Volume 1
Desk Review of Urban Management Concepts and Definitions

Volume 2
Draft Action Plan for Improvement
This volume the concept of urban management is explored as a critical ingredient in enabling the reforms of the Saudi planning system to be realised. The content of this volume should be seen as part of a wider project contributing to the Un-Habitat’s ‘Future Saudi City Programme’ and here the focus is primarily on the capacity of the actors to help deliver the reform package.
Urban Management in Saudi Arabia

A Concept Note

Shaw, David
UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL
Introduction

In this paper we explore the concept of urban management as a critical ingredient in enabling the reforms of the Saudi planning system to be realised. This paper should be seen as part of a wider project contributing to the Un-Habitats ‘Future Saudi City Programme’ and here we are primarily concerned with the capacity of the actors to help deliver the reform package. These reflections are based on:

- The readings that the team have been able to do, including reports provided by UN-Habitat e.g. work on the skills needed to deliver reform;
- Meetings and discussions with various stakeholders within the Kingdom, including staff a MOMRA, ADA, Royal Commission, women and youth based NGOs etc.;
- Reflections on our international best practice case studies of systems and local planning practices; and,
- Our evaluation and reflections on existing local planning practice.

The detail of much of this work is outlined in a series of separate reports which will not be repeated here. The key purposes of this report are:-

- To think through what the concept of urban management is and how it can, or should be aligned to the objectives of ‘Vision 2030’;
- To consider what some of the critical ingredients for good urban management could be. This draws inspiration from our international best practice experiences, but also of crucial importance is to recognise that there is already good practice evident within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We argue that this could be better utilised, disseminated, and the skills, knowledge and managerial practices shared more widely to enable local practice, which is specific and bespoke to the local country context, to be developed more extensively in a locally appropriate manner. Such approaches can draw inspiration from international experiences but must be locally situated.
- Based on this analysis we will suggest some ways forward.
Defining Urban Management

All countries in the world have what might be described as a planning system. The way these systems are configured and effectiveness of the systems to deliver their goals depend on a number of different factors, including:

- the extent to which the elements of the system works together,
- the effectiveness of the implementation processes to actively deliver the planned outcomes, and
- the relative power and nature of the plans, whether they guide and manage in positive proactive and flexible manner or whether they are bureaucratic, regulatory and blueprint in character. The latter are often inflexible rules based documents showing little alignment to the needs of local places.

The powers and responsibilities of any planning system are conferred on it by the state and hence planning is intrinsically a political process, which helps to deliver state objectives. But whilst the system is an important part of the way cities develop and evolve this process, briefly outlined above is inevitably more complex. Of much greater importance than the system itself is the way the system works and the relative capacity of the key stakeholders to operationalise the system and ensure that it is efficiently and effectively implemented. Increasingly in a complex and complicated world planning is seen as a process of guidance, management and shaping rather than simply controlling and regulating. This suggests planning moves from a technical exercise to more of an open fluid and negotiated, mediating process to enable desired outcomes to be realised and negative externalities to be miminised. But we would argue that this is only a small part of the wider concept of urban management. This is because despite the rapid urbanisation that is occurring throughout the world, the form and function of many cities has already to a large extent already been established. Planning as a process looks at building new elements of a city and/or renewing and rebuilding those parts of the city that are in need of regeneration/transformation. Nevertheless for cities to work efficiently and effectively those parts of the city that have already been built need to be managed and maintained. In this context we envisage urban management, as a concept, as covering three distinct, complementary and overlapping elements, notably:-

- Creating a suitable framework of plans and strategies to manage the process of how and where new development should be encouraged and/or how parts of the city should be transformed;
- Providing positive mechanisms to enable and facilitate the development process in a pro-active manner; and finally,
- Ensuring that the public infrastructure is managed and maintained so that it continues function in the way intended (see figure 1).
Fig 1 The Critical Components of Effective Urban Management

Within the Saudi context, across many parts of the Kingdom, MOMRA has a responsibility for delivering, or helping to deliver, all three elements outlined above. It is responsible for preparing or overseeing the preparation of local plans that are intended to shape and manage the development of the city. Through these plans they seek to regulate and manage the development process, and finally in terms of the day to day management of the city they have a responsibility for maintaining roads, street lighting and managing waste. We would argue that these final functions are only a small aspect of urban management, other urban functions such as access to good local educational facilities, security, water, sewerage and energy, health care, etc. are all services that need to be delivered and arguably managed locally to ensure that a city or place functions effectively for the benefit of its citizens. It is this whole practice of managing the existing needs of citizens, addressing existing challenges and considering the future needs as the city grows in along short, medium and longer term time frames is the basis of good urban management.

