

# SUSTAINABLE URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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**MEANING as the essential element of urban quality. The role of the three main factors for the urban quality achievement: PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT and PEOPLE. Next to that, it is important to assume the identity of the local CONTEXT as the essential base for designing and shaping of form development.**

**The problems of the quality achievements in the situation of the permanent changes. In such an environment - the RENEWAL of the towns become the basic strategic orientation requiring - evaluation of the development policy instruments. On the road of changes there are PROBLEMS of a strategic nature which should be, firstly, defined and, then, solved before entering in the process of structuring and arrangement. One of these problems is NEW versus OLD. Transition to a new policy of urbanism relying, first of all, on the private investors and international funds of the local authorities - call for a NEW STRATEGY in urbanism, in the context of the sustainability of environment. The sustainability of quality and the categories of the influencing factors. The sustainability of quality as a twofold process of urban design. The quality of environment as an aesthetic phenomenon. The urban situation and environmental quality: feasibility of changes and effects; the environmental capacity as an indicator and quality determinant. The urban quality and international experience. The evaluation of our urban situation. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSION: A general review on the visions and urban quality policy and planning. Toward an evaluation of urban environmental quality: negative and positive indicators; sustainable communities: environmental ruling and urban quality planning.**

## INTRODUCTION

### Meaning of urban quality

An essential element of urban environmental quality is not something easily measured, or, completely identified, because it arises from a combination of the factors related to "feeling" of the place such as collective memory and built up environment of historic continuum, as well as, from a number of the contextual conditions and influences. In addition should be added today "inclusiveness" and "diversity" in a pluralistic society. Here, we are talking about a feeling of the place through the "identity" of the place and urban context, more in term of direct emotional relation with our built up environment, through an uncatchable element of the quality, while a more detailed talking on the phenomenon of the "identity" will be presented in the following item. It is clear, that, this relation, predominantly, includes our feelings, so that in such a context, exists an emotional "answer" among our personal (and collective) psyche and environmental form and its source.

It guides us to the identification of the first and the most important factor of the urban quality - THE MEANING of it. The element of the meaning, within our surroundings, is essential one for our psyche and well-being.

An insignificant environment is the right antithesis to what we need and what we are expecting of an urban environment to be. Without the meaning we get lost, while the life is empty. For, the absence of coherence, lack of clarity, intention or structure (illegibility), or the absence of evidence of the source and way of growth (organic or formally designed) - all these aspects are manifestations of an insignificant environment which produce a negative reaction to people. Hence the full meaning of the environmental quality of our towns, is the essence of urban quality too. But how to achieve it?

First, we can draw out some useful lessons from history in the terms of circumstances and solutions. After all, the urban changes and growth problems and their relevant physical-designing components, should be put down in

the same basic assignment of considerations such as: economic, social and cultural imperatives, plus administrative, locational historic and technological attributes.

Secondly, taking into account the above mentioned considerations, we can examine the role of the three main "arenas" for the achievement and implementation of the urban quality such as: PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT and PEOPLE. Within these aspects there are the segments of policy, planning control and urban design.

Underlining these elements we are pointing out on twofold factors (very often in contradiction) making, from one hand, MAN'S POWER, and, on the other hand, DECISIVENESS of economic power.

These factors are, naturally, reflected permeating of public and private sectors, what is more and more the reflection of the pluralistic society we are gravitating to (or it should be so).

Today, our best hope to achieve an urban quality is the useful use of URBAN DESIGN, as

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far as possible, related to the concept of a mixed building, enabling more possibilities for an imaginative but realistic approach to a development necessary for the creation of the true urban quality.

It is excessively to simplify seeing on an urban design as something more than a pragmatic activity, aiming to solve problems, because the emotional aspects typical for the top quality environment - calls for something more fundamental. To come to the heart of the matter, we need, and we expect urban quality from, it depends on the perspective of the MEANING incarnation. In today's market oriented development, more and more is asked to accept economic arguments and imperatives, but, of course, not unlimited. Certainly is, to tell the truth, that the "quality" of an environment can't be changed unless the restrictive and outdated aspects of the planning process are improved. The new approaches in land use policy, should replace the existing planning procedure. It is an imperative of conceive that the planning must operate on a qualitatively, different way in the coming future. For example, through a new organizational procedure and policy, incorporating views of people plus a larger cooperation among public and private sectors.

