THE BASIS FOR

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

/

Professor Zvonimir Jelinovic Zagreb, Yugoslavia Senior Fellow Division of International Urban Studies Center for Urban Studies Wayne State University Detroit, Michigan January, 1971 "Barbarians have built their houses separately and civilized together." In which direction are we going?

The foundation for progress in metropolitan planning, or any scale of spatial planning, should be clearly defined national policy with respect to the location of industry and population and interrelated policy concerned with railroads, highways, ports, and airports. Only on the basis of such definite national policy can regional planning be successfully performed.

Any planning process demands an interdisciplinary approach for solving problems. Such an approach is the only way that a satisfactory performance and a better understanding of all involved professions can be guaranteed.

The results of such interdisciplinary teamwork depend substantially on how seriously such work is taken, the degree to which a scientific approach is utilized, the research methods used, and the financial resources allocated to the work.

The results of such work will depend also on which profession, or professions, are playing the dominant role in the planning process. Quite naturally, each profession attempts to look at and solve problems from its own point of view. The ultimate solution and its success often depends on who is looking at the problems and from what angle. Thus, architects often focus on the aesthetics of the city; traffic engineers concentrate on the traffic network, different modes of transportation and the movement of people and goods; economists are concerned with financial matters, e.g., cost and benefits. The goals and objectives of different professions are conflicting. There are a number of conflicts in the planning process: the conflict among different professions, the conflict between theory and practice, the conflict between urban and suburban interests, the conflict between public and private modes of transport, the conflict between pedestrians and vehicles, the conflict between various modes of mass transit, and the conflict among experts who deal with these problems, especially among traffic engineers, architects and conservationists.

Each area of present planning research needs acceleration and better coordination. In the past many scientific disciplines have made research contributions. The demand for even more brilliant future contributions in both research and practical application, however, is substantial.

Efforts made in this field until now have produced only limited results and much more effort must be invested in the future to realize a new high level of planning at the city, metropolitan, regional, national, continental, and world scale. Efforts which promise the greatest returns lay in a comprehensive and complex program of research, not short-sighted in its conception, but uniform in its coordination and useful in its conclusions. To achieve these objectives, the planning of human settlements has to be the concern of every one, researcher as well as citizen. A large role may be played on an international scale and on an interdisciplinary research level by many universities, including, for example, Wayne State University.

-2-

In such research work it is important to respond to specific problems at each geographical level. There does not exist only one solution or panacea. Along with specific problems at each level we can possibly group a number of different levels classified according to similarity of situation and problems. On such a basis, we can classify cities which we want to plan into five groups according to population growth and employment, structure (e.g., employment in production, wholesale trade, retail trade, or other services.

Transportation and Metropolitan Development

"The dominant economic fact of our time is not development of production but of the transportation industry."¹

"Structural changes in economic, housing and other conditions, together with a considerable increase in motor vehicle traffic, have led to certain basic changes in traffic components and to an increase in the size of cities and their suburbs. Traffic problems can no longer be solved through the construction of roads and streets, improved organization and traffic control. Problems must be solved at their roots which means the planning and reconstruction of cities and the reorganization of their traffic. The planning of towns or of the metropolis and the planning of traffic should therefore be coordinated so as to get the best traffic solutions for all those concerned".²

-3-

^{1.} Marchall - Principles of Economy (1922).

^{2.} XXXII Congress - Union Internationale des Transports Public (UITP), Hamburg, Berlin, 29-VIII-7-IX-1957.

Some questions arise in connection with the planning of an area: (1) what do we want, or have to plan; (2) how should we plan?; (3) what are the limits of that planning; (4) do we want either physical planning or socio-economic planning only, or both of them together?

Another question arises: Shall we make plans within the strictly administrative limits of communities, states or nation, or shall we make plans without regard to those limits which very often only exist on the minds and paper of city planners?

A third group of questions arise in connection with the quality of the plan. Shall we make a strong or flexible plan? In my opinion every plan must be very flexible in the long-run. We are not really able to make a good, or the best, plan "for the simple reason that it is never going to be built".³ It is an expression of appreciation for the realities of urban development.

If we are looking from a transportation point of view, traffic is a factor which ignores administrative limits trying to provide linkages among larger areas not only on the local, state, and federal level, but also on the continental and international level too. For this reason we in the transportation and traffic field are strongly attempting to exert greater influence on the city and metropolitan planning process than we have until today. Transportation is a main component of all planning. Investments in traffic

-4-

^{3.} William R. McGrath - Transportation and Urban Development, Traffic Quarterly, October 1964, p. 491, Saugatuck, Conn.

are large and, therefore, must achieve positive results. In the long run they have to be optimal. Traffic networks are built with the long run in mind, and have to be very carefully planned so that they can accommodate new situations or new technology with flexibility. If this is not the case, such investments can be wasted. We can tolerate failure in a relatively small investment (for example in a playground) but not in a traffic network which may have a large influence on the distant future of a nation.

From a transportation point of view one cannot observe strictly separate units such as towns, cities, and metropoli, but we have to consider the system from a larger point of view. People in one area do not live isolated from people in other areas. They must settle their own local traffic needs (which may vary from 100 to 600 trips or more per year per person), but also must solve their traffic problems at the metropolitan scale. At this level the number of personal trips is smaller, but distances involved are larger. There are even longer distance trips too. The number of such trips is the least, but, of course, these distances are the greatest.

If we always try to solve transportation problems optimally at the region level only, what about coordinated solutions for the needs in other areas?

Many cities and metropolitan areas encounter problems with the planning process, but only a small number of them have comprehensive studies on that process. In many cities the planning process is a poor orphan. Almost all cities in the world have authorities or

-5-

1

enterprises responsible for water supply, health service, fire prevention, education, and labor; but only a small number of them have authorities responsible for traffic and transportation in general.

The growing economy, rapidly increasing population and associated development of large cities embracing huge areas have contributed to the traffic crisis. Paralysis has arisen because of the deficit in vital traffic apparatus and has resulted in the strangulation of life outside many cities. The situation became worse after World War II when the migration of village people into the cities and metropolitan areas rapidly increased. That which earlier was open agricultural land is disappearing from the metropolitan region, now being used for the construction of houses, industry, commerce and other uses. As a consequence, there is a further aggravation to traffic. So a situation has arisen in which space travel is now a success, while ground travel is mired in crisis.

Many proposals have been made to solve the problem. Some propose to demolish existing cities and to construct new ones which will be more suitable to the modern traffic requirements. Others propose that we should return to the way of living of the 19th century. A third suggestion is the prohibition of the use of motor vehicles in cities or, at least, a reduction in their number. The fourth group consider that fast underground transit would solve all problems, while still a fifth group considers that architectural planning is the ultimate solution. But these suggestions have met vehement opposition in some U.S. cities by car-owners, who comprise

-6-

the majority of the nation. They are sharply against the European cult of planning and call it the "hysteria of mass transit".⁴

Many of these proposals arose because of a fear of changes in the physical composition of cities with the aim of adjusting to 20th Century life and traffic requirements. If cities refuse to adjust themselves to traffic's requirements and to the modern way of living, they face further failure and economic death. Traffic is a key to cities being centers of culture, finance, commerce and business. So, "if there exists any opportunity to live in peace with motor vehicles, it should be taken" (Collins Buchanan).

Many of the traffic crises arose either because the cities do not have traffic plans at all, or if they do have plans they are not satisfactory. Mistakes have been made in the establishment of land use in the planning of traffic systems, and in the performance of the city's general and transport plans. There is a lack of knowledge that the traffic needs must be in harmony with the wishes of car owners. Often an attempt has not been made to develop the kind of city people desired. This requires the determination of the role of the city and the services which it must provide for the people and economy in order to justify its existence.

The essential condition for solving the present and future traffic problems is the elaboration of a long-term traffic plan for a period of 25-30 years. Such a long-term plan should embrace the

-7-

^{4.} Charles M. Noble, "Transportation - The Challenge of the Century", Traffic Engineering, October, 1962, p. 2.

whole area of the region, not only one city. A general traffic plan must be based on a very exact conception about traffic. Only such a plan can be a guarantee against improper investments, which would inevitably occur if the sub-optimal solutions were pursued. Cities should, as soon as possible, acquire the necessary areas for future roads and traffic facilities. The practice of Yugoslavia's cities is interesting in this regard. There the city determines the domain within which all lands are nationalized and defines its own policy with respect to land use.

Plan elaboration is the job of experts, not of politicians, and requires the wisdom of a statesman. There is no place for amateurs or prophets of doom.

The transportation planner has achieved a high level of sophistication in determining needs and travel desires, and in transplanting them into a plan concept. The concept, however, becomes most difficult to translate into reality.

There are many potent forces working to shape the city of the future. Studies of economic, technological, and social changes plus studies of topography, ecology and demography might provide some kind of guidance to the future of the city.

There are six major programs shaping the city of the future. All are at different stages of conception, progress and integration. Each has its own peculiar benefits and determining factors on the city. These programs are the following:

1) The highway improvement program;

2) Improvement programs for modes of transportation;

-8-

1

3) Mass transit improvement program;

4) Urban renewal;

5) Land development; and,

6) Government expansion or reconstruction.

A so-called theory of optimalization can help cities to become better places in which to live, work and play.

A starting point should be the principle that traffic and buildings are not two separate entities but two sides of the same problem. The buildings induce traffic and represent origins and destinations of traffic movement. If there are no buildings, there is no traffic. Moreover, if there is no traffic there is little demand for buildings. The development of a special network of "distributer roads" which would serve only for traffic and "areas free from traffic" can help to solve the problem.

Traffic and transportation problems in the cities are complex indeed. In small limited areas, systems of different modes of transport interlace, supplement and conflict. The largest and the most difficult problems of railways exist in large railway stations; the largest and most difficult problems for sea and river shipping exist in large ports and harbors; those of air transportation are in large airports; those of road traffic are on city streets and highways; and those problems of communications exist in large communication centers. Railway stations, harbors and ports, streets and city highways, airports and helioports are all located in cities or in their surroundings. Each of them, individually and collectively, demand space and a large amount of money must be invested into a

-9-

city's organization. From my rough calculation, traffic and transportation problems in large cities equal about 70% of the total traffic and transportation problems of all modes of transportation in any country.

As functions of the city have been changing, so too have the functions of transportation. In the past, cities were places where people only lived. Since the industrial revolution, however, cities have become places where people both live and work. During this ' century some cities have started to become places for work only, with suburbs for living. Here again, transportation has played a main role in this phenomenon.