This wider conceptualisation of urban management as going beyond planning has been picked up by many policy documents, but most notably in the New Urban Agenda which was agreed at Habitat III in Quito in October 2016. This involves new forms of urban governance rather than government, new innovative and adaptable policies and systems that are based on good up to date information (this is one aspect of a SMART city), inclusive, open, transparent and collaborative approaches to decision making with proactive institutions and individuals empowered to create and implement bespoke local policies recognising the particular needs of particular places and the importance of different scalar needs. This involves forward planning (identifying existing and future needs and opportunities), effective and coordinated implementation and ongoing delivery, management and maintenance of good urban services. All of these integrated systems and processes must be accessible to all.

The Saudi government has recognised the need to transform its urban management processes and in developing it’s roadmap ‘Vision 2030’ the need for good planning practices and processes (including maintaining urban services) is clearly evident if the vision is to be fully realised.

‘Vision 2030’ provides an ambitious and far-reaching strategy to take the Kingdom forward. We would argue that central to achieving the goals set out in this document will be a strong robust enabling, facilitating and agile planning system which is committed to planning and managing change in a pro-active and positive manner respecting and reflecting the needs of all. Table 1 provides a brief illustration as to how the delivery of all the main themes and sub-themes will
require effective and efficient planning. Furthermore Vision 2030 offers a huge opportunity to MOMRA to be positive and strongly advocate how important inclusive, engaging proactive and adaptive planning can be to delivering these national ambitions.

Table 1. Some Critical Roles for Planning and Urban Management in delivering the goals and aspirations of Vision 2030.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Themes</th>
<th>Sub Themes</th>
<th>Planning and urban management relevance</th>
<th>Possible consequences and opportunities for Planning and Urban Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Vibrant society</td>
<td>With strong roots</td>
<td>Increasing Umrah visitors from 8-30 million.</td>
<td>National, regional and local plans need to be aligned and focused on implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Fulfilling Lives</td>
<td>Requires good quality of life, healthy lifestyle and attractive living.</td>
<td>To be delivered by good plan making, managed implementation and effective maintenance of public infrastructure (urban management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Thriving nation</td>
<td>A thriving economy rewarding opportunity</td>
<td>Good planning is necessary in delivering the spatial opportunities for the private sector and society to flourish</td>
<td>Positive role and potential of good planning needs to be highlighted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open for Business</td>
<td>Restructuring and revitalising economic cities, creating special zones</td>
<td>Need to refresh university planning programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Investing for the long-term</td>
<td>Quality urban environment as an attractor of mobile capital</td>
<td>Need new training and updating of existing staff to meet the new urban management culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leveraging its unique position</td>
<td>National and regional plans need to have an external focus which is flexible and adaptable to changing global opportunities.</td>
<td>Providing suitable rewards for providing the necessary soft infrastructure (urban management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>New opportunities for young and women’s groups to deliver new agenda in an entrepreneurial manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Ambitious Nation</td>
<td>Effectively governed</td>
<td>Includes greater transparency, engagement for all, e-governance, and through better co-ordination efficiency savings</td>
<td>To realise this potential good planning at all levels necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibly enabled</td>
<td>Being responsible to business and society</td>
<td>Planning remains a public service activity whose role is to enable, facilitate and be positive about change to deliver opportunities for all, promote long-term resilience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If many themes and sub-themes are to be realised then strong plan making will help to create a system of decision making where there is both strong vertical integration between levels and horizontal integration not only between public sector agencies, but also between public, private and civil society to ensure that the right facilities and infrastructure is delivered in the right place at the right time in a cost efficient manner. In this context plan making creates the framework within which decisions can be made and investment opportunities prioritised. Secondly implementation which is positively facilitated can then be seen as critical step in delivery. In this way planning as a system and process is not simply concerned with regulating development but becomes much more focused on enabling and facilitating development positively and proactively, and crucially monitoring the delivery outcomes. In this way the planning system must be seen as an ongoing, iterative, interactive and constantly evolving activity where plans enable, facilitate and adapt rather than being idealistic, theoretical blueprints to be used to regulate development, irrespective of what the market or citizens need.
Much of the rest of the work on this project has been focused on what might be described as the hard infrastructure associated with the urban planning system in the country. These involve the rules, regulations, policies, and instruments of urban planning. This involves the nature of strategic planning instruments at national, regional, and local levels, their role, purpose, and the interconnections between them to create an integrated system. Such ideas and principles have been dealt with elsewhere in this project, if accepted, will become enshrined in the forthcoming Urban Planning Act which will, it is hoped, consolidate some of the many current and often confusing suite of Urban Planning Laws, Regulations, and Circulars, which can emanate from a Royal Order, Royal Degree, Supreme Order, a resolution of the Council of Ministers, and a Ministerial Decree (Un-Habitat 2016). Following a review of planning legislation, there are some 20 laws, 15 regulations, 360 circulars, and 102 others legislation that impacts on planning and whilst most is produced by MOMRA, other actors make legislation that has significant urban planning impact.

