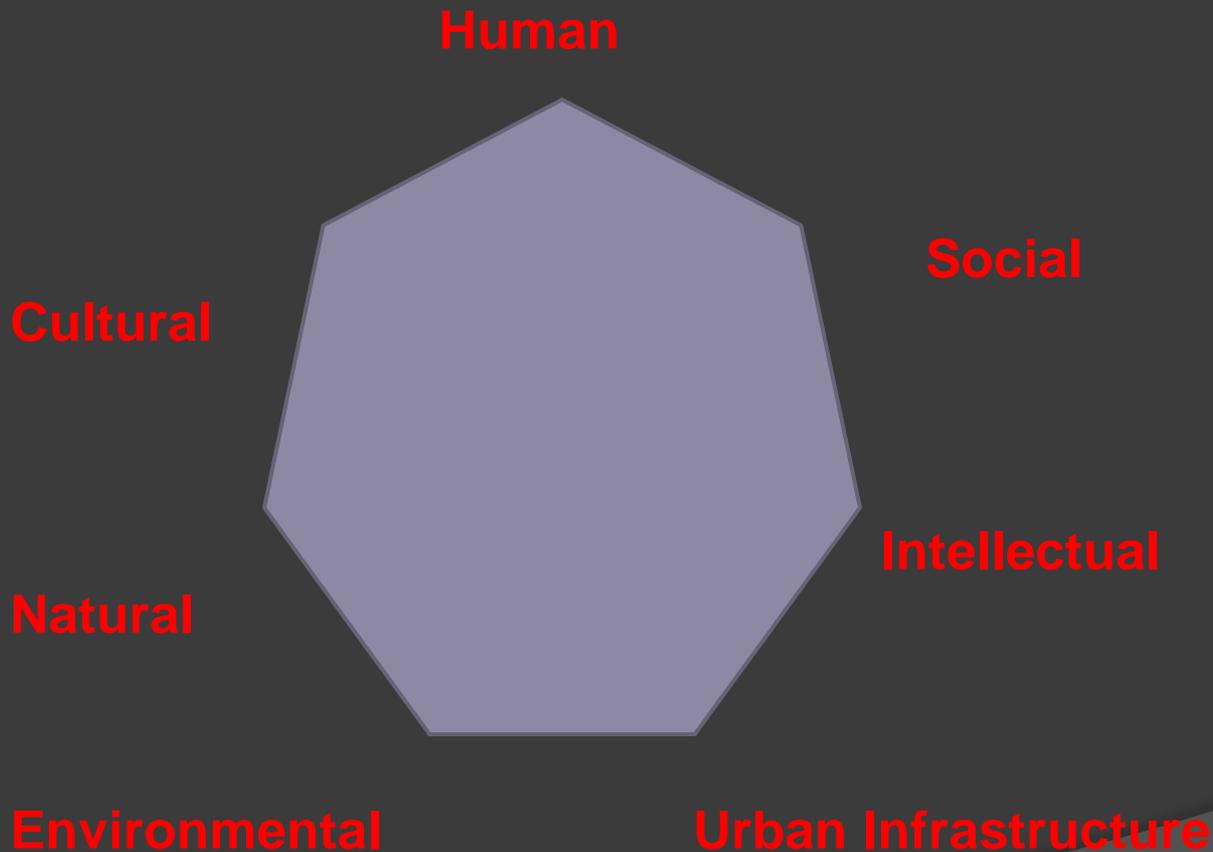
... While building on the assets of members

- ◉ Human Quality of life and personal safety
- ◉ Social network density
- ◉ Cultural strengths
- ◉ Intellectual and artistic quality
- ◉ Natural assets
- ◉ Environmental quality
- ◉ Urban supportive infrastructure

To a varying degrees these assets are present in all Citynet members

Source: John Friedmann: The wealth of cities (UN Habitata 2007)

