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Urban Design and Planning for Towns and Communities

Urbanistyka i planowanie urbanistyczne w miastach i w gminach

Charles Scott jest absolwentem Uniwersytetu Minnesota. Jako architekt posiadający uprawnienia, wykonuje swój zawód w stanie Minnesota. Jest członkiem Amerykańskiego Stowarzyszenia Architektów (American Institute of Architects).

Jest zdobywcą wielu nagród w konkursach regionalnych i krajowych. Jego prace były wielokrotnie wystawiane, zarówno w kraju jak i za granicą, na ważnych przeglądach i konkursach architektonicznej w skali międzynarodowej, które zostały opublikowane w czasopismach fachowych. Ostatnia praca nosi tytuł: *Naśladownictwo i jedność poprzez różnorodność* opublikowanej w AVANT GARDE Journal of Theory and Criticism in Architecture and The Arts (Awangarda — Materiały Teoretyczne i Krytyczne w Architekturze i Sztuce, 1991), czasopisma wydawanego przez Uniwersytet Colorado. Charles Scott jest jednocześnie redaktorem naczelnym międzynarodowego kwartalnika ARCHITECTUS, który stanowi forum współpracy i międzynarodowego dialogu w dziedzinie architektury, urbanistyki i planowania przestrzennego.

Charles Scott zaprosił do współpracy pracowników Zakładu Polityki Społecznej, Gospodarczej i Przestrzennej, specjalizujących się w planowaniu przestrzennym. Od 1991 r. na łamach ARCHITECTUSa zaczęły pojawiać się ich publikacje. Prezentowana praca Jego autorstwa na łamach ANNALES jest kontynuacją nawiązanego dialogu. Porusza interesujące a zarazem pouczające dla czytelnika polskiego treści, które dotyczą uczestnictwa społeczeństwa amerykańskiego w planowaniu.

A design assistance team program, as in the state of Minnesota, is established to assist and support local towns, villages, and communities in their endeavor to improve their community and define their future.

The procedure — which is essentially a forum for ideas — gathers the ideas and concerns of a community into a vision of the future. This is accomplished by involving all segments of the community in the addressing of issues confronting their community. These efforts are energized to make the most of the physical and environmental aspects of the community.

The notion of a design assistance team, whose sole purpose is that of providing architectural, urban design, and urban planning services for towns and communities in determining and visualizing their future, contributes a flexible 'means' for further discussion opposed to an inflexible 'end' or conclusion which is often difficult to change or modify. After all, "No precise planning solutions exist for a given social order. Man's demands on his environment remain constant, whatever the system."[1]

A discussion of the concept and operation of a design assistance team requires: an overview of a few problems confronting American cities, a discussion of influencing design philosophy, and the methods of the process.

AMERICAN CITIES

American cities, with present declining economic and social standards, have in the past most often chosen to follow an objectivist view towards the building and the functioning of the city.

According to the Belgian architect an urban designer, Lucien Kroll, there are three possible implicit assumptions made by the town planner depending on her/his political attitude: objectification, centralisation, and permeability.[2]

The objectivist plan is ruled by economic considerations and is motivated by monetary profits. Often such "an attitude breeds indifference to the landscape, simply exploiting it, and modifying it purely with a view to one's own convenience. ...Without relation to anything local, he chooses ordering systems as incompatible with the landscape as with neighboring developments."[3]

[1] R. Krier: *Urban Space*, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York 1979. p. 83–84.

[2] L. Kroll: *An Architecture of Complexity*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1987, p. 7.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

The centralist approach tends to dominate the sphere of the project and transforms it according to a preconceived image.[4] The plan is then passed down to the towns. This affords little or no participation by the members of the community.