Sitting along this hard planning infrastructure is what we describe here as the soft infrastructure. This is primarily based on the nature of the institutions which have or will be charged with delivering the system and the human capacity within these agencies with the necessary skills sets, enthusiasm, and pro-active attitude to deliver change. It might be that some functions are delivered by what have traditionally been described as public sector agencies, or special agencies or indeed private sector consultants, but what will be key in a more inclusive process (which engages stakeholders, positively manages change and urban development through a flexible framework of plans, combined with effective means of regulation and enforcement and the monitoring of outcomes to ensure the desired direction of travel is being followed) will be the building of new capacity and encourage new behaviors amongst many of the existing actors. This requires what might be described as a culture change, and is an idea and concept deeply embedded in ‘Vision 2030.’ Whilst this is an easy concept to advocate, in practice it is extremely challenging to deliver and requires sustained action across a range of different activities (Shaw and Lord 2007). Culture change therefore permeates every single approach to planning reform. As well as reforming the system itself, there is crucially a need to reform the way planning is practiced as well. ‘Planning is a vehicle which cannot be fixed by only looking at the engine. You need to change the way the machine is driven.’ (Shaw and Lord 2007, 63).

Others have described this as moving from a slow, unresponsive administrative model of city management to one which is more flexible, adaptable and responsive to changing situations and circumstances, decision making is open and transparent, and planning functions and activities are constantly evolving to meet changing needs and opportunities. Plans are therefore no longer idealistic blueprints to be implemented but are rather strategic frameworks within which negotiations regarding development can occur, and implicitly recognize the complexity of the modern world with its inherent lack of simplistic linearity. This requires a new or different cadre of officials and civic leaders, empowered to respond quickly and openly to rapidly evolving circumstances.

Having therefore explored the broad idea of urban management as a wider concept of delivering sustainable and resilient urban places as advocated, globally through the Un-Habitat’s New Urban Agenda and clearly embedded in the Kingdom of Saudi’s ‘Vision 2030.’ In the next section we look at some of the key ingredients that might be necessary to deliver this culture change and whilst drawing on international best practice, our missions, meetings, and readings have revealed that within the Kingdom good/best practice is already evident and there is considerable scope to learn from, share, and disseminate these experiences to help facilitate and engender the necessary culture change.
Opportunities and Challenges for Urban management

Understanding the value of good planning or the costs of bad planning

The planning process is critical to the creation of good cities, although its value is often ignored. Good planning requires the public and private sectors to work together and co-ordinate the delivery of land and infrastructure to ensure the development can succeed. Increasingly in a context where capital is internationally mobile there is a need for planning and planners to be flexible and responsive to opportunities that might arise. There are lots of good examples with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia where this positive proactive approach is very evident in terms of facilitating change. In Riyadh for example ADA has acted as a facilitating broker between different land owners to create sufficient space for inward investment and there are many examples of new projects being delivered in this proactive way (e.g. the new financial quarter, new ambitious developments around the rapidly emerging metro system etc.). Elsewhere the Royal Commission in delivering places like new Jubal are delivering good plan making which is strategic in nature and then produces more detailed and phased implementation plans thereby carefully managing the physical development of the city. Whilst such examples have unique advantages in terms of controlling the land, being able co-ordinate the activities of different stakeholders such approaches are very similar to the way that planning is practiced in Abu Dhabi, which has been seen as an example of international best practice. These examples are illustrative rather than exhaustive but they do illustrate that there is good practice within the Kingdom.

