

Success of the City in the 21st Century: Some thoughts arising from presentations

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Dr Fookes is an Associate Professor in the Planning Department, University of Auckland, New Zealand. He has worked variously through the past 36 years as a geographer-planner, academic, environmental impact assessor, policy analyst, and professional planner. A defining moment in his career path was the two years spent as a student with C.A. Doxiadis at the Athens Center of Ekistics in Greece. As a consequence he has carried through the principles and practices developed in Athens into his professional life. Dr Fookes is leading research and development on Ekistics in Education, and he is currently Vice-President of the World Society for Ekistics (WSE). The text that follows is a slightly edited and revised version of some of the thoughts he presented at the WSE Symposium "Defining Success of the City in the 21st Century," Berlin, 24-28 October, 2001.

The systematic structure by Ekistic Element used in the program of the Symposium is also followed in this summary.

• **Nature:** Given today's environment of concern for the way humankind is continuing to impact adversely on Nature in the city, I am surprised there were so few offerings under this element. I think we need to think seriously about the reasons for this because they may impact on our membership and the scope of our thinking. Are we clear enough about what an ekistic contribution to the "Nature in the City" debate could be? Do we think sufficiently about the contribution research into ekistic theory and practice could make to extending our reach in this element?

• **Anthropos:** The discussions we have had provide an important recognition of the spirit of the individual in city life. This has been reinforced by the fall-out from the September 11, 2001 attack on Manhattan (New York), the Pentagon (Washington, DC), and the plane crash in Pennsylvania. Where we have connected with this tragedy it has been through thoughtful challenge to the assumptions of planners and politicians concerning city building. The TV has been full of images of community in action – the interactions of individuals to overcome the losses that have affected their lives and those of their family and neighbors. We have also been reminded of the ethnic diversity within our cities and the need for us to exercise tolerance to all. From these impressions we can see the need for research which has Anthropos at the center.

• **Society:** Our discussions have reminded us of the breadth of settlements – rural through to urban; micro to macro and

super-macro (the mega-city). Social sustainability has been identified as a needed focus for reference to ekistic theory and practice. Central to this is the notion of community, with more focus on micro levels and the need for our study to reflect people's perception of the spatial area we call "local community." Intersecting with these ideas is the principle of urban diffusion, connecting with the concepts in **Anthropos** (above) where the ebb and flow of diverse populations stimulates the achievement of a liveable city. Related to these ideas is the application of synergy – the whole is greater than the sum of its parts – and the fundamental notions within the Ekistic Principles articulated by C.A. Doxiadis.

• **Shells:** The models applied to our city building have been challenged, with a reminder to recognize traditional and cultural settlement models. We need to design with a recognition of the physical and the socio-economic contexts, while working with existing and new opportunities (as illustrated by the examples of Panama City and Berlin).

• **Networks:** The physical connections that underpin our concerns with Nature and Society are critical to the success of the city. We have been reminded that integration of networks is still an issue – and this means both integration of function and administration. There is also a need for balance between public and private interests. The future prospects for networks require us to carefully consider the electronic innovations so evident in the last decades of the 20th century. Electronics provides us with exciting possibilities but we also need to be aware of possible adverse consequences. The realization of potential needs for the scientists, technologists, and decision makers is to take care. A key area for improvement in our development of networks is our progress towards more effective energy systems to achieve sustainability.

• **Synthesis:** How do we answer the question "What is a successful sustainable city?" Suggestions that can be drawn from the presentations and discussion through the Symposium are:

- Define criteria to reflect the scope of ekistics;
- Recognize the importance of people as individuals;
- Balance the political/rational with the spiritual and cultural traditions;
- Shells to recognize human scale effects;
- Networks to respect the context of each Ekistic Unit (e.g. neighborhood and metropolis) and with energy reforms as a central initiative; and,
- Aim for the achievement of happiness/satisfaction through civilization.