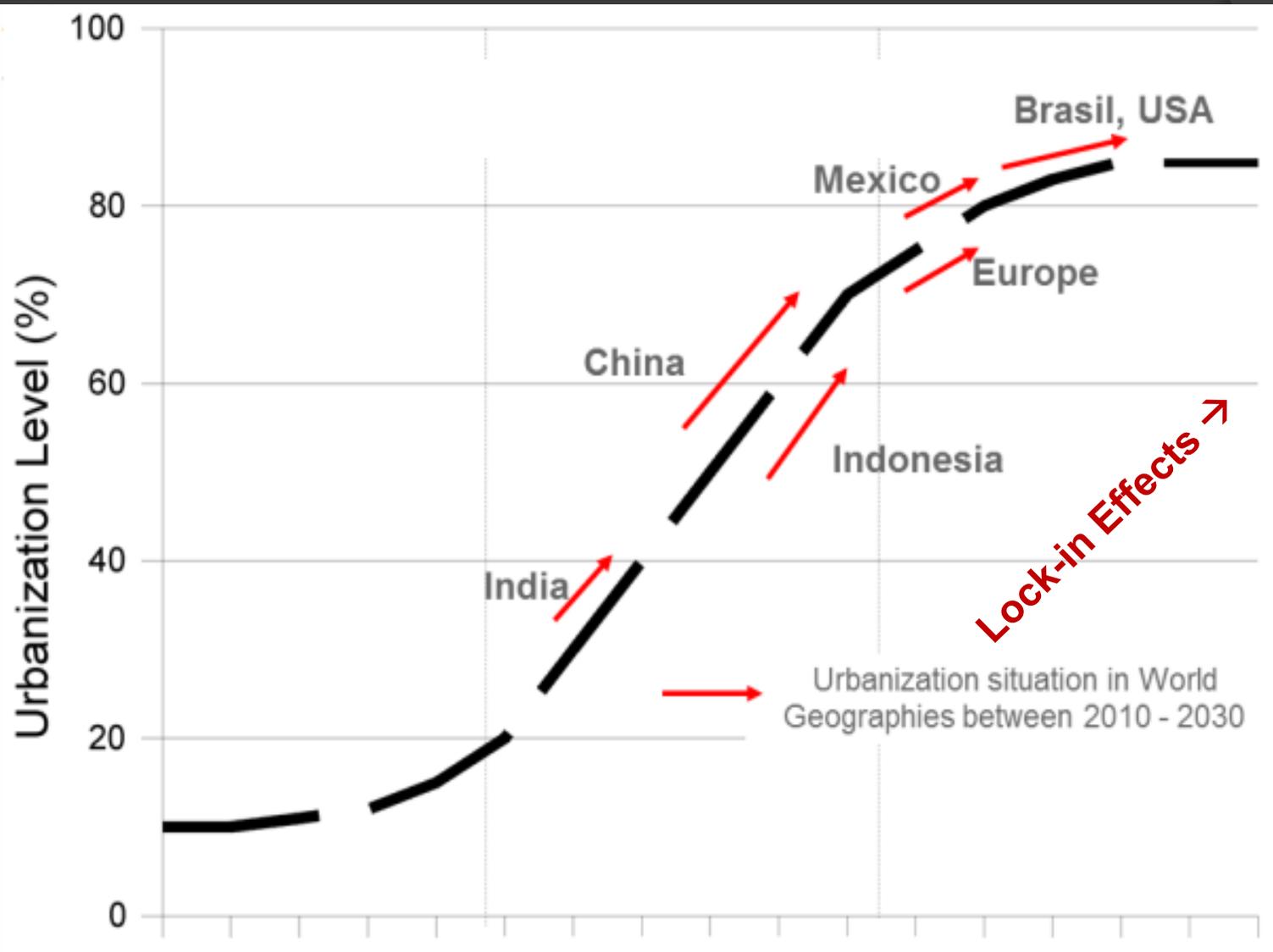
The Seven Dimensions where we can help each other through Citynet



A New Narrative is Emerging

- Massive growth is taking place in Asian cities, which have a large part of the 2 billion new urban dwellers expected by 2030
- Implication → Doubling of humanity's built environment by 2030
- Significant urban (re)development programs, with estimated public/private investments exceeding \$8 trillion in China, India, Brazil & Mexico alone!
- The quality of assets Asian cities develop is of critical importance to humanity

Most of our Cities are in a position to champion good practices



Citynet Strengths

- 1 Membership: Numbers and spread with over 130 members in the major countries of the region
- 2 With almost two decades of existence and activity Citynet has a visibility and presence in the region
- 3 Having been structured creatively with the cities and the civil society/NGOs as members, it has a positive balance in its polity and a representative character
- 4 Having maintained a democratic, inclusive, participatory and consultative style of functioning Citynet has developed certain healthy traditions
- 5 Over the years it has evolved a fairly extensive work plan in response to the member needs
- 6 Citynet listens, is responsive and prepared to learn

Suggested Vision for Citynet in strengthening the New Narrative

5 Main Roles

- (a) Build city capacity for strengthened governance and management
- (b) Strategic engagement with the governments to promote appropriate urban development policies, strategies and institutions
- (c) Broker knowledge, experience, strategies, methods and technologies relevant for problem solving and charting new directions in governance and management

- d) Training, awareness building and strategy formation on the larger global issues that affect cities (such as more frequent natural disasters, water & energy security, adoption of climate friendly technologies)
- e) Build partnerships among all stakeholders, such as civil society, academia, youth and other social and cultural groups.

Question: How can we bring better alignment between the organization and the very large issues that matter to its members?

Organizationally Citynet needs to bridge many Divides

- City authorities, Civic Organizations, Academic and Training Institutions, Business and Industrial Stakeholders
- Youth, Gender and Ageing Population Concern
- Different Social and Cultural Styles among its membership

Inspiring Ownership so that Citynet becomes “Our Organization”!

- ⦿ Can it happen in a representational arrangement where representatives change time and again?
- ⦿ How can enthusiasm be built among change seeking, ‘emotional’ NGOs passionate about the cities they work in?
- ⦿ How can other arms of ‘civil society’ such as the youth, business, industries and real estate developers be engaged in Citynet activities?