The third approach, centered "on the idea of permeability, involves seeking out and responding to the special conditions of the chosen site. In so doing it should prove possible to discover a basis for formal organisation, to relate the construction process to the immediate locality, to choose an appropriate scale and relevant dimensions. Such an approach can encompass opposites and allow contradictions, but it permits no apathetic indifference."[5]

Of these three assumptions which have in the past been utilized by the town planner in America, the objectionist economic emphasis has harmed American cities more often than it has enhanced the living conditions of its citizens. However, due to a recent tendency towards a permeability approach those towns, villages, and communities utilizing this approach are less apt to sacrifice their ideals and future needs with the adopting of short-sighted projects motivated primarily by profit margins.

Short-sighted/short-term profit pragmatic problem solving has created an imbalance in the preparation for future needs in American cities. The creation of quick-fix, quick-profit schemes with a propensity towards instant gratification has preferred resource development at the exclusion of environmental and social concerns. This has caused a depletion of resources as well as creating adverse impacts on the environment.

The presence of the ominous forecast put forth by Lewis Mumford in the early 1960's remains a relevant problem yet to be solved for cities in general. Mumford forecasted that "the prospect of a massive extension of our present mechanical-electronic facilities, without any change in social purpose, or any attempt to translate the product into higher terms of human association, remains ominous. Countries, [...] theoretically immune to the usual seductions and corruptions of contemporary capitalist enterprise, are plainly open to the same temptations — under equally virtuous disguises — to push bureaucratic command of power and centralized authority at the expense of free human association and autonomous development."[6] It is

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[6] L. Mumford: *The City in History — Its Origins, Its Transformations and Its Prospects*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York 1961, p. 567.

apparent that some of these problems are not only restricted to large cities and metropolitan areas within the United States.[7]

Another point of concern pertaining to the economic dilapidation of American cities is the problematic concept of zoning. The comparatively young age of American cities — with their origins occurring during the industrial revolution — could be traced to the propensity of early town planners to adopt zoning codes which have quickly become outdated. Early twentieth century theoretical zoning concept combined with an eagerness for profits had become a chief concern among city planning motivators.

Three classic theoretical zoning concepts for spatial organization in America are the concentric-zone concept, the sector zone concept, and the multiple-nuclei zone concept[8]

The concentric-zone (Burgess 1925) concept consists of five concentric zones. The core zone consists of the central business district followed by the zone of transition, the zone of worker's homes, the zone of better residences, and the commuters' zone.

Similar to the concentric-zone concept, the sector zone (Hoyt 1939) has a concentric form with the central business district at its core, surrounded first by a low-class residence zone which is then surrounded by a middle-class residence zone. The sector zone concept varies from the concentric form with a wholesale and light manufacturing spatial organization penetrating the city core in the form of a wedge on one side of the city with high-class residences wedged between the middle-class residences on the other side of the city.

The multi-nuclei zone (McKenzie 1933) varies from the above in that it is built around a series of nuclei (central cores) upon which other zones are layered using separate suburbs for residential, industrial and heavy manufacturing.

Unfortunately the use of rigid use-zones "in order to curtail the discretionary powers of local governments and assure each owner an equal entitlement under zoning laws" have "fostered the eventual development of vast housing tracts where only one-family houses could be built and where a car was needed even to buy a bottle of milk.[9]

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[7] U. Wich: *Polish Towns in Transition: From the Socialist Model to Self-Government*, Architectus, Cultura, St. Paul, Minnesota, Vol. 1, 1991, p. 16–17.

[8] F. Stuart Chapin, Jr.: *Urban land Use Planning*, University of Illinois Press, Chicago 1979, p. 32–37.

[9] G. Lefcoe: *Land Development in Crowded Places, The Conservation Foundation*, Washington D.C. 1974, p. 47.