Conversely poor planning leads to additional costs to the state and residents alike and during a period of what is assumed to be ongoing resource pressure on public expenditure it will be important that scarcer public resources are used more efficiently. The relatively uncontrolled urban sprawl, characteristic of many Saudi cities, has we would argue been an enormous cost to the Kingdom in delivering services to these sites. Through better co-ordination and phasing of the expansion of cities within the urban growth boundaries then in theory services could be more effectively co-ordinated and delivered in a cost effective way.

Many of the these examples of good planning and costs associated with bad planning were highlighted at the Saudi Urban Forum in 2016 and we would argue are probably already well understood within the Kingdom.

Moving from an administrative to an urban management model of urban delivery

We have seen how the planning as a process can be slow and bureaucratic, not just in terms of preparing technical blueprint plans, but also in terms of managing the development process. It is also clear that to deal with the changing demographic situation in the Kingdom, a growing youthful population with a reduction in household size combined with internal migration pattern is creating a need for rapid and sustained house building of various types. The Ministry of Housing is charged with this delivery and we heard examples where it is creating a ‘one-stop shop’ within Riyadh so that all the necessary licences that are required (including planning approvals) before development can commence can be better co-ordinated to speed up the delivery process. This seems a very good and sensible idea, but we are not sure whether the expected outcomes are actually being delivered in practice. However this does seem to be a proactive approach to managing the development process through integration and co-ordinated actively and is and will become an integral part of the delivery
process. It raises an interesting question as to whether MOMRA envisages such activities as falling within its remit and wishes to be more proactively involved in delivering change. However, at another level, so long as the activity is being effectively delivered, perhaps it does not really matter who delivers this function. However, we would suggest that this deliver and facilitation of development should be considered an integral part of the implementation of plans.

Similar sorts of approaches are also evident in some of the new economic cities, such as King Abdullah Economic City where good governance is becoming the norm through the Smart Service Centre (SCS). This two is a form of one stop shop, where there is a close liaison between all the government agencies and developers designed to speed up the licencing processes and thereby aid delivery.

Such activities could be further facilitated by the use of e-governance and operating perhaps utilising performance agreements to aid delivery. Within the UK now almost all local government services can be accessed electronically, including all planning services. Local plans are all accessible online and indeed much of the consultation processes and background reports are made available for the public and developers to access. Furthermore, the regulation of development is now almost always managed electronically, including the submission of planning applications, payments of appropriate planning fees, public consultation exercises, and accessing the final decision notices etc. Through e-governance therefore it is argued there is much greater transparency in the decision making process.

This inevitable will require investment in the technological systems and processes for planning across the whole Kingdom and need to improve the technical competences of all staff working in planning.

**Improving the technical competences of local staff especially in the field of GIS**

In a recent study by UN-Habitat exploring the training needs of planning officers in municipalities there was a considerable and significant call for GIS training. We would not disagree with this assessment but would urge decision makers to think carefully about how and integrated GIS could be used in planning and urban management and what role and skills the users of the system might require. It might go beyond simply GIS training to database management systems. Nevertheless, we would advocate that many planners would use of the systems rather than necessarily building the system, and therefore the training and skills required might need to be carefully considered. In terms of thinking about a system of planning the role of an integrated GIS system could play might include providing an updated system concerning planning opportunities and planning constraints, provide update and real time information as to where new development applications have been submitted, approved and ideally developed, thereby helping monitoring development trends and trajectories and if was built as an integrated urban management system could help to facilitate other urban management services, including emergency service response times, traffic management etc.

Indeed an effective city wide information system could provide up to date information that could be seen as a *smart* way to make decisions. Having an integrated spatial information system so that good rapid and interactive urban management decisions can be made based on solid information, is one of the critical components of what has been dubbed a SMART city, which in turn is an aspiration for many Saudi cities.
It has been recognised elsewhere that information needs for good planning and the ongoing and monitoring of the outcomes of plans or urban development trends has been problematic in many Saudi cities. One response was the creation of a network or Urban Observatories which sought to collect baseline information about cities in the form of urban indicators such as the City Prosperity Indices. Such an approach was advocated and supported by UN-Habitat to enable comparative internal and external benchmarking to take place. The success of this venture varied considerably from city to city but does serve to highlight some of the information gaps that exist that are necessary prerequisites for good planning. Furthermore many of these Observatories remained relatively disconnected to many of the key governance agencies, notably MOMRA. So whilst this experiment has helped to provide some baseline information against which the relative performance of Saudi cities can be internally and externally compared in terms of broad quality of life indicators, the disconnect between this activity, which in many cases is organisationally discrete from other planning and urban management functions remains very evident. Monitoring of trends and outcomes has to be an integral part of any system of future urban management as it can provide an identification of need, can indicate whether the anticipated trends are being realised and provide an indication that current planning policy needs adjusting to meet new and emerging circumstances.

We believe that the need for a good integrated information system at the local scale has been recognised within MOMRA and we have seen system that is being developed for Medina. Such an approach could if properly designed and implemented could be critically important for delivering effective urban planning by helping in plan making, implementation and monitoring and could also be used by other services with the more day to day management of the city through the provision of real time information on for example traffic flows. An single integrated urban management system could enable better sharing of information between agencies and through a single platform avoid duplication of effort thereby becoming more efficient and cost effective as costs (in terms of data collection, and managing and maintaining the system) could be shared.

So whilst we accept that GIS can be a very useful tool to aid urban management, we think that there is a need to think more widely about a robust and easy to update information system that is spatial in character. This information system can be used for plan making by providing information of trends and patterns, can provide detailed information on the opportunities and constraints of particular development sites, can be used monitor planned outcomes and can provide real time information to better manage the city. Such an information system can really only fulfil its potential if it is built collaboratively between agencies delivering at a local level and is maintained and managed.

Once these elements have been carefully considered then appropriate training can be provided about building, maintaining and using a spatially based information management system that meets the generic needs of urban management and whilst containing common elements that are necessary across the Kingdom, it can still be made bespoke to meet the specific and particular needs of particular places. It is important to re-iterate that we think that within MOMRA most of the preliminary work to build such an information system has already been realised and this should provide a good basis for roll-out across the country.

**Considering the opportunities for e-governance**

As well as developing a new SMART information system many countries around the world have developed their e-governance, whereby local municipal services are accessible without the need to formally visit an office. This offers an alternative and additional way of engaging with local citizen and in many countries inevitably includes the planning service. Today within the UK planning service
all planning applications and decision notices are submitted online and are publically available for scrutiny, using nationally prescribed standardised forms, the stages and evidence bases supporting plans and various consultations can be submitted online, with targets being set by central government in terms of what is expected of an e-enabled planning service. In this context, as with much about planning within the UK, the responsibility for preparing plans and making decisions on development proposals is largely decentralised and devolved to the local planning authority.

Decentralising Power, but with Responsibility to Deliver

This decentralisation, at least in the UK context to local authorities comes with certain responsibilities and targets set by central government. The Department of Communities and Local Government monitors the planning performance of local planning authorities in terms of key indicators such as the number of planning decisions (minor and major) which are determined within the 8 and 16 weeks timescales, the outcome of appeal decisions as a measure as to whether original decisions are wrong and a need to have a local plan in place by the end of 2017. If a local planning authority and indeed other public services are deemed to be ‘failing’ then central government reserves the right to take power away from the local authority and vest it in another agency. As yet such powers have not yet been exercised but there is strong speculation that this might occur in 2017. Therefore it is important to understand that in such a highly centralised planning system as the UK, decision making powers have been decentralised for a long period of time, but not devolved. This means that unless the performances of the local authorities with respect to certain services maintains a minimum level of standard, then on the basis of ensuring that all citizens have the right to certain minimum level, the state can either send in alternative providers.

Similar within the Saudi system we would argue that the asymmetrical political planning leadership abilities that currently exist in different amanah and balaydia, combined with variable officer capacity means that if more decentralisation of decision making were to occur then the pace of change must be variable and dependant on the municipality having the capacity to deliver. Furthermore we would argue that such decentralisation of planning responsibility should also be subject to performance review. We have seen from our local plan review how in practice this already happens with different places taking greater or lesser roles in shaping their local plans.

Building Capacity within the system

In order to deliver the new system which, if it is to help deliver the aspirations for inclusive resilient and liveable cities, as set out in Vision 2030, there will need to be a transformation in the way that planning is practice. This will require strong local leadership which believes in and strongly articulates the value of planning in creating liveable places. This was certain evident in one our local planning case studies, where the major had a planning background and saw the value of good planning to realise the aspirations of the place. In this case the leadership was a political leader. In addition there needs to be the necessary skill sets embedded within the local planning officers, who will either undertake the work and/or be involved in overseeing the work of others. The plan making team therefore could be embedded in the local government structure and prepare the plans themselves following the processes and procedures set out in the new Guidelines. Alternatively the plan making service could be wholly or partly contracted out (either managed internally, or if the local capacity is lacking by MOMRA) using revised Terms of Reference, which can be used as a contract to specify specific tasks that may be required or indeed the whole plan making process.