Strengthening Citynet

Suggestions for Consideration and Action

**An Agenda for change in the structure,
organization and working of Citynet for
higher relevance and greater impact**

1. Think big and act strategic

- a) Focus on strategic rather than peripheral issues
- b) See advocacy, educational and idea generator role more seriously
- c) Find more resources for activities over and above the administration of the secretariat
- d) Bring into play the formidable resources of the members: both cities and civil society
- e) Build Strategic and issue focused partnerships
- f) Engage with the power structures in the region with a mandate, resources, political clout and accountability
- g) Build adequate organization in response to the need and enlarged agenda

2. Change Style, Procedures and Systems.

- ⦿ Appear, behave and act like an organization of the city authorities and civic organizations
- ⦿ Become a membership and member driven organization in spirit, image, operational style, procedures, work agenda and communication

3. Establish presence and develop relevant agenda at the National Level

- ⦿ Move from symbolic gestures and tokenism to a greater commitment to issues and ideas
- ⦿ Allocate more energy, priority and funds for promotion of National Chapters
- ⦿ Rethink how a substantive national presence can be established by building a credible profile in the urban space and visibility through national media

4. Develop strong leadership, besides an efficient and pro-active secretariat.

- To make an impact, to become a truly influential regional agency, Citynet needs a strong leadership to emerge from its members
- The constitutional, operational, political, and environmental factors need to be examined to initiate changes aimed at enhancing member interest, member stake-holding and member `ownership' in Citynet.
- Pro-active and efficient secretariat is necessary, but it is no substitute for member activation and leadership.
- Working with limited staff and inadequate funds is counter productive. Build appropriate organization with funding commitments from key partners
- The litmus test is not what it does in-house but what it causes to happen. Activating, engaging and motivating others will help achieve scale, enable multi-tasking and develop a diverse work agenda—a need of the sector and the hour

5. Strengthen relationship between member cities, and between city and civil society members

- ⦿ Promoting, facilitating and supporting interaction, dialogue and working together of the members would strengthen Citynet.
- ⦿ Exchange of ideas, experience and technology and sharing of successful approaches and strategies between the cities themselves and between the city and the civil society members would enhance member stake in the organization

The above would make Citynet more relevant and useful to its members - a necessary precondition for the investment by the members and the leadership to emerge.

6. Resource Mobilization is Key for investing in activities above the past levels

- The ratio between the administrative costs to activity investment is a good indicator of an organization's health, efficiency and productivity. Citynet needs to tilt that ratio substantially in favour of facilitation, development and advocacy activities.
- If Citynet is 'useful'; if Citynet "strengthens" them; if Citynet leverages their position Vis-à-vis- the national governments in form of favorable policies and resource devolution; if, citynet shares useful and profitable information and ideas, the cites would not hesitate to invest in Citynet. And if that happens, Citynet would have enough resources to work and grow.
- The argument is not that other donors are not needed. It is working in a manner that raises resources while servicing the members
- Seeing the resources equation in the performance (on part of Citynet) and stake-holding (on part of the members) context would change the Citynet politics. It is not donation versus investment. For a financially healthy Citynet, it is both.
- Be innovative and if necessary use professional help in fund raising

7. View the civil society members as a different kind of resource

- ⦿ They can't contribute money. But ideas, analysis, alternative approaches, and especially understanding and knowledge of what works with the people and the poor are their strengths and assets
- ⦿ NGOs and the civic groups need not be second class citizens in Citynet. Their status needs a revisit. Ensure them position in the hierarchy and position of office.
- ⦿ Recognizing and putting to creative use their skills and talents is also a “resource management” and “constituency activation” task
- ⦿ Making the NGO members stake holders is as important as making city members stake holders.

8. Develop diverse agenda in partnership with members

- Macro: on major regional global concerns such as climate change; rural urban interface; migration; alternate energy sources; water crisis
- Micro: on making cities livable, accessible, manageable, safe, secure and humane for the people
- Cities need seeing from the top and bottom; for the present and the future; for the systems and the inhabitants; for the machines and the communities, and for the material as well as spiritual
- The city governments and urban bodies are so preoccupied by immediate problem solving—they are seldom planning, they are perpetually fire-fighting— that they neither have the time, nor the resources, nor the luxury to see things differently, to look for alternatives

Structure and equip Citynet to facilitate the above

“Thinking Big” and Acting Smart

- Active National Chapters in 50% of the member countries by 2015, in two years after relocating the secretariat to Seoul
- Substantial partnerships with the Corporate and Business and development assistance agencies in the major donor countries and some of the developing countries on

Disaster risk management and adaptation

Sustainable Transport

Alternative Energy Sources

Solid waste as a Resource

Sustainable Water Management

Support for job creation, particularly for the urban poor Youth

Targeted programs/Fund for the Urban Poor

MDG and Poverty Alleviation Strategies

Facilitate the generation of a US\$100 Million Urban Poor Fund , on the ACHR model, linked to slum upgrading and affordable, climate friendly housing and urban mobility solutions to be managed jointly by the city authorities and Civil Society Organizations