However, other countries also have use-zone laws which were set up for the well being of its citizens. "As in the United States, zoning first evolved in Germany as a means of nuisance prevention. Noxious manufacturing was confined to selected zones wherever possible. But shops and offices were permitted nearly anywhere, even in prime residential zones, so long as they generated no disturbing noises or smells and were not unsightly. Because space was viewed as a scarce resource, local governments were early afforded a free hand in trying to squeeze as many diverse uses into a locale as could be accommodated comfortably."[10] Unfortunately, in contrast to this approach, past American city planners were reluctant to zone areas for diverse uses, contributing to the increased use of the automobile, which has led Mumford to state that, "under the present dispensation we have sold our urban birthright for a sorry mess of motor cars."[11]

These policies have been recently challenged by some American architects and planners whose approaches appear to agree that the existing methods of planning are contributing to the increased demise of many cities. The work of the DPZ group, Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, acknowledges this problem and attempts to provide a positive impact in their planning of towns and villages with the changing of policies "by writing new codes and regulations that towns and cities must abide by in legal implementation".[12] Their approach has set precedents which often challenge current paradigms — providing a new way of thinking in regard to urban design and planning.

While the debate over the fate of large cities continues, often towns and communities have largely been neglected. Communities outside of major metropolitan areas are confronted with similar problems, albeit on a smaller scale, which has caused population shifts from small towns to large metropolitan areas, causing a deepening fiscal and social crisis in towns, and out of control growth in land development outside of town boundaries. American towns and communities should adopt more precise land development control mechanisms as found in Europe. Land development in Germany, for example, "has a network of district planning reviewers and these administrative officers (which) will usually prevent smaller villages from enlarging

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 46–47.

[11] M u m f o r d: *The City in History — Its Origins, Its Transformations*, and Its Prospects, p. 509.

[12] B. D u n l o p: *Breaking the Code — Offering Small-Own Alternatives to Suburban Sprawl*, "Architecture", April 1990, p. 82.

their tax bases with regional shopping centers or industrial parks that would seriously jeopardize the dominant position of downtown merchants [...]"[13]

SYSTEMS PLANNING VERSUS THE ART OF BUILDING

The notion that art has a paramount position in urban design is not a new concept. Alex Krieger, when describing the need for artistic city planning, compares systematic planning and the art of building by examining past precedents. He states that "the ancient Greeks could see the complexities of life in their cities. Our own cities do not seem so transparent, offering instead veils of homogeneity which belie an underlaying complexity [...]. At some moment during this century, the 'systemic' nature of planning and the 'art' of building became understood as separate activities. From this disengagement, the enterprise of designing cities has yet to recover. The greatest sin in Modernism, its most problematic abstraction, may have been its insistence that the city was fundamentally a planned entity, to be examined as an amalgam of systems rather than as a collection of places."[14]

The confrontation between systems and art within urban design was prevalent before the twentieth century machine aesthetic. The Austrian town planner and architect of the nineteenth century, Camillo Sitte, in his endeavor to secure a place for art in urban design lamented of the failings of urban design at the end of the nineteenth century, "Today nobody is concerned with city planning as an art — only as a technical problem. When, as a result, the artistic effect in no way lives up to our expectations, we are left bewildered and helpless; nevertheless, in dealing with the next project it is again treated wholly from the technical point of view, as if it were the layout of a railroad in which artistic questions are not involved."[15]

A call for the marriage of systemic planning and artistic building in urban design would create a balance between the objective and subjective — pragmatism and idealism. This is necessary in the development of systems that will address immediate pragmatic needs as well as future idealistic concerns and needs. Addressing the problems confronting towns involves solutions of a technical, economic, and artistic nature with a reliance upon new systems and those systems already existing.

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[13] Lefcoe: *Land Development in Crowded Places*, p. 45–46.

[14] A. Krieger: *The Eye as an Instrument (Again) of Urban Design* Progressive Architecture, Feb. 1992, p. 102; Mr. Krieger is Director of the Urban Design Program at Harvard University.

[15] C. Sitte: *The Art of Building Cities*, 1945 Reproduction, Hyperion, Conn. 1991, p. 85.

THE GOAL-CONCEPT

A change from internalized governmental processes to an implementation of a grass-roots approach was created in Minnesota with the design assistance team program.[16] The program is a process that gathers the ideas of a community, with a collaborative effort involving a design assistance team, into a future vision of the community. This process is accomplished by involving all segments of the community in addressing the issues important to their community by energizing positive efforts in utilizing the physical and environmental aspects of the community. "A city is more than the sum of its inhabitants. It has the power to generate a surplus of amenity, which is one reason why people like to live in communities rather than in isolation."[17]

The Minnesota Design Team sets as its goals, to assist in the planning of improvements to the physical, environmental, and economic base of the community — to address the needs of the community[18]. This is accomplished by providing a forum in which the people of the community take an active role in the development and decision making process — to determine their own future without ideological constraints, or prescribed plans from a central authority.

Since its establishment in 1983, the Minnesota Design Team has assisted 46 towns and communities in Minnesota from 1984 through 1991. Communities which implement a design assistance program may benefit by:

1) the establishment of a plan of implementation — determined with community participation,
2) a strategy for attracting future investment in the community from local, regional, and international sources,
3) a plan for the application of assistance grants,
4) the establishment of town planning and urban design guidelines,
5) assistance to local business and private enterprises,
6) increased self-esteem of the community,
7) increased future employment for individuals.

[16] Design Team, GDT Minnesota, 1991, p. 6.
[17] G. Cullen: *Townscape, Van Nostrand Reinhold*, London 1981, p. 7.
[18] Design Team, p. 1–5.

LANGUAGE AND COOPERATION

This relatively new approach — the design assistance team — involves a language of building which is conducive to community involvement. That language is influenced by the notions of design and dwelling.

The beginnings of the notion community design assistance could be traced to the involvement of an urban design language and architectural/philosophical writings of the last part of the twentieth century. One example, is the writings and work of Christopher Alexander. Alexander's philosophy relies heavily upon the notion that to build, a town or a village, house or public building, encompasses the involvement of the community — that the strength to build comes from within the community.

Alexander introduced his theory through a series of writings describing a 'timeless way' of designing. "A building or a town will only be alive to the extent that it is governed by the timeless way. It is a process which brings order out of nothing but ourselves; it cannot be attained, but it will happen of its own accord, if we will only let it."[19] It is seen in Alexander's method that the concept of 'building' is synonymous with 'design'. His theory begins at the grassroot level with an individual act of building that utilizes "a common language, (where) millions of individual acts of building will together generate a town which is alive, and whole."[20]

The common language of building and design found in Alexander's theory can be seen to be anchored in the notion of being, dwelling, and language. "The being of anything that is resides in the word. Therefore this statement holds true: language is the house of Being."[21] Alexander begins with an element of language — which he refers to as patterns — "which defines a town or community. These patterns can never be 'designed' or 'built' in one fell swoop-but patient piecemeal growth, designed in such a way that every individual act is always helping to create or generate these larger global patterns, will, slowly and surely, over the years, make a community that has these global patterns in it."[22] This notion of building can also be seen in the building of residential housing in the Netherlands. As posited

[19] Ch. Alexander: *The Timeless Way of Building*, Oxford University Press, New York 1979, p. IX.

[20] *Ibid.*; p. XIV.

[21] M. Heidegger: *On the Way to Language*, Harper & Row Publishers, New York 1971, p. 63.

[22] Ch. Alexander: *A Pattern Language*, Oxford University Press, New York 1977, p. XIX.

by Ulla Schreiber, building form and city configurations are all based upon regional influences such as climate, culture, and topographical features.[23]

THE PROCESS

The process combines history, community culture, traditions, and the community with the expertise and experience of the visiting design professionals.

The usage of five elements of a planning[24] assists a team in assessing the concerns of the community. The team must first determine the basic parameters of the project through a series of meetings with the community. This collecting of information leads to the building of an informational systems base. Once the preliminary ground work has been accomplished the members of the team and the community move into the problem analysis and goal specification phase of the project. This leads to the fourth element of planning the advanced formulation of policies/plans of which there may be four different parts such as: a policy framework, long term plans, future development plans, and an immediate needs plan of action. These actions lead to the last element which is active problem solving – on a participatory level. Active problem solving should involve both the design team and the community in the continuation of their cooperative effort.

The process begins with the questions that members of the community must ask themselves when assessing the feasibility of applying for assistance. For instance: is the community actively considering the important issues in their future development? Is there broad-based community support? Has community discussion begun?

The Minnesota Design Team (MDT) suggested guidelines and procedure for the preliminary phase of community design assistance involves that:

1. The process requires a long term community commitment.

2. The community receives general information about the process from the MDT.

3. The community prepares an application, answers questionnaires, provides a community profile, provides photographs and maps of the community and areas to be addressed, provides a proposal for media support and publicity, and suggests preliminary schedule of visits.

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[23] U. Schreiber: *Modelle für Humanes Wohnen — Moderne Stadtarchitektur in den Niederlanden*, DuMont Buchverlag, Köln 1982, p. 20.

[24] Chapin, Jr.: *Urban Land Use Planning*, p. 77.

4. The community must determine of who is represented from the community and who is not represented, the needs to be considered, and discussions of methods to encourage participation by those not present.

5. The community gathers of all local participants such as: Mayor and city officials, City planners and engineers, City administrators and staff, Economic committee, Community organizations, Chamber of Commerce, Senior citizens, Schools representatives, Church groups, and Interested individual members of the community.

6. The community begins to meet on a regular basis for a determined period of time.[25]

The application process also includes the screening of a community. This procedure assures each applying community a visitation by a preliminary design team. A community whose application has been approved should expect that the design team visits would be scheduled for spring or autumn. These visits usually occur on a weekend so that anyone may attend.

The preliminary visit consists of a meeting between the design team leader and community representatives. The primary intent of this meeting consists of fact finding, the outlining of beginning issues to be discussed, and getting acquainted with members of the community. At this meeting the community supplies the meeting place, the base maps and summary data, and the announcement and publicity of the meeting.

The design team visits are coordinated by the community. The communities responsibilities generally encompass the following: general coordination, reception of team members, accommodations — host families, documentation and photographs, food, facility/building for meetings and presentations, equipment, transportation.

The ability of the design assistance team and of the community to work together in achieving their goal is paramount, throughout the process. Design teams, upon arrival to a town or village, may be viewed dually as a consultant and an outsider. A positive working relationship between the community and the design team is of prime importance and is the first issue to be addressed.

The different aspects of each community are what define the individual communities. Within this known realm, the design team is often considered 'Other' than the community members. Unfortunately, the reciprocal may also be possible whereas an unexperienced design team may unwittingly promote an 'us' versus 'them' approach in their involvement with the community.

[25] Design Team, p. 22–35.

This possible breach between the two interlocutors, the design team and the community, may by precipitated by a perceived notion of difference. It is, however, the notion of responsibility plus the need and desire for action that initiates a fruitful relationship between the two interlocutors. The design team as well as the community are bound together by a "responsibility towards the other."[26] The outcome of the interaction between the design team and the community is not a gift, a charity, or a decree from higher authorities, but mutual cooperation towards the pursuit — the task — that needs to be accomplished. "Work is then a relation with the Other".[27] It is this relationship through the task — the work to be accomplished — which bridges the breach of difference, allowing a relationship between the 'Same' and the 'Other', the community and the design team, to occur.

This process of working together and the reinforcing of a working relationship between the two groups involves an understanding of direct and indirect values recognized by each of the participants. These values include; basic goals of the organization, preferred means by which those goals should be attained, basic responsibilities of participants, and a set of principles which pertain to the maintenance of the identity and the integrity of the organization.[28]

The visitation by the design assistance team begins with a tour and briefing followed by a team work session. The team work session often involves charettes comprised of the design team members. The charettes are presented to the community for discussion. These charettes are commonly used in the United States and may typically involve the community as well as the design team. The DPZ group, for example, will 'intensely study each plan and research every possible aspect of a place — regional history, vernacular architectural styles, and local customs. For each project, the architects hold at least one charette lasting three to five days, involving developers, architects, planners, engineers, historians, and local residents."[29] This approach towards community involvement with the actual process of

[26] E. Levinas: *Totality and Infinity*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, Pa. 1979, p. 213. The philosopher Levinas in his discussion of exteriority stresses the responsibility of the same to the other.

[27] E. Levinas: *On the Trail of the Other*, Philosophy Today, Vol. 10 1966, p. 38.

[28] D. A. Kolb: *Organizational Psychology: Readings on Human Behavior in Organizations*, Prentice Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1984, p. 9.

[29] B. Dunlop: *Breaking the Code — Offering Small-Town Alternatives to Suburban Sprawl*, Architecture, April 1990, p. 82.

community planning and design is similar to the approach that the MDT incorporates.

The presentation and discussion of the work session leads to the implementation of community action groups which begin work on the recommendations agreed to by the design assistance team and the community. The design assistance team should continue its involvement with periodic follow--up visits. Those visits should pertain to the documentation of the process and what has been accomplished to date, the discussion of trouble areas, and the redefinition of goals and the adaption of recommendations.

The design assistance team may function as a non-profit organization. Non-profit in the sense that there is not any pecuniary gain to members directly from funding. However, members of the design team may receive a honorarium through the design assistance team program. Funding for this program may be received through numerous sources such as; governmental and international grant programs, endowments, foundations, private grants and contributions. These funds may originate from local or international sources depending upon the organization and its program.

CONCLUSION

As enterprises become computerized and adapt telecommunication systems, the need to locate an enterprise within congested, high rent, metropolitan areas diminishes. Small towns and villages are in a position to be a viable alternative to the suburban sprawl presently.

ABSTRACT

A design assistance team program, as in the state of Minnesota, is established to assist and support local towns, villages, and communities in their endeavor to improve their community and define their future.

The program is a process that gathers the ideas of a community, with a collabo.ative effort between the design assistance team and the community, into a future vision of the community. This process is accomplished by involving all segments of the community in addressing the issues important to their community by energizing positive efforts in utilizing the physical and environmental aspects of the community.

The notion of a design assistance team, whose sole purpose is that of providing architectural, urban design, and urban planning services for towns and communities in determining and visualizing their future, contributes a flexible 'means' for further discussion opposed to an inflexible 'end' or conclusion which is often difficult to change or modify.

The discussion of the concept and operation of a design assistance team includes a required; overview of a few problems confronting American cities, discussion of influencing

design philosophy, and discussion of the methods of the process occurring around metropolitan areas. Some towns and communities have already recognized this opportunity and have worked with design assistance teams in planning, designing, and working to define and shape their future.

STRESZCZENIE

Założeniem programowym doradczego zespołu usług projektowych działających w stanie Minnesota jest wsparcie inicjatyw społecznych w miastach i gminach, które nastawione są na poprawę warunków życia i działania w przyszłości.

Program ten polega na zbieraniu inicjatyw społecznych, współdziałaniu doradczego zespołu usług projektowych z ośrodkami społecznej inicjatywy w celu wypracowania przyszłej wizji rozwoju regionalnego. Program ten opiera się na zaangażowaniu wszystkich sił społecznych w rozwiązaniu problemów lokalnych oraz na wykorzystaniu zasobów środowiska i naturalnej rzeźby terenu.

Doradczy zespół usług projektowych, którego głównym celem jest oferowanie usług w zakresie urbanistyki i planowania urbanistycznego w miastach i gminach pod kątem przyszłych potrzeb, stanowi elastyczne forum dyskusyjne, w przeciwieństwie do sztywno sprecyzowanych zadań lub końcowych wniosków, które z trudnością ulegają zmianom czy modyfikacjom.

Prezentacja założeń i działania doradczego zespołu usług projektowych zawiera przegląd wybranych problemów, z jakimi borykają się miasta amerykańskie oraz przedstawia wpływ filozofii projektowania i metody wykorzystywane w procesie działania.

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