### **Philosophy of urban context**

In every time, throughout history, a form of the positive planning has been axiomatic for a successful achievement of urban quality, be that through the local rules such as types of mixed land use allowed in a particular locality, or, through the stimulus of some specific forms of buildings, naturally, related to the spectrum of local materials, or, by controlling of built up and height of buildings. Next to that, not less important, is to become conscious of the visual art design creation, where the buildings are composed within milieu in such a way, so that they make a relationship with each other, as well as, with the streets and spaces complementary to them, what, as a whole, fall into the field of the urban design.

In all such situations, where an urban quality is achieved - a common and indispensable factor has to, in a way, be present: acceptable identity of the local urban context (what usually we call "feeling of place") as an essential base for

designing and shaping of development forms. This can be achieved in one of the two following ways:

- by organic adding of buildings in a way of filling out or increasing it in order to change their image "by sort" and by degree, or
- by full replacement of the outdated and inadequate buildings or planning solutions in a creative and imaginative, as well as, compatible way.

Consideration of the local urban context must be the essential first step of ability to adapt urban development to the situation. All other, in the term of urban quality will come from that.

The "answer" on "urban context" will be, mainly, in the terms of harmony with the existing forms of buildings or ensemble, without relating to the historic styles. Alternatively, the circumstances may, actually, give right too the contrastive elements than harmony (as Pompidou center in Paris). In some cases, where the existing context is inadequate, to the authentic needs - the new dimension or "key" must be set through a new development, in order to achieve a successful future urban "image".

In some way, there are opportunities for the innovation through the richness and diversity of the urban entity inheritance, while in some way the justification for total changes will evolve from the absence of any valuable characteristics within the urban milieu. But there is always a question of the identity of place, in any extent that it exist, in the terms of span usage and their physical expression which should "set up, milieu". Fortunately, it should guide and inform investors, urban designers or planners to such a solution of the design which is more compatible than imposed on the valuable inheritance.

As we have, already, seen, there are a lot of examples of successful application of this basic principle. Next to some exceptions, the urban places have not been created in one original moment, but, they began by the development process.

Historic evolution first of all, represents a process the identity of place arised through. That evolution includes, also, today's moment, so that, an appraisal must, as well as, encircle all various physical results (past and existing)

relating to efficient work, uncertainly of purpose, exaggerated ambition, as well as, manifestation of farsightedness, opportunity of location and land use, sensitivity and feeling of consistency, balance, moderation and proportion - unusual qualities in these days of maximum developed opportunities at the expense of the urban character cohesion.

So, the urban context we have inherited through the process of historic evolution is almost an incomplete "decorated table" showing both pressure and challenge to those we are talking about. From the contextual conditions and influences it can be seen that a number of examples fit into our "philosophy of context". In essence, the several factors are common: social needs which accelerated and influenced the settlements and their gradual evolution, then, physical nature of the soil, as well as, the new and changeable economic circumstances). Out of these, only the physical setting up of settlements has its constant steadiness, although this is, also a subject of opportunity and limitation as the original settlement is developing towards outside, creating new land requirements, and so, the new models of living and activities.

It is clear, the extent of changes which could happen without "flooding" of urban context, as well as, without losing, of character, will depend not only of the extent and type of the proposed development, but also from the scale and nature of the urban context, the proposed development was intended to. Large towns are, almost always, "more president" so that they will easier bear development changes than smaller towns. These smaller towns more and more are suffering from a "paradox of needs", from one hand, to preserve an adequate degree of economic stability in order to avoid some kind of stagnation, while, on the other hand, they require a great attention during the implementation of the changes growth, actually, they require a protection against some radical changes.

The most partitions, often, the most harmful influence on an urban context is that of traffic, and its requirements in the terms of moving, accesses and lodging needs. The expansion of the use of private cars (what is against public transport) and the extension of the main road

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network, have a direct implication to place of this traffic wave into the road space, with additional effects on a pollution, what altogether, tells, that the growth of traffic must be priority in the regulation and safe guiding of an urban context.

The modern building forms are less desirable within an established/inherited urban context, although, of course, they are more favorable for presenting of some commercial contents than are the traditional architectural forms and method of building.

"Principle of context" can be applied on any kind of appraisal of the development disregarding the proposed size and scale of an urban context. Finally the decisive aspect will be that of quality - for example, proposed quality in relation to quality of the urban context.

#### **PROBLEMS OF QUALITY ACHIEVEMENT IN THE SITUATION OF THE PERMANENT CHANGES**

No doubt that the urban environment of many towns, particularly those in the transition, find them self in a state of changes. In such a milieu the renewal of towns became the essential strategic orientation requiring reexamination of instruments and development policy which should enable the realization of that strategy. On the road of changes, a number of PROBLEMS appear which, first, should be defined and then solved, before entering into the process of shaping.