Earlier last year Un-Habitat (2016) produced a report exploring the Training Needs Assessment for the 17 key cities and this was undertaken within a context whereby the new or revised system had
not really been designed. This then focused on what the problems were in relation to effectively delivering the current status quo. There were and remain many overlapping and interconnected issues that need to be assessed. These include:-

- A lack of capacity of suitably qualified planners working in the municipalities, and this is illustrated by the fact that many of those employed in the Local Urban Observatories (LUOs) are none Saudi’s. The planners or engineers are often Egyptian;
- There is a lack of joined up thinking, so that whilst the LUOs have been established to gather baseline information about city performance, this role and activity is not linked into wider strategic city planning activities and remains a largely technical exercise. This lack of co-ordination and integration also is evident between other service providers and therefore has important implications for urban service delivery, where there was advocacy that such services should be delivered on a cost recovery basis, paid for by the customer (e.g. in relation to waste management collection and disposal). This becomes an urban management issue and in other countries such as the UK this service is a local authority responsibility paid for through local taxation, but the collection and disposal services are delivered by the private sector.
- Those employed in delivering the planning service are often overwhelmed in day to day administration issues and whilst the open door policy means that key decision makers are accessible, there time is taken up with important but bureaucratic matters involving citizens’ cases “mo’amalat”
- There are questions raised regarding the appointment of suitable individuals to planning positions when appointments are controlled by the Ministry of Civil Service and allied to this are there the right career paths with suitable reward structures to keep such individuals working for the local planning service. In many cases it was reported that good staff would leave and join the private sector or more proactive delivery agents such as the ADA or Royal Commission.
- Finally there were identifiably skills sets absent within the cadre of individuals employed in planning practice, these included experience of working with data, including analysing trends, monitoring outcomes and representing such ideas spatially through a GIS, interacting effectively and positively with stakeholders (including other sectoral agencies of government, the private sector and citizens more generally), and specific issues related to traffic management or flooding concerns.

This then means that there will be enormous challenges in developing the capacity to deliver the new system which moves from what might be currently described as an administrative and bureaucratic system to one which is much more flexible engaging and concerned with managing and facilitating urban change.

If the importance of planning and urban management is recognised as being integral to delivering Vision 2030, then inevitably there will be a substantial need to develop the capacity within the Kingdom to deliver. There are various options as to whether the service will be delivered by local government, arm’s length planning agencies (such as Development Agencies or the Royal Commission), the private sector or some combination of all three. In many parts of the world there is a general downscaling of the public sector. Often the services and functions remain a public sector responsibility, overseen by the public sector but outsourced and delivered under contract by some third party. For example within the UK household waste collection and disposal is a local authority function, but both the collection and disposal services are contracted out to the private sector.
Similarly with public transport, whether the buses or rail services, and all of the public utilities (gas, water, electricity etc.), all are now essentially run by the private sector under licence.

Given the current context within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we doubt whether there is much appetite for expanding the number of public servants and instead we believe that new and innovative ways of delivering public services will have to be considered. From a planning perspective this might involve the charging for services associated with the provision of planning licences that could be based on a cost recovery basis, or it might increasingly seek to recover some of the infrastructure costs from developers, rather that it being exclusively born by the public sector. Such an approach aligns with the National Transformation Plan (2016), whereby the internal revenue generated by MOMRA should rise from 11% to 40% by 2020.

Nevertheless whatever the outcome of the new Urban Planning Act, there will be a need to improve the capacity of those working in the planning system. This will involve both training new staff with new skills and opportunities and upskilling and mentoring existing planners to ensure they understand the new context for planning and the new requirements of planning. Within local authorities we understand that the key employees are classified as Civic Servants and within the National Transformational Programme the need to develop and transform the capacity of this cohort, including planners is recognised through the ‘Human Capital Improvement Performance Programme’. We would argue that if planning and urban management is going to be successfully transformed and some of the targets (e.g. for plan making 85% urban plan project approval by 2020 and or the percentage of waste recycled and treated up from 15 -40%) are to be achieved sustained and significant changes in performance will be required. This will require not only training in new skills, but also changes in performance and scrutiny of individual and collective efforts.

We have suggested before that this will require a substantial culture change, which is easy to argue for but difficult to operationalise. It will be important for those involved in the planning and urban management processes at the local level there need to be specific and bespoke training. Whether this should be provided as a distinct component of the wider ‘Human Capital Improvement Programme’ of whether it should be an arm of MOMRA is a debatable point. Nevertheless when the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act was introduced and this was seen as an integral part of a ‘modernising planning agenda’ a new organisation the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) was created. This body was initially funded by the Department Of Communities and Local Government, to provide training and support to officers and councillors (politicians) about what the new planning reforms meant and how they should be implemented. They have provided regional seminars on a range of topics, provided best practice examples and step by step workbooks as to how certain tasks should be undertaken, they have gone in to benchmark particular authorities and developed improvement plans, and they have facilitated peer mentoring processes so that good practice can be shared. Often the seminars and workshops have been held on a regional basis and their work programmes have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders, noticeably the hosting central government department and the users. After at least 13 years of core funding PAS is now moving to a new model of delivery whereby the key users (local authorities) pay an annual subscription for the service.

It is clear that within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia there will need to be some ongoing and sustained training and retraining programmes. Furthermore arguably, given the importance of private sector consultancies to the delivery of the service, they too will need to be involved in some of the training. Whether these training events are to be organised nationally or regionally and whether they should deal with broader principles of the new planning and then take particular topics or steps within the process making processes (including for example stages of evidence gathering, evaluating options,
stakeholder engagement, plan presentation, plan monitoring and review etc.) and/or looking at problematic areas of planning implementation (e.g. phasing development within the urban growth boundaries). Furthermore having a bespoke agency that can deliver such training, but call on the necessary professional skills and experience from anywhere in the Kingdom would appear to critical. Such an agency might be part of MOMRA, might be funded by but arm’s length from MOMRA, but should be able to draw on expertise from anywhere within the Kingdom, university experts, from the Royal Commissions, Development Agencies, local authorities themselves etc. with the focus of the training sessions being on sharing and disseminating best practice through workshops, peer mentoring and readily accessible case studies.
A way forward

Building new capacity in the system will require a long and sustained process of activity.

It is likely that in the shorter to medium (5-10 years) term most effort will have been devoted to enhancing the existing capacity of those already within the system through training and mentoring approaches. These changes in approach can begin to be operationalised almost immediately. However it can be challenging to initiate a culture change process in this way as often there is considerable in-built inertia within the system as well established customs and norms of behaviour that can be challenging to alter. Nevertheless within the next 12 months a series of workshops outline the principles of the new system and a series of phased workshops and guidebooks could be made available to help stakeholders work through the process.

Building new capacity is likely to be a longer term project (5-15 years) but inevitably not only will more but new capacity will also be required if the transformations envisaged are to effectively be embedded in the process. Building new capacity will require the proactive engagement of all or some of the Universities so that undergraduate and postgraduate planning programmes that meet the existing and future needs of the planning industry can be carefully designed. As well as designing relevant programmes to career opportunities and rewards in embarking on such a career, both in financial and other rewards need to be clearly articulated to ensure students choose this option for good reasons. We have suggested that this is more of a medium to longer term project as from now (January 2017) it is unlikely that a significant cohort of new graduates is likely to be ready for work much before 2020/21.

It is important to re-emphasise the urban management as a broader concept, and fitting within MOMRA's current remit requires forward planning to think through how a place needs to develop; effective mechanisms and processes to manage the development process; and, finally effective ways in ensuring the city's services and functions are properly maintained and managed. Only by effectively co-ordinating and integrating all three elements of how a city works, functions and develops can the potential to achieve resilient, liveable and sustainable cities be achieved.
This Volume presents a review of the existing structures which support planning in Saudi Arabia illustrating a baseline situation that is both complex and evolving. This review is grounded in an assessment of the key material provided by Un-Habitat as part of the Future Saudi Cities Programme combined with reflections generated from engagement with a broad range of ministerial and sectoral experts in the Kingdom including MOMRA, local municipalities, academics, other Ministries with spatial planning implications (Ministry of Economy and Planning, Ministry of Housing etc.), special planning agencies (e.g. ADA and Royal Commission) and stakeholder groups (e.g. women and youth representatives).