

**PLANNING AND/OR FORECASTING**  
**FATE AND FORTUNE OF CITIES OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

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In this paper seven problems, related to the fate and fortune of cities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be dealt with. Positive and negative expectations, striving with each other will briefly represent subsequent content of the following chapters.

**1. What can be planned, what can be forecasted**

The term: planning could really be considered as a “truism” for most practitioners of the field whereas and wherever they act within the urban and/or regional realm with their ordinary attitudes: Let us make things better, the current situation we confront or encounter, has to be corrected. And also, let us create a future vision, finding the means, the techniques, which are necessary to realise our “fictions” and imaginations, after all, and our plans. The idea of planning substantially could be identified (and simplified) with the banal “slogan”: desire for change wish for correction. Psychological analyses and evaluations of the mental nature of planners, being active in the huge realm of urbanism, somehow in economic, social and political domains too, prove that genuine demands exist in the top of their value hierarchies for amendments, for bettering actual situations.

As against this position we often observe that unexpected changes mostly bother researchers, as they generally give priority to “objective” and quantifiable descriptions, neglecting – as they often explain – “wishful thinking” properties of many of the planners.

I am afraid, all these are clichés, nevertheless if we realise that the relatively low level of outcomes and consequences of plans, in particular in greater spatial dimensions, mainly in cities and regions of the developing and former Socialist

Countries, we have to admit that as planners, what we are also interested in, is the complementary field of forecasting, our curiosity to know what really will happen. Thousands and thousands of city plans (and regional plans) have been made all over the world. Instead of “old fashioned” master plans we have now more flexible and dynamic “structure plans”, “master processes”, etc. with alternative strategies, even tactics to implement our planning ideas. Although all these are relatively recent events in the long history of planning paradigms, the rather interesting conversion from “planning” to “forecasting”, closely connected with “future research” techniques, could be considered as significant. This phenomenon symbolizes perhaps our unpretentiousness the lack of omnipotence, the fact, we humbly have to accept, discovering indeed our limitations regarding the manifold future potentialities.

There is one field: meteorology where we constantly use the term of forecasting. Though it looks today funny and strange “to plan”, i.e. interfering artificially within our micro- or mesoclimatic conditions, influencing so far untouched components of nature with new sophisticated technologies, these ventures cannot be regarded as illusory or abstract only, in the second half of the 21<sup>st</sup> or in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. On the other hand, as stated before, demands for forecasting appear more and more in urbanism and regionalism. We plan, but what really will happen, what are the probabilities of our plans to be implemented, how unexpected factors should be incorporated or rejected within our ever growing curiosity in uncovering the destiny of both planned and un-planned settings of our cities, regions and countries: these are the true challenges.

## **2. Roles and rules within man’s environmental strata**

Within the scope of ordinary approaches to architectural-urban-regional phenomena we usually restrict to their fields themselves, in order to find relevant means to systemize their present and/or future structures, properties and qualities. Let me turn this time to less conventional interpretations and emphasize “vertical” interdependencies among layers where man contacts the outer world, all the more, as I consider these connections, rather neglected in our times, could play important roles in the forthcoming decades. Man’s healthy location within his micro, meso and macro environment highly depends both on his knowledge and his feelings about them. “Habitability”, as *Benton MacKaye* (1928) explained with this neology more than 70 years ago, is closely connected with all the layers which border and surround us.

The *first* layer is our skin, topic essentially of dermatology, however, as all psychologists are well aware, diseases, disorders of the skin are generally correlated with mental problems, too. First discoveries of illnesses of

psychosomatic character like asthma and the various forms of allergies had proved that human skin definitely explains and symbolizes correct or incorrect relations not only towards our natural-physical, but also towards our social-psychological environments.

The *second* layer is garment, as “artificial” skin of human beings in order to help the naked animal to balance changes of the climate (cold weather, storms, rain, snow, etc.) and protection from beasts for survival. It could be added that through millennia of human evolution the functional sterility of garment for defense and comfort had “spreaded”, and developed “fashion” with all its artistic and businesslike orientations.

Constituents of the *third* layer: architecture, as strata both for protection and communication are turning to be definitely detached from the human body. Architecture represents the first layer in the series where disconnected static buildings (houses) appear, assuring peace and rest for families and their single members or act as workplaces on they one hand, and are bases for commuting with the outer world on the other.

