Methodology of action

The text that follows is a slightly edited version of a document by C.A. Doxiadis extracted from Ekistics, *vol. 41, no. 247, June 1976, pp. 361-364.*

Introduction

It will be a realistic goal to expect that humanity can achieve the following:

- Recognize the content and extent of the problem of human settlements in the 1960s;
- Develop proper and accepted systems, theories and solutions in the 1970s;
- Experiment in order to test the theories at a proper scale in all types of units, countries and areas in the 1980s and 1990s;
- Reach the point at which humanity will be in control of the situation of human settlements again by the turn of the century.

Whilst working, though, on such a systematic and long-term program, we cannot overlook the fact that we have immediate needs for action which cannot be delayed until we know best. This is why we have a second task: to act to the best of our knowledge in order to ameliorate and expand the human habitat.

In acting in this field we do not simply create new parts of the settlements, we also interfere with existing settlements, some of which have been very satisfactory ones, especially those which took a final shape before the nineteenth century, and before the new forces changed their nature. If we leave these settlements to develop under the impact of the new forces, then by the end of the century they may have been completely changed for the worse, and this is going to mean a great loss for humanity. Then, when some day we recognize the value of the settlements of the past, they will not be there any more. They will have been lost for ever.

It becomes, therefore, our third task to save as many as possible of the values created in the settlements of the past, as well as the settlements themselves, until man, in control of the situation again, can deal wisely with all problems of settlements of the past and of the future.

As a conclusion, I think that we face a triple task during the decades to come:

- Develop the science of human settlements and act on the basis of its findings;
- Till this happens, act to the best of our knowledge in order to face critical situations in many types of settlements, in both underdeveloped and overdeveloped settlements;
- Act in order to save values of the settlements of the past, which are being spoiled under the impact of new forces.

Policies and programming

For ekistic development we need to clarify our goals, not just following trends but determining where we want to go. Then we need to set the policies to determine the road that will lead us from B to E, and not to D or even C (fig. 1). After that we need a program determining the method of implementing our policies. Finally comes the physical plan – a partial projection of the foregoing in two or three dimensions.

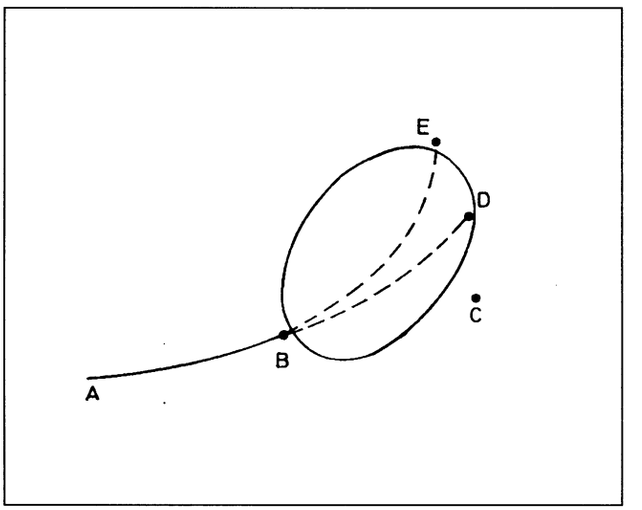

Fig. 1: We need to set our goal at E, not D.

- **Goals:** The goals must be decided by the community and not by the expert. The task of the expert is to present the advantages and disadvantages of different courses of action in measurable terms, and then let the people decide. It is better to have limited, specific goals than generalized objectives: better to advocate a maximum commuting journey of 30 minutes than "increased leisure." Goals can be set for the five ekistic elements and for different ekistic units and for different organs of the city. They should always be expressed in terms of physical space and time budgets in relation to how the citizen spends his 24 hours.

- **Policies:** Policies always exist, even if they are not expressed in laws (some countries have a policy of doing nothing about housing for the poor). Our task is to bring the main issues up to the surface so that the people will have to take a position. Urban renewal can never be a policy since it is a form of surgery, and operations are dangerous, critical actions that should only be undertaken in an emergency. The policy should be long-term preventive action that will prevent emergencies from arising.

● **Programs:** Programs are guided growth. What is impossible today will be possible in five years, and easy in ten. Even in the distant past man set goals for the future. The Acropolis could never have been built under a five-year plan. Some cathedrals were under construction for two centuries. These people had faith in the future.

A city consists of buildings born 100 years ago, 50 years, 10 years. It is a complex structure that is going to live a long time. Does it make any sense to plan for its future with short-term programs – with one-year and five-year budgets?

Many cities are growing at the rate of 10 percent a year. This means annually 3 to 4 percent increase in population, 4 to 5 percent increase in incomes, 3 to 4 percent increase in public services. In other words the city doubles in seven to eight years. Thus, even if one only aims to guide new growth, there will be a great impact within ten years.

● **Physical plans:** These are only two-dimensional diagrams of *a* four-dimensional projection. They must always bear two dates: the date of their conception and the date of their intended realization. Without these two dates they are meaningless.

Conclusions

We are heading toward an earth with more people, more wealth, greater technological skill and more concentration in favorable areas of the globe. This means larger and more complex human settlements. Our task is to understand the irreversible trends and to create human conditions.

