

## Seeking Solutions to Saudi Arabian Urban Problems\*

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**Abstract.** The paper provides certain ways of seeking solutions to the urban problems identified in “A Survey of Saudi Arabian Urban Problems”. Rather than giving explicit solutions, it is argued that solutions can only come from Saudi Arabia itself. Concentrating on the urban planning field, the paper explores the advantages that can be derived from the decentralization of decision- and plan-making, the benefits (and necessity) of urban policy, and, based on studies from the Philippines, various models of participation by the public in decision-making. The paper then proposes the creation of an Urban Think Tank to carry out basic urban research as a means of solving the Saudi Arabian urban problems. It is suggested that the Urban Think Tank initially compile an urban database, and then carry out various studies within the areas of spatial aspects of urbanization, infrastructure, employment, migration, environment, transportation, housing and local government. A list of possible research projects in each area is included.

### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to suggest certain approaches that can be made in finding solutions to the problem identified in the paper “A Survey of Saudi Arabian Urban Problems”. The two papers should be read in conjunction with one another in that they are very closely interlinked. As mentioned in the conclusion of the earlier paper, it is not the intention here to solve the urban problems identified as given their serious nature, this must be done by Saudi Arabians, not a foreigner who has only recently arrived in this country. Although a study of international experience can help in finding solutions, it is the methodology that should be examined, and not the solutions themselves.

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In the course of this discussion, it will be suggested that one of the first alternatives to examine is the potential that can be gained by the decentralization of decision-making, that is, concentrating decision that affect local people as close to them as possible. The analysis will then go further and suggest that in fact the people should be involved in the decision making process itself. Several alternative avenues by which this might be achieved are suggested. If decentralization is to be successful, it is necessary to establish various urban policies to guide local decision-makers not because they cannot decide for themselves what to do, but to guarantee the local citizenry in all parts of the country have access to at least a minimum acceptable level of local government services. In addition, such decentralization has other implications, and it is necessary to at least briefly consider a few of them.

The analysis will then move on to how an intense urban research effort might help in finding solutions to the Saudi Arabian urban problems, and try to suggest some areas where fruitful enquiry might be

carried out. In addition, suggestions will be made concerning the necessary institutional support of this research to insure effectiveness.

### Decentralization

When one looks at the municipal structure of Saudi Arabia's urban areas, one sees basically five cities where at least some of the decisions affecting the local population can be made, the so-called *amanat* cities of Riyadh, Jeddah, Makkah, Medina and Dammam. In these major cities, the mayors are directly responsible to the Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs.

Beyond these famous five, there are many other smaller places where there is total dependence upon the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs for virtually all decisions concerning their municipal affairs. The ministry, through its regional office, is responsible for their administration, including the urban planning, the development of roads and basic infrastructure and the management and maintenance of services. The central Ministry of Finance makes a direct grant of specific funds to these municipalities to carry out these activities.

One of the more surprising aspects of these smaller places is that each of them has a current structure plan to guide physical development. This is somewhat surprising in the sense that in the United Kingdom, where the structure plan was invented as part of the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act (updated in 1971), such approaches to planning were seen as covering counties, which in the British context were relatively wide areas of the country, and were always linked to local plans. Whereas structure plans set out and justified broad land use policies for urban and traffic management and measures for the improvements of the physical environment, the local plans were designed to relate proposals in the structure plan to precise areas of land and to provide a detailed basis for development control. Attempting to use the structure plan concept on limited sized cities, many might suggest, is problematic. Still, it is a flexible planning tool, far superior to the application of master planning, as anyone who has had experience with both will testify.

Yet, the interesting point is that for the non-*amanat* cities, the structure plans are initiated based on suggestions and even drawings made by local municipal personnel following the formula guides devised by the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs. These local government formulations are

vetted at various stages by central ministry officials. Once completed, they are approved by both the provincial councils and finally by the Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs. There is no consultation with local residents at any stage. If proper decentralization could be implemented, could not the plans have been drawn as part of a municipal exercise as an expression of local desires? The argument frequently given against this approach is that the public has little interest in urban planning activity and that there are not enough planners in the country to carry out the work in this way.