The architectural layer is followed then by the urban one with its rather well known professional characteristics and further on by the regional, national, continental, and global strata with their specific properties. Main features of these subsequent layers are cardinally the same from the human viewpoint. One special aspect should be mentioned, however, in respect of the urban layer. Towns and cities are the first linguistic terms within the series where only one word is used for both the inhabitants and their physical-natural surroundings, as against garments and buildings (houses) where man and his “encircling” objects differ when naming them. In my opinion this quality of human settlements (and of the further strata), whether imagined abstractly or called concretely, symbolizes their “super-human” character, as both their space and time dimensions cannot be physically looked over. Meanwhile duration of architectural produces holds on a few generations only, terms of past and future of the urban phenomena and those of greater territorial units coagulate into a coherent infinite mix in the minds of average citizens.

I suppose that altering rhythms and peculiar characteristics of quantifiable and non quantifiable components of all these strata mentioned above, their interrelations – too many of them little investigated so far and to be uncovered in the next future – will play greater parts within the ever expanding profession of planning.

### 3. Our environment and/or environments

“Environmentalism” is fashionable in our days. Both scientists and politicians and also man in the street, eagerly strive to overcome the manifold problems which emerge by the man transformed, unfortunately, in many parts of the world heavily polluted and intoxicated cities and regions.

We easily recognise and measure, are able to quantify more precisely damages, which come from air pollution, noise, allergy creating weeds, and others, arising even globally, from overall warming or from the ever-spreading ozone hole.

Of course we have to welcome all efforts in order to avoid environmental threats and human sufferings related to them. As planners, however, we definitely have to persuade and convince the many specialists of the environments (chemists, physicists, engineers, etc.) that in spite of the differing backgrounds, for better results, professional language barriers have to be surpassed, and instead of “double” or “triple” monologues of the various specialists, veritable dialogues are needed. Since planners with all their activities intend to shape and transform our earth, locally, regionally and globally, since they are responsible for the “built” environment indeed, cooperation and conversation without less prejudices are requested between the two huge group of experts. I am hoping that my desire is on the way to be fulfilled in the next decades, as what we are surrounded with, is a unitary environment, and all its detachments are not but artificial: only holistic endeavours could bring satisfactory solutions in researching, planning or designing, on the whole in creating and “re”-creating all the smaller and bigger interconnected entities, we are commissioned or assigned.

*Walter Gropius* (1969) the famous Bauhaus architect urged planners more than fifty years ago to apply psychosomatic analogies in the field of urban planning. His idea submerged for many years; “somatic”, i.e. material-physical-economic components have dominated and still dominate to a great extent the realm of planning. Only minor share of the world population can meet their fundamental needs, requirements and wants and even worth, genuine interests, represented partly by psychological components, are considerably neglected, besides the overwhelming majority of poor countries, in the highly developed Western ones too.

#### **4. Old/new orientation tendencies after the second millennium**

The Soviet type of Communism has collapsed, its vain political, economic as well as social efforts to create a lasting and efficacious system, has frustrated not only politicians of those countries who opposed Communism, but, as it has been proved by the many revolts, overwhelming majority of the former, so called Socialist countries definitely got fed up by “centralized” blessings of the rulers of the Party. Since 1989 Soviet Communism does not exist any more in its original form and does not threaten any more the world. China, however, with its cultural heritage, tremendous resources, considering both its assiduous and industrious population and its richness of minerals and other goods, though its biased communist past and present, maybe by softening its rigorous dogmas and prescriptions, will play, a well-defined role in all global “happenings”. As China’s future role cannot be based on its present political system only. Chinese spiritual tradition most probably will be amalgamated with the this time dominating USA and West-European patterns of economy and hopefully will be able to create new alloys, more relevant to human demands.

Hopefully Buddhist compassion, Taoist spiritual tolerance, oriental wisdom, alive in all Far-Eastern countries could mitigate sterile market orientation, our current battles for benefit. As a minor example: Feng-Shui could gain ground in the Western Hemisphere hinting at links between genuine insights of the East and Western technology and science.

Surpassing East-West complementarities let me mention briefly some dichotomies, which practically appear in the urban-regional realms anywhere in the world. To be found in various forms and dimensions I refer to these (maybe “classical”) ones this time: democracy vs. autocracy, public vs. private, laymen vs. experts (professional planners), cooperation vs. competition, ecology vs. economy, values vs. interests and last but not least legislation vs. anarchy. Let me comment with a few words in greater detail the last dichotomy only.

As one the decisive subjects of civic affairs, the conflict between legislation and anarchy could be considered. Instead of anarchy I could use the milder contradictory term: “non-regulation”, or a much rougher one as “corruption” or even the slogan “cleptocracy”. Apart of these extremes, I feel, whichever opposite we choose, this dichotomy is alive anywhere. Western Democracies and other developed countries have good experiences in urban and regional legislation, from real estate topics until prescriptions and codifications of various aspects of the planning field. As against these countries legislation in the 3rd world is full of hiatuses. Political and municipal leaders, planners and developers easily manipulate within the inadequacies.

Considering all possible dichotomies concerning the urban field, whether mentioned or not, neither pole of them could be dismissed entirely, only joint efforts of all participants in the “game”, of the honourable “players” could diminish troubles and inconveniences, which emerge by exaggerations of this or that extreme.

## 5. The new age of information

The last decades of the twentieth century could be characterized by the remarkable advance of information and communication technologies. This revolutionary success influences many issues of the planning realm both theoretically and practically. We encounter challenges this time which could be compared with those of the late 15th century when Gutenberg uncovered and initiated means and techniques of typography. In his famous and renowned book: “The Gutenberg Galaxy” *Marshall McLuhan* (1962) adds to the blessings of this discovery unexpected curses, too. As the proverb points out: “What is made about on the rounds is lost on the swings”... and with the immense chance to enlarge possibilities for spreading human knowledge, we have lost to a great extent directness of our experiences, intimacy of our contacts. Printed books, papers and newspapers belong to our everyday life, nevertheless lately, as many observers and critics draw the attention to the current situation, only minor share of people, in particular that of the youth is interested in printed matters. Computerization irresistibly comes through, permeates and influences nearly all segments of human life. Of course we enjoy all positive and creative impulses in the ever growing, impressive findings of the new “galaxies” of “Internet” and “Virtual Reality” and must necessarily draw the relevant conclusions within the enlarged field of both planning and forecasting, certainly. We have to confront, however, the aftermaths, ambiguous results of these revolutionary trends, too. As compelling effects of the new challenges, three possible consequences should be stressed this time.

The *first* one could be put down as modern “sporadism”, considering most probably, increase of scattered settlements. It seems obvious if computerized, prompt contacts will be (in many places are already) created between boss and employee, among all members of staffs of any enterprise, sooner or later nationwide and worldwide indeed, the crucial problem of commuting, involving millions of people will lose its today significance. Consequences – not only in the urban and regional ones but also in all “layers” –, mentioned before, are enormous, albeit hardly conceivable.

The *second* consequence is closely connected with the first. If scattering will increase, intensity and directions of traffic systems have to be gradually

reviewed and re-arranged. In this respect let me cite the story of the years of 1870-1880 when European metropolises have met the, that time acute challenge: how to solve circulation of coaches and horse-drawn trains in downtowns, how to manage commuting of the many horses from the suburbs, and hesitated to construct or not, giant stables in the centres. And simultaneously, in the same years Benz in Germany worked out the manufacturing process of the petrol-engine. Just a few years later, thousand of T models of Henry Ford appeared in the streets of US cities too, and horses for traffic use definitely disappeared in all urbanised areas of the world. We are in the focus of similar dramatic changes and we only can hint at, but hardly foresee effects to be expected in a given space and time.

The *third* idea, worth to mention, refers to some dangers, which may arise from the rapid growth of users of “Virtual Reality” instruments, both with their modifiable sexual and military programmes. Socio-psychological impacts of these devices could result in unexpected extension of drug abuse, increase of hooliganism and gangsterism on the one hand and necessarily growing defense preparations, indicated by these potentialities, suggesting several new duties both for planners and (local) governments.

## **6. Constructive or (de)constructive tendencies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

After Bauhaus and the modernist period post-modernism dominated, recently deconstructive tendencies rule the architectural domain. These “fashions”, embracing relatively shorter time span than historical styles like gothic or baroque, their duration, however, generally holds on much longer than e.g. fashions of women’s dressing, to be included to the second layer: “garment”, mentioned before within the series of environmental strata. The reason to refer to the differing time spans is, in my opinion that it would be worthwhile to observe and analyse rhythms of changes, properties of periodicities of the single layers, investigating causes and motives vice-versa among them. All the more, as “vertical” interconnections in the future have to play much more important part in shaping effectively both architectural surroundings and the larger urban-regional environment(s).

Although discussion about prevailing tendencies and comparisons will not be tackled this time, few notions about essential significance of truly enduring symbols should be touched upon. Symbol-language was likely the first pre-babelian human communication, which must have been universal, though mankind has forgot the essential sense of symbols. A few ones only, e.g. smiling and screaming, gestures of the limbs, uttering sympathy or antipathy towards fellow men, remained general. *Erich Fromm* (1957) even typified symbols,

distinguishing conventional, accidental and universal ones. Unfortunately greater part of them submerged below the consciousness of the common man, remaining mainly unreflected. Consequently – following Fromm’s suggestion, (1957) – in order to lose our intellectual spasms and the same time enhancing our capacities for feelings, emotions and transcendence, continuous educations would be needed to “decipher” and comprehend symbolic substances of objects around us. Yet, education of this kind has very little to this time pre-dominantly Cartesian, neopositve patterns of curricula, challenging the intellect primarily. As the Swiss philosopher *Jean Gebser* (1953) explained, *a*-rational components should be aggregated to those training programmes where, recalling best traditions of oriental approaches, also symbol-language could be better “instructed”.

Just one evident and topical example. This time with their banking offices, insurance companies, huge enterprises, the highest skyscrapers represent and “symbolize” material richness. Before, spiritual symbolism was predominant, mediaeval people were pervaded by the grandeur of cathedrals which signified omnipotence of God for them on the one hand, and their disposition for humbleness towards the Creator, the Great Architect of the Universe on the other.

The godhead of today is idolized “money” with all its business, economic and technological concomitants. Since the Enlightenment for more people than ever, twentieth century could be considered, the most prosperous era in the long history of human race. I am afraid, however, that the this time flourishing epoch of modern capitalism could also collapse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and on its basis – through unexpected crises – new syntheses emerge... It might happen that not the “biggest”, or the “richest” will be the ideals or models. As regards the construction fields itself, certain tendencies already could be observed. Instead of striving higher and higher, directions turn to the opposite: let us “de”-construct *deeper* and *deeper*... Technologies are here; all the services and conveniences could be supplied, in making homes and offices, and churches too, below the surface, like the famous, most beautiful underground Lutheran church of Tempelaukko in Helsinki, besides factories of strategic importance, constructed long since in this century. Instead of pride and loftiness in competing materially with celestial powers in the height(s), humble acceptance of our earth-bound obligations and duties (the word humble derives from the Latin “humus”) could be preferred symbolically as well as concretely. And as a practical fact, it has to be stated: best defense in possible star wars is in the depth, in the “abyss”. Let me hint at the Latin language once more: The Latin word “Altus” means both high and deep (profound) simultaneously.



## 7. Ease and dis-ease of cities

Reviewing current representative approaches within the urban-regional spectrum, (e.g. the physical-geographical, the economic, the legal-administrative, the social, the ecological, the biological-medical, the aesthetic, the mental-spiritual ones and their clusters) I assume, significant shifts of accents could be expected in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Slightly changing today emphases on clusters, composed mainly by the first ones of the spectrum mentioned above, more priorities will be given to transdisciplinary “alloys”, based on approaches of the second half. Biology and medicine oriented analogies, (patterns, models) emphasizing essential vital functions of city-dwellers, regarding their physical as well as their mental health on the one hand, and also entire cities to be “treated”, analysing subtly their interdependent symptoms, will likely play greater roles in our theories and practices, on the other.

As antecedents of these tendencies it should be referred that collecting and summarizing many symptoms, which allude to the disease of cities, the term “urbanities” was initiated by *Ragon* the French planner (1963) in the 1960s, marking ill-managed, ill-administrated, ill-planned urban entities with that “slogan”. And truly, neglection of various clusters of disorder, anomalies, parasite systems, as *Friedrich von Weizsäcker* (1971) explained, represent the real dangers in the forthcoming years within all spheres of urban organisms. *Eliel Saarinen* (1945) the famous Finnish-American planner, one of the initiators of holistic approaches, emphasized long ago to recognize and analyse cities as organic systems in their entirety, and not to restrict to certain preferred segments, whether they represent either sectorial (economic, ecological, administrative, technological) or even territorial ones. In the long run, I assume, pondering and based on both planning conditions and uncertainties of the forecasts, more adequate strategies would be required. Surpassing and/or complementing predominantly economy oriented managerial attitudes; new types of composite city-“intemists” also would be welcomed. Making use of far extending analogies of the well-known *Bálint* groups, where investigating each patient’s peculiar situation psychologists and medical doctors cooperate for curing, whole cities could be “handled” and “cured”, contributing to healthier circumstances in the unitary bodies of cities and regions too, based on interconnections of their physical-natural and mental-spiritual constituents.

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