

Industry Agenda

The Future of Urban Development Advisory Board Meeting

New York, October 2013



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Session Summary

The Future of Urban Development Advisory Board Meeting

Industry Partnership Strategy Meeting – New York

Wednesday 2 October 12.00 – 14.00

New York City, USA

Executive Summary

In this session, Advisory Board members were in favour of the Forum continuing with the Champion City activity that goes deep into regions. Members were also keen on the Future of Urban Development Initiative maintaining a broader dialogue between its communities as the Forum's leadership network in general.

Synopsis

The Future of Urban Development Initiative serves as a partner in transformation for cities worldwide as they address significant urban challenges. It aims to make innovation accessible to city leaders and businesses in a mutually beneficial setting.

Eighteen months after the launch of the Initiative, Advisory Board members convened to discuss the Initiative's direction – whether to continue with the current suite of activities that fall under the Initiative's broad umbrella, or to explore alternative directions to maximize impact.

The current trajectory: These following four activities define the Initiative.

- **Champion City Activity:** Board members of the Initiative test a new model for urban problem-solving by working with leaders of select cities to address specific challenges and catalyse action. In its initial phase, the activity has focused on working with Chinese cities, beginning with Tianjin. After early indicators of success, the activity is working with Dalian and Zhangjiakou in 2013-2014. The plan is to extend the activity to India in 2014 and then to other regions.
- **Urban Anthologies:** Learning from Cities: The Global Agenda Council on Urbanization generates insights on strategies to address urbanization and publishes them once a year in a creatively formatted publication that is circulated to urban leaders worldwide.
- **Competitive Cities:** The Global Agenda Council on Competitiveness is in the early stages of integrating cities into the Forum's annual Competitiveness Report.
- **Toolbox for Urban Governance:** The Council on Governance is developing scenarios for governance in 2050, one of which describes cities playing a leading role in global developments.

BRAINSTORMING FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE INITIATIVE

Key takeaway: Continue with the Champion City activity

Based on its pilot phase, the Champion City activity has proved successful in offering Chinese cities tailored recommendations to tackle common urban challenges, and in creating partnerships between Champion Cities and Board Members to help implement those solutions. However, the activity has also turned out to be time and resource-intensive in achieving the stated goal of "catalysing action". Working with each city takes over a year and requires almost all of the Initiative's staff capacity, which makes expanding to new regions a challenge.

Before replicating the activity with additional cities, participants debated whether to continue as is or modify the approach.

- All the participants were keen on further developing the Champion City model as it presents a rare opportunity of urban problem-solving that is particular to an institution such as the World Economic Forum. The value of the Initiative is indeed to take those regional deep-dives and scale them up to a more global dialogue.
- In addition, the Initiative could look at conditions where it can head off but also reconsider the level of involvement in the implementation of the Champion City model.
- The participants were also greatly interested in moving the activity to other regions and to test the models in myriad contexts. Some participants were proposing "messier cities" (sic) where there is a greater challenge in dealing with local governance.
- It was also suggested to transport the activity to new and rising cities, in particular cities in sub-Saharan Africa where hasty urbanization, coupled with an even faster population growth, is paralleled with a lack of infrastructure and poor governance.
- A few participants suggested that the Initiative takes on less challenging cities (cities of developed countries), or large-scale development projects rather than whole cities. The activity will not be as resource-heavy as before and the Initiative could take those success stories and move the model faster across geographies.
- Another trend of recommendations suggested that the Initiative create demand for solutions rather than being a "hammer in search of a nail". The Initiative could then match regions of need to the capabilities of the Forum in order to intervene and propose solutions.

Key takeaway: Develop a broader global dialogue in parallel to the Champion City activity

Participants generally agreed that the Forum should pursue a broader, high-level global dialogue to complement the deep-dive approach of the Champion City activity. The following topics were suggested:

- **Smart cities:** Topics on governance and “smart cities” were the most favoured. It seems natural to the Initiative to engage in dialogues on governance, since this is exactly what the Forum as a whole engages in. However, complex topics such as governance and smart cities need to be “unbundled”, according to some of the participants, so that the Initiative and stakeholders can make sense of them.
- **Citizen engagement:** As a common subtheme of governance and smart cities, this topic was elaborated differently between participants. Some talked about the democratization of the planning process and whether planners can make sense and can handle the amounts of data they receive daily; while others mentioned the inclusion of urban poor in global debates.
- **Lifting up bottom issues:** The Initiative should bring back more humane and social issues, such as sewage treatment, food waste and food security, whose solutions will be transformative. Additionally, there should definitely be more emphasis on working on urban resilience and the impact of urbanization on the environment.
- **Environment/climate:** Based on the comment on environmental issues and their solutions, and whether they have a place in the future of the Initiative, the session concluded with a brief intervention from Dominic Waughray, Senior Director of the Environmental Activities at the World Economic Forum. Waughray shed light on future Forum projects in collaboration with the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change. The two organizations will collaborate on a new environmental global deal in which the topic of cities and urbanization will play a central role.



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01: Michael Lightfoot, Head of Public Affairs, Akzo Nobel NV, Netherlands (centre); Kiyooki Sugiyama, Executive Officer, Kokusai Kogyo, Japan (left); Jit Bajpai, Independent Consultant and Adjunct Professor, the Earth Institute and Columbia University
02: Kiyooki Sugiyama, Executive Officer, Kokusai Kogyo, Japan (centre); Christopher Thomas, Founding Principal, Fontinalis Partners, USA (left); Michael Lightfoot, Head of Public Affairs, Akzo Nobel NV, Netherlands
03: John Casesa, Senior Managing Director, Investment Banking, Guggenheim Partners, USA
04: Participants of the session The Future of Urban Development Advisory Board Meeting, Industry Partnership Strategy Meeting, New York, Wednesday 2 October



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01: John Brodhead, Executive Director CityWorks, Evergreen Brick Works, Canada (left); Mary Stromitis, Senior Manager, Strategic Marketing, Qualcomm, USA
02: Pooran Desai, Co-founder, BioRegional Development Group, United Kingdom
03: Eugenie L. Birch, Nussdorf Professor and Co-Director, Penn Institute for Urban Research, University of Pennsylvania, USA
04: Alfredo Brillembourg, Professor at ETH Zurich, Adjunct Professor of Architecture at Columbia University, Founder, Urban Think tank, Zurich, Switzerland
05: Moderating the session: Robin Ried, Associate Director, Infrastructure and Urban Development Industry, World Economic Forum, USA (left); Muriel Skaf, Intern, Future of Urban Development Initiative, World Economic Forum, USA (right)

PARTICIPANTS

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- Mary Stromitis, Senior Manager, Strategic Marketing, Qualcomm, USA
- Stefan Denig, Vice-President, Center of Competence Cities, Siemens, United Kingdom
- Jennifer Latka, Director, Corporate Strategy and Development, United Technologies Corporation, USA

Industry guest

- Michael Lightfoot, Head of Public Affairs, Akzo Nobel NV, Netherlands

Experts

- Pooran Desai, Co-founder, BioRegional Development Group, United Kingdom
- Alfredo Brillembourg, Professor at ETH Zurich, Adjunct Professor of Architecture at Columbia University, Founder, Urban Think tank, Zurich, Switzerland
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