#### **New versus OLD**

In any time, there existed a natural tendency of people to tie strongly with the architectural forms of the past, on the other hand, to have a kind of hostility to all aspects opposite to that opinion. This is understandable and sometimes justified, particularly, when the problem of urbanism consists in adding or inserting of a new building into the territory assumed by the special cohesion's scale and quality, where some "strange" form of the design, could disturb totality of a territory.

In such cases, it would be normal to express these existing characteristics of the urban context, into a new work or structure in a very direct way. In the cases of the territories intended for conservation, where the urban

context is fully cohesive, by the scale or style, or it is a mixture of the distinguished quality - the new buildings can repeat existing styles, or "what is preferable) should be designed sensitively in order to fit into the individual character of the buildings in a satisfactory way. The essence is to keep a balance by which the existing general character is not prejudiced, but, where these exist a space for maneuver as are the new forms of urbanism. Before issuing a recipe, too specific for every case, in the detailed terms of urbanism - the best approach for a good design is, probably, that one expressed through three principles according to the modern terminology: CONVENIENT TO CONTEXT, CLARITY OF FORM IN RELATION TO FUNCTION, and GENERAL RELY ON OUR FEELING OF BEAUTY.

But, there are situations when the old structures do not satisfy present requirements. Everybody knows today, that this unparallel growth of population, connected with the traffic chaotic situation, within the core of towns - force us to make RADICAL CHANGES.

#### **Problems of town's structure change and environmental quality**

If a town, is aiming to keep its existence, today, then such a town must change its structure, this time, by the pressure of the determined social and technical conditions, as it was earlier made by the methods of guiding a war.

But, in the man's nature parallelly, exist, the tendency towards changes and wish towards a permanence. Hence, come resistances against changes, which do not come only due to the private interests. This opposition should be found, also, in the emotional causes. It can be seen from the various proposals aiming to free towns from any rigidity, although, the common tendency is the kind of an organic planning (5).

Attention is given to the differences in the proposed concepts. So, Giedion in his review on the proposals of decentralization (who, instead of today's concentration of population into the giant agglomerations, conceive towns life as another extreme: by small settlements consisting of half to one hectar) underlines:

"Such a decentralization would change all our life, converting the inhabitants of towns into the village inhabitants, living at a

mechanized farm, what would bring to the balance between, rural and industrial work. It would be, absolutely, and conscious destruction of town, as well as, in a certain way, it would undermine some social differences our civilization exist at" (6).

Remarks on the concept of the total decentralization could be given, also from the aspect of the relation MAN-SPACE. So, a small settlement of one hectar, where the basic aim is production, affirms only the private existential man's space, where such a space does not mean part of a larger whole, by which man does not groups into a social context, so that, in such a case, he does not become a part of his "socius". For, an alive and incorporated physical environment, capable to provoke a certain picture, play, also a very significant social role. That could be achieved only by the town in full sense of the word, were the companionship is being developed, parallel with the development of the existential space. That relation SHULC described in this way: "So, the internal urban structure is the resultant of complex of the individual and social functions which are "happening". Behind these functions, stand up certain needs, which a small settlement - neither village nor town, would not satisfy, by its size, conditioning a certain level and kind of function. The example of the neighborhood units that confirms in the best way.

On the other hand, stand those who do not oppose that the existing state of metropolis is inhuman but they think that the town, as an entity, should be transformed. A kind of solution they see in the change of the town's structure, next to all respectation of the contact with nature (8). In this view some historic experiences could be useful for orientation. While, in Paris of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have been mixed reciprocally, the functions of the traffic and housing, that far, simultaneously, the London's squares are an example that MAN for his existence need peace and greenery.

But, times have been changed. Both the greenery and peace, in an urban environment, are today more necessary than ever. How to achieve such a need in a way that the town keep its identity, as well as, that the town is not eliminated, because of accumulated difficulties? The concept of the high-rise buildings,

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free distributed in greenery, has not had produced expected results. It can be seen by that as the contemporary town became an amorphous environment. The character of the street is lost and converted into a "town's line of communications" without its architectural face. Next to that - it confirms, that the natural milieu will never be sufficient in order to concretize an urban environment satisfying man, who in it, not only use to work and reside, but also emotionally experience it.