Cities are already inhuman in their dimensions. It is imperative to save the human scale and to create spaces corresponding to man's natural dimensions within a total inhuman framework. There are two scales we must bear in mind: the scale of man (the human scale) and the scale of many men coming together (nonhuman dimensions). We need a policy for stability at the human scale and for dynamic change in the nonhuman areas. To achieve this the repeatable human scale units must have practical dimensions.

The walking scale urban units of ancient cities measured roughly 2,000 m x 2,000 m. In a modern metropolis such human scale units have to be connected in a hierarchical structure to bridge the gulf between the human scale of the indispensable units and the nonhuman scale of the inevitable units.

A possible system is to create major units each 10 km by 10 km (6 miles square), each containing 25 human communities (2,000 x 2,000 m). How many human communities are needed to support major urban institutions? Technology gives no answers and social scientists' standards change with an evolving society. To meet the changing demands of society, we should develop a recognizable urban system that creates a frame for all sorts of different developments. To do this we have to organize space as objectively as possible in three ways: the human community, the unpredictable total, and a hierarchical system of interrelations.

Note on implementation

This is a kind of recommendation to young professionals now entering the field, based on my own experience derived from practice. I am sure those who have had some experience will have already come to many of the same conclusions.

● **Starting the process:** Do not speak about planning needs. Nobody understands what we mean by the need for planning. Ordinary people are not interested in planning or in the need for planning; this is technical terminology.

Speak instead about the problems of the people and start at the proper level, with the authorities. But if you fail here, then start at any possible level.

● **Selecting the study area:** The area of study should be as large as possible, because if you select an area which is only a small part of a living organism, you will have already started on the wrong foot.

Give reasonable boundaries to the area. Do not select three-quarters of an organism, missing perhaps the one-quarter where most of the new action is taking place and where the interest of the community is centered.

These two statements may be misleading if I do not add a third one. While I recommend as large an area as possible – the largest possible kinetic field – one cannot always have it in practice. In such a case accept a smaller area, but be sure that it has reasonable boundaries.

Thus here I defend two positions. You have an expanding organism. Try to see how far its forces extend and try to cover the whole area. Have proper boundaries. But if this is not possible, if you are just given a small part, take it, because the process can also start at very small levels. But in that case, be sure that it corresponds to natural boundaries. If not, adjust it, no matter if your client does not want this. Study it as a unit, with reasonable boundaries, and give the answers for this unit.

If you have to take this small unit, try to see it in the frame around it. Spend some of your time on this. And then, and this is very important, try to look at all aspects within it. Do not imagine that you can solve the traffic problem by turning to the engineers, who may think that by designing a new traffic system within the unit they can solve its problems. Sometimes they kill it. So try to look at all aspects and develop an approach for the whole settlement.

● **Presenting the plans:** I think we should feel obliged to show clearly both the present and the future problems. We must express these in human, understandable terms; then present the alternatives. Not a single solution, but alternatives. No one will accept your favorite solution unless he has seen other alternatives, and understood the reasons why you rejected them.

Recommend each alternative on the basis of goals and criteria, and (this is very important) do not give your own opinions. No one is interested in your opinions: they are only interested in facts. The idea – often held by planners and experts in urban affairs – that the world waits for his wisdom, is very wrong. The world wants the facts of the problems (or the diseases) to be superimposed with facts on alternative solutions and the methods by which these were selected.

● **Approval of the plans:** Let those who are responsible approve the plans. Do not try to convince them, just give them facts; because, if you are a good salesman, you may convince them to accept things they do not want, and then they will spoil everything as soon as you turn your back. It is better for them to have their own plan and believe in it and implement it, than to have "your plan."

The expression "your plan" has no meaning. When I am told, this is "your plan" for that city, I strongly resist it. This is a selected proposal, and if approved, it will become the plan of the city. Otherwise it is a plan with no value at all, perhaps not even a historical value. Who will pay attention to the thousands of volumes of unimplemented master plans lying in the libraries of so many countries?

● **Implementation of the plans:** Finally, once the community has accepted a plan, we must have the courage to go ahead of the people, and start committing the community. I could mention the cases of many cities which we admire today where action was started before decisions were completed.

I have presented here a kind of bricklayer's experience and recommendations. With this I shall close. The future depends on you.

We must understand that the Nature-made and Anthropos-made systems must merge into one. The way to do it is to marry them happily together so that they can live forever without disputes and separation. To achieve this goal we must do the following:

- Understand Nature through geography, ecology, etc.
- Understand human settlements through their own science, that is, ekistics.
- Analyze the whole region into which the human settlements we are studying will grow in order to understand the values of those parts of Nature that have to be saved.
- Evaluate these parts in terms of the five Naturarea zones and in terms of the two Cultivarea zones. Assign them the degree to which they must be saved (from 100 to 0).
- Analyze the five Anthroparea and Industrarea zones which will be taken over by humans and changed basically. Calculate the total surface of each such zone and its probable locations.
- Evaluate these zones and their probable locations (from 0 to 100).
- Now that we have delimited the two systems and evaluated them, we face the most difficult task: to merge them together.

If we can follow this road properly, in several generations the global city or Ecumenopolis will be married with the global garden or Ecumenokepos.