This is unconvincing in three points. First, it is hard to believe that any local resident, if given the chance, is indifferent about the appearance and development of his or her local community. Second, there are a number of universities in Saudi Arabia that have large urban planning programs that are capable of meeting the needs of municipalities. Third, it does not take all that many planners to construct a structure plan in consultation with the local community, and then when it is completed, to implement it.

Here in Saudi Arabia, the implementation aspects of a land use plan seem to be relatively straightforward. Five steps are involved in the process: the meeting of planning standards (building height, plot ratios, density, floor space, parking space, land subdivision); being compatible with zoning ordinances; eligibility for a building permit (which of course acts as a check on planning as well as construction standards); meeting regulations on land subdivision; and, conforming to existing urban growth boundary policy.

The big planning challenge, if this activity were to be decentralized and carried out at local level, would be the construction of local, or action plans that would fit into the structure plan. It should be possible for two or three planners to make up a local plan, something that every student of planning has had considerable practice in doing during their education. There are certainly more resources to do the job here than there are in many local planning offices that have these responsibilities in Africa and South Asia.

Obviously, there is more to local administration than land-use planning alone, although this must surely be the most complex of local activities in a decentralized administrative environment. Most of the remaining responsibilities would indeed fall into the managerial category, and this group of activities could readily be guided, and controlled if desired, by

the formulation of a national urban policy. In the paper dealing with urban problems ("A Survey of Saudi Arabian Urban Problems"), urban policy was defined as 'the set of rules and procedures that urban government personnel follow in managing their territory, raising and spending public money and providing services to residents of the jurisdiction' (this definition was originally presented in Choguill (2003: p. 261)). Certainly in a decentralized urban system, rules are needed to guide officials.

One of the most interesting sets of guidelines that exists is from the Philippines: the Local Government Code of 1991 (Nodello, 1998). For every level of government, this massive volume spells out the powers and responsibilities of each classification of local government official at village, municipal and provincial level. And if some local official should violate the public's trust, the Code also spells out the penalties that will be imposed. The Philippine system is extremely decentralized, yet done so in a controlled and orderly way, thanks largely to the Local Government Code and the oversight provided by the Ministry of Interior and Local Government.

Recall that the definition of urban policy includes the mention of raising and spending of money. Of course, here in Saudi Arabia, local governments are not faced with the problem of raising money from local sources, although some municipalities, especially the larger ones, have limited funds available from such things as rentals of municipal real estate, fees on street advertising and issuance of permits. By 2025, it is planned that municipalities will, through their own revenue-raising activity, be able to cover more of their own spending. Yet for now, and the next 20 years, the money will continue to trickle down from the Ministry of Finance with pre-determined budget headings, thus alleviating the need of local officials even to determine how much to spend on which activities. As a result, one of the biggest complaints of local mayors is that, with very minor exceptions, they do not have the money to do anything that is not pre-determined at the higher level. Even if they manage to accomplish one of these pre-determined goals and have money for that activity left over at the end of the budgetary year, rather than being able to spend it on other activities the next year, it is transferred by the Ministry of Finance to other municipalities where shortfalls have occurred in that particular activity. One result is that mayors feel they are unable to spend on certain projects that could transform their towns into

better places for their residents. This seems to suggest the advisability of a block grant from the Ministry of Finance to local municipalities, allowing local municipal councils to determine how the money might be divided upon among competing needs.

Yet with this suggestion, the comment will inevitably arise: 'Oh my goodness, how will you keep local officials honest? Won't they spend the money on prestige projects to glorify themselves?' This need not necessarily occur. In fact, there is a better solution than coercion in this case, and that is to include the public, the local citizenry, into the decision-making process on how local policy, spending plans, and project proposals, are formulated. It is to this issue of public participation in the decision-making process that attention is now directed. And, in keeping with this tone of this analysis, the emphasis of this examination will remain in the field of urban planning.

### **Participation of the Public in Decision Making**

One of the major problems with urban planning in Saudi Arabia, and in fact with most countries of the Middle East, is that it is viewed by government planners as a top-down exercise. Planners, because of the professional qualification and the esteemed title of 'engineer' before their name, feel justified to carry out the action of planning for people. Planners feel, or appear to feel, that they know what is good for people, and on the basis of this, they prepare their plans, schemes and designs.

Saudi Arabian planners are not unique in this regard. Even in Europe where planning has been firmly established as a profession for decades, the involvement of the public in the processes of planning is of relatively recent origin. In the 1970s, for example, very senior British planners still felt that the blackest day in planning history was when legislation in the United Kingdom required planners to consult urban residents about their views on plans and planning policies.

As it turned out in the United Kingdom, the legal requirements were not that onerous at that time. Planners were expected to consult with local residents at the time of preparation of a plan, to take local ideas and objections into account at an early stage. Finally, once the plan was completed, it was opened to the public for comment. This was in fact quite a formal operation, as the plan and supporting documents were opened to the public, usually in the town hall, and

written comments of various aspects were invited, and once received, considered.

In fact, this consultation in plan-making was little more than the thin end of the wedge, and since then, much more of this type of local government operation has been opened up to the public, frequently at the insistence of planners themselves. Planners discovered early on that people actually had ideas, and in many cases, good ideas. Incorporating them not only made the plans more popular with the target population, but ensured that the amount of criticism traditionally directed at planners in fact was reduced. Criticizing a plan that has been reviewed and commented upon by the public is the equivalent of criticizing your neighbors, rather than the faceless planner at the town hall.

And since the 1970s, the British public have become involved in many other aspects of urban planning activity. They have been welcomed into the process, even though it requires a somewhat different type of planner to achieve success in this new world. Gone are the days of a planning expert dictating the terms of a plan. Nothing gets the backs of the British public up faster than being talked down to by some young planner.

Would such an approach work in Saudi Arabia? Why not? With the new initiative of electing at least a proportion of the members of the municipal councils, it seems that there is an active move to incorporate the opinions of the public into the way things happen, at least at the local, municipal level. The consultation of the people in planning exercises is merely the next step on this road.

Consider if you will know the way this occurs in other countries, and in particular in the Philippines where this author has carried out a number of consultancies over the last five years in which consultation with the public was basic. The involvement of the public in decision-making has been an integral part of government operations since the fall of Ferdinand Marcos in the 1980s. It is possible that a modified form of the Philippine models might be acceptable here in Saudi Arabia and that the country would gain from the effort.

Give your attention to a few details from three participative experiences. As will be seen, each is rather different in terms of the degree of involvement of the public in the exercise, ranging from a limited degree of consultation in the first example, relying instead largely on consultation with representatives of various government departments, although with a

very explicit purpose, to almost an open-ended approach to participation in the third case where the study was totally dependent upon the inputs of the general public as a basis for the final report and recommendations.

### **Models of Participation in the Philippines**

The first example is drawn from the preparation of the Philippine National Urban Development and Housing Framework in 1999. In effect, this was the Philippine national urban policy, prepared for the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, which was headed by the President of the Philippines. Emphasis here will be on the involvement of the public, and particularly government representatives and non-government organization personnel in the writing of this policy. (Details on the content of this study can be found in Choguill 2001a, 2001b and 2003).

The underlying rationale for involving non-governmental organization representatives and government personnel in the preparation of the NUDHF was that the NGO members were involved to provide ideas while the government people were seen as implementers of the policy. In one sense, this understates the role of the government people, as the NUDHF was timed to coincide with the release in 1999 of the Philippine Mid-term Development Plan. Thus, the urban framework plan had to be compatible with the national economic plan.

The public consultation was planned to take place at three levels. First, there were four technical working groups, the membership of which was appointed by departmental ministers, composed of government technocrats, private sector representatives and representatives from civil society. The second level of participation was extensive, as the plan was presented at review meetings in each of the 12 administrative regions of the Philippines. The major participants in these meetings were the regional representatives of various governmental ministries. The third level of participation was provided by a blue ribbon panel composing a National Steering Committee, the members of which were appointed by the President.

Over the 24-week period of the exercise, meetings with these various groups were held on average once per week. After each consultation, an effort was made to update the plan in view of the comments. This approach tended to be particularly effective in terms

of providing major directions, although it was relatively weak on detail. Thus, the plan took the unusual direction of poverty alleviation, but the actual detailed policies to be included largely came from the consultancy team.

Would this approach of simultaneous consultation with government agencies and the public work in Saudi Arabia? Had this been done when the Urban Growth Boundary Policy was being designed and implemented, there would very likely have been coordination and cooperation among the various ministries involved, as well as between the government agencies and the general public, especially developers. Thus, if consultation had been employed, the policy might have avoided the pitfalls that it encounters and been more effective.

The second experience in Philippine consultation was in the preparation of a set of performance indicators and standards for development administration in a project sponsored by the Australian Agency for International Development for the Philippine Development Academy. The purpose of the project was to determine a set of generally agreed indicators for development administration to assist the Philippines in assessing progress toward 'good development'. Although the participation model in this project was the simplest of the three, the input of the public was essential in defining the output.

Three sets of consultations were held in the three major island groups of the Philippines. Their primary purpose was to define the prevailing local norms in local development administration and to establish a preliminary list of indicators which could measure progress toward meeting these norms. In the process, participants, mostly from NGOs although with an inclusion of some government personnel, discussed their interpretation of what development administration was and how it could be measured, then after proposing a large preliminary list of indicators, carried out a selection game: voting for those indicators that they felt most accurately reflected local and national development administration needs. The approach used was an adaptation of that used by the United Nations Human Settlements Indicators Program (Flood, 1997).

Would this approach of requesting members of civil society to help establish priorities of a government program have worked in Saudi Arabia? Had it been used to determine the local priorities to be included in, say, one of the many urban structure plans that have been created here in Saudi Arabia, the

public's involvement and interest in the plan would be significantly higher. In addition, with higher interest and external recognition, it has been frequently seen that implementation difficulties are sometimes reduced, thus justifying the effort.

The third experience in participation of the public was in another Australian-sponsored project, this time for the Philippine Department of Interior and Local Government. The Philippine Local Government Code specifies that Local Development Councils (LDC) are to be organized at village, municipal and provincial level to undertake an advisory role on government priorities. The central government wanted a project carried out to determine whether it was feasible to transfer additional powers to these bodies and what the implications of such a change might be (details are found in Choguill *et al.*, 2001).

In order to get the information needed for such a study, 26 local consultations were held with local development council members, local government officials, and other non-governmental organization representatives throughout the Philippines.

The format of this series of meetings, which were held over two months, was a variation upon the US Agency for International Development's 'Technology for Participation'. This approach is based on four sets of questions, or the ORID, a word which means nothing in English, nor in any other language. The O calls for questions to elicit 'objective' information (Can you cite your involvement in the LDC or LDC-related activities?), the R for 'reflective' answers (How did you feel as a result of this involvement?), the I for 'interpretive' information (How do you see yourself in future LDC or LDC-related activities?), and the D for 'decisional' response (What improvement do you want to see in the LDC?). This formula was repeated in variations over the course of each one-day seminar, and led to a relatively complete understanding of both the capability of local residents, but also their wishes with respect to the activities of local development councils.

Would this approach to policy design by consulting the public have worked in Saudi Arabia? Such an approach might have been very interesting as a means of planning and decision-making process establishing the elections of a part of the municipal councils. Certainly if at some stage, an augmentation of their powers is envisaged, consultations using this model would be very enlightening.

Although highly relevant to the Philippines, none of these models would be appropriate for application

here in Saudi Arabia in an unadjusted form. Approaches to problem solving in one country are very rarely appropriate for problem solving in any other. They are presented just to give you ideas about the kinds of approaches that have proven useful in other countries. Perhaps the format of the candidates' meetings for the recent municipal elections can provide a clue as to how participation might be geared to meet Saudi needs. Although to the non-Saudi, these meetings appeared to be overly formal, perhaps that is the approach that appeals to local civil society. The important point is that if participation can be integrated into the planning process, by whatever model seems appropriate, then the quality of planning can be improved and the plans suggested by local planners will very likely be more successfully implemented and followed than plans which are simply done in some remote ministry office.

### **Innovations in Urban Policy Research**

Urban problems in Saudi Arabia (and elsewhere) can only be solved if they are understood. The understanding of these issues is constrained by a lack of past research into these fascinating areas. Although the Kingdom has an extremely high proportion of Ph.D. holders in its population, including many in the urban fields, much past Ph.D. research has not been on the kinds of issues that will lead to improvements in the lives of Saudi Arabians, whether they live in urban or rural areas. Furthermore, once the fresh Ph.D.s return to the Kingdom, they find that the opportunities to apply their newly developed skills into Saudi Arabian issues is severely limited. As a result, many of the best and brightest launch off into consultancy, or even government, rather than trying to make a career of teaching and research in a university. This is unfortunate, especially since it was universities that primarily nominated these scholars to undertake Ph.D. studies initially.

And as a result, since the Saudi Arabian Ph.D.s go off into areas other than teaching and research, the shortfall in teaching resources is filled with expatriates. Now, many expatriates are serious about their teaching and do their best to succeed in these circumstances. There are, however, two characteristics that severely limit the effectiveness of expatriates in Saudi Arabian universities:

- First, they find it difficult because of cultural constraints to undertake research, and therefore tend to continue past work on their own countries.

Such research may help people in their own countries, but has limited positive impact upon Saudi Arabia. Certainly this kind of research does not inform teaching that is relevant to Saudi Arabian students.

- Second, no matter how dedicated they are to the Saudi university in which they are teaching, at some stage, they are going to quit and go home. Thus, their dedication to the long-run development of Saudi research capability and development progress must surely be viewed as limited.

It is suggested that many of the Saudi Arabian Ph.D. holders in planning and architecture migrate into consultancy and government service primarily because of a lack of opportunity to carry out research and the facilities to support it. It actually takes quite a strange sort of person to undertake and persevere through Ph.D. studies. In the process, the survivors prove that they have an interest in this particularly peculiar set of skills.

Therefore, within the urban field, it is suggested that Saudi Arabia should create an Urban Think Tank, an urban research organization made up of the brightest of Ph.D.s, who should be freed from university teaching duties and forbidden from diverting their attention to private or governmental consultancies. Obviously to achieve this aim, the Think Tank must have a career structure and pay people what they are worth.

They must also be supplied with the library materials and computational equipment that they need to make an impact. Money for surveys should be available, as well as for hiring younger Saudis as research assistants. No money should be available for hiring foreign consultants, as the purpose of this Urban Think Tank is to use Saudi brainpower to solve Saudi urban problems, not to tender them out to some foreign organization who could care less about whether the traffic gets snarled on King Fahad Freeway or whether the sewage backs up in Jeddah as long as they get paid.

Now, what should this Urban Think Tank do? Much of their initial work will have to be in the form of pure research, the building up of the knowledge base that has been neglected here for far too long. Once this exists, however, one would expect their priority areas to switch largely to policy issues, the devising of avenues that the government could follow to solve urban problems that exist here in the Kingdom. The researchers in the Urban Think Tank will not hire their services out to government

ministries and agencies, as the government is already paying them and supporting their work. Therefore, they are truly involved in trying to solve Saudi problems for the good of all in the Kingdom.

Perhaps the first task the Urban Think Tank should pursue is the establishment of an urban databank. This is actually quite an interesting research project in itself, and one that the author has been involved in on behalf of the British Overseas Development Administration who wanted a feasibility study for an urban databank that they could use to support their field workers, while at the same time defining the state of the art in urban research and policy initiatives (Choguill and Silva-Roberts, 1992; Choguill, Silva-Roberts and Wood, 1992). The usefulness of a databank dedicated exclusively to Saudi Arabia urban areas cannot be underestimated, and would be expected to provide the necessary input data for many varied research undertakings.

The information in the databank should not just be available to Think Tank researchers, but should be displayed on a dedicated website that would be accessible to researchers everywhere, not just in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, but worldwide, as an effort to develop a fraternity (and sorority) of investigators and urban analysts who can share ideas and insights with one another over the Internet.

It is suggested that the urban databank should be a repository of, at the very minimum, the following data time series, where information collection should begin with the largest cities, and work down from there, with the support of GIS technology:

- Urban land in hectares (by land use: residential, commercial, industrial, open space, other; vacant serviced land; vacant un-serviced land) all by GPS location capable of being aggregated into geographical sector.
- Building permits issued by type and by geographical location.
- Quantity and value of construction by geographic location.
- Monitoring of housing construction by type, value and location within city.
- Industrial and commercial investment by geographic section of city.
- Infrastructure: water consumption by section of city, leakage data, service reliability.
- Infrastructure: coverage and efficiency of sewerage disposal system by section of city.
- Infrastructure: solid waste management efficiency by section of city.

- Infrastructure: electricity billing information, number of customers, KWH consumed by type of user to allow the construction of an activity index based on electricity consumption and value added.
- Infrastructure: roads by type by the section of the city.
- Social infrastructure: health facilities by type, area, location within the city.
- Social infrastructure: education facilities by type, area, location within the city.
- Social infrastructure: community facilities by geographic location.
- Car registrations by section of city.
- Air pollution data by location within city.

Once the databank is available at a single location, much interesting and relevant policy research is potentially possible. Below is a list of a number possible research projects. They are only a sample of what is possible, and any Saudi urban specialist could double or even triple the number with a few minutes thought. These subjects are, however, related to the problems identified in the paper on the survey of Saudi Arabian urban problems, although some additional topics have been suggested which sound relevant and potentially interesting. These candidate research project topics have been clustered into eight groupings, covering what are probably the major policy areas that need to be addressed by urban managers everywhere.

### **Spatial aspects of urbanization**

This should include a series of studies:

- To determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the urban boundary limit policy, focusing upon its effect in utilizing central land before moving to the periphery;
- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the land-use planning system in operation in Saudi Arabia, focusing upon alternative approaches, such as the British 'planning permission'; and
- To develop measures to evaluate the implementation of the National Spatial Strategy 1422 H – 2001 AD.

### **Infrastructure**

This should include a series of studies:

- To assess the relationship of residential density and the cost of the water distribution system, the sewerage disposal system and the road system; and
- To carry out an investigation on the potential role of the private sector, highlighting in particular areas

where costs of urban services can be cut and where service levels can be improved.

### **Employment**

This should include a series of studies:

- To evaluate the economic bases and competitive advantages of various cities in the Kingdom to assist planners and the Saudi Arabian Investment Authority in licensing various kinds of productive activities in various provinces and cities;
- To carry out a study to determine why so many potential Saudi investors are taking their money elsewhere and to suggest policies to alleviate this situation; and
- To carry out a study of the costs and benefits of Saudization in various economic sectors.

### **Migration and change of residence studies**

This should include a series of studies:

- To determine the shape of the current migration within the Kingdom, quantifying the split between inter-urban migration and rural-to-urban migration;
- To carry out and evaluate surveys in various cities detailing the tendency to move from central to peripheral locations, and suggesting policies that might reduce such movement; and
- To make an assessment of the potential of small towns in Saudi Arabia to retain existing populations in terms of an identification of the facilities (education, health, commercial and employment) that would be required to achieve this aim.

### **Environment**

This should include a series of studies:

- To develop environmental impact analytical techniques that could readily be applied in various Saudi Arabian regions to assess the effects of various kinds of investments: commercial, residential and industrial;
- To assess the ecologic and environmental impacts of the physical growth of cities on reserved areas on the urban periphery, and areas further out which are subject to degradation by the building materials supply industry; and
- To assess the reduction of biodiversity that has resulted from urban expansion.

### **Traffic and transportation**

This should include a series of studies:

- To assess the potential of traffic management as

against capital investment as a means of increasing the capacity of Saudi Arabian urban roads, and suggesting policies to implement such measures;

- To assess the traffic accident situation in urban areas of Saudi Arabian cities and suggest policy measures to reduce the accident, injury and death rates;
- To carry out and analyze surveys dealing with public transportation, determining what policy measures would be required to promote such transport modes; and
- To carry out a series of urban transportation demand studies in various cities which might feed into the City Databank.

### **Housing**

This should include a series of studies:

- To analyze and evaluate the potential savings that could be gained by moving to higher density, more compact housing arrangements, and suggesting policies that could be used to achieve this aim;
- To evaluate the costs and benefits of the current low density housing demands of urban Saudi Arabians;
- To evaluate the size, extent and cost to the national economy of subsidies in the Saudi housing market; and
- To carry out studies of the residential construction industry with the objective of reducing housing construction costs.

### **Local government**

This should include a series of studies:

- To propose quantifiable indicators concerning the effectiveness and efficiency of Saudi Arabian local government;
- To evaluate the costs and benefits of the current local government financial arrangements; and
- To define in Saudi Arabian terms, governance and transparency issues, and to suggest policies that would make local government more accessible to local urban residents.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this two-part presentation is to identify the most important urban problems facing Saudi Arabia and then to suggest certain approaches that can be followed for finding solutions to them. The most important point to gain here is the need to devise solutions acceptable to Saudi Arabians to the



problems identified. This probably means that resort to international best practice and foreign consultants is unlikely to provide the kinds of solutions that Saudis desire. Much can be learned from the study of what has been done in other countries, but at the end of the day, the most important solution is the one that is not only effective, but also acceptable to the local population. As a result, the obligation to find solutions falls squarely upon Saudi Arabian planners.

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## البحث عن حلول للمشاكل الحضرية في المملكة العربية السعودية

تشارلز إل شوجيل

قسم التخطيط العمراني، كلية العمارة والتخطيط،

جامعة الملك سعود، الرياض،

المملكة العربية السعودية

(قدم للنشر في ١٩/٤/١٤٢٦هـ؛ وقبل للنشر في ٢٤/٤/١٤٢٧هـ)

**ملخص البحث.** توفر هذه الورقة طرق عديدة في البحث عن حلول للمشاكل الحضرية التي تم تحديدها في الورقة بعنوان "مسح ميداني للمشاكل الحضرية في المملكة العربية السعودية". فبدلاً من طرح حلول ظاهرة عامة، فإنه من الأفضل لهذه الحلول أن تأتي من نفس المملكة العربية السعودية. فبالتركيز على مجال التخطيط الحضري، تستكشف هذه الورقة المزايا التي يمكن التوصل لها من خلال لا مركزية القرار ووضع الخطة، والفوائد (والضرورة) للسياسة الحضرية، وبالاغتماد على دراسات من دولة الفلبين، تم استعراض نماذج متعددة للمشاركة الشعبية في عملية صنع القرار.

وتقترح الورقة استحداث ما يعرف بخزان الأفكار الحضرية لتتيح القيام بالبحث الحضري كوسيلة لحل المشاكل الحضرية في المملكة العربية السعودية ويقترح أن يتم ربط هذا الخزان بقاعدة معلومات حضرية، ومن ثم القيام في دراسات متنوعة في مفاهيم التحضر المكانية، والبنية التحتية، وتوظيف، وهجرة، وبيئة، ونقل، وإسكان، وحكومة محلية. وتتضمن قائمة لمشاريع بحثية ممكنة في كل من هذه المجالات.