It means, that, the problem of the structure change in towns is not so easy to solve. In this case, also, it is useful to remember the historic evolution of the town's development. In the beginning, the knowledge about town was related to the State, then, we have seen the occurrence of "POLIS" as the association of free citizens, in whose center the AGORA has been formed as a democratic way of opinion. ROME gave the name for the first world's empire, giving its contribution to further wealth of the towns structure.

The development of productive relations in the Middle Ages in the first place launched the handicrafts by which the communal authority of the free towns was strengthened, imposing itself on the surrounding environment so that, the notion of town got much larger frameworks.

The Renaissance in towns, by its individual characteristics, left high cultural achievements. But, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century we already, noticed the political deprives of towns. In his review of this problem GIEDION says: "If we are looking for the roots of the today's difficulties, it can be found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century - Already, in that time, due to the production for the international market is arised the original, economically defined concept of town. Already in that time began chaos, although, not in today's dimensions (9).

If in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the unlimited production became an aim itself - it is today the unlimited power of the technological era, deepening much more the social disorder, and, at the same time, increasing the inequality, as a result of the social and economic conditions. But, it brought to towns another trouble: the shortage of measures or criterions, as well as, the clash between emotions (dropping, back) and the improvement of the technology. So,

each man's action, is unconsciously formed under the influence of the certain emotional background, for "people can't plan a society without projecting themselves", and that enters deeply into the present state of culture (10).

The proposals for the transformation of the town should be seen, in that light,; how much they are taking into account the satisfaction of cultural needs of the contemporary man, beside the demographic and technical force.

Certainly, this is moment of the transition from the two-dimensional urban planning into the three - dimensional one - supposing the building in layers, where the dynamics of the traffic and the dynamics of changes are incorporated into one whole, as natural conditions, in a positive sense of shaping (11).

If a change is the creative element, then, probably, the next way to the solution of problems brought by the industrialization process, would be: that each change, as a result of need, can be included into the project, under the condition to leave untouched that what was, built earlier. That is a kind of anti-thesis of the "New Vavilon" concept, telling that in any case, the "place", will be changed in the meantime and become something else.

These are problems tormenting "developed". The town's of the under developed world, came into the phase of the transition. The ideas that the structured reorganization of towns could be implemented within the conditions of the "directive" economy on the account of, exclusively, State funds, are absolute, as it became clear, that it is inefficient way in the new conditions of the market economy.

#### **AN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR URBANISM**

The transition to a new policy of urbanism relying, first of all, on the private investors and internal towns funds, next to certain State support - call for the establishment of a new strategy of urbanism, essentially different in relation to the earlier one.

That strategy should rely on the law regulation, including, also, some under law ordinances formulated by the town according to its specific condition (norms etc.).

The new strategy should have an unique approach in similar urban situations. From the aspect of the urban design, at MEGA level, it is necessary to define a position to the market extension of the town area, generally, as well as, particularly, when the subject is a building land. This is because, at one side, it leads to a non proportional growth of towns, and on the other swallowing of the surrounding settlements.

Earlier, the conception were created by the deductive approach, without relying on the contextual environmental conditions, so that, the plans were unrealistic. Today, it is an imperative, that, in the formulating for a new strategy we start from below", that is inductively, relying on the influencing factors and resources of a concrete environment. All these things, lead to the need to modernize the urban methodology, taking into account the restorable resources, leading to a SUSTAINABLE development of towns.

It is understandable, that a general plan, in the contemporary condition presumes that we think about a PROCESS, per phases, and not about a forecasted fixed picture. In relation with the private sector, the local authority and town planning institutes, still have resources on their own disposal, to create, control and partially design a model of the main development. In that context, it should be taken into account, the public opinion, as well as, the participation of the citizens. These two processes are relevant and central in the sense of the urban quality. A consultation, as a whole, presumes the representation of the predominated options before the public in order to know their commentary and desirability. A participation of citizens in formulating the ideas and plans, as a creative part of the planning process and designing is presumed.

All these ideas tell us, that, it is necessary to formulate some STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK incorporating the action to changes. Action and reaction, cause and effect are the integral part of such a framework of the strategic changes. This FRAMEWORK does not issue an individual mechanism for the implementation, some final form, or some preferable visual character for all urban areas.

Because of that, it promotes an important feature of the urban development: POWER to

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stimulate other preferable actions. The focus is an interaction of the new and existing elements and their influence on the future urban form, but not an approximation of the predetermined physical ideal.

Institutional, citizen's and political actions put that process in movement and make a key factor of the urban design. But, there is, also, one danger in that urban development, not only because of a possible failure to influence, but, because of a real prevention of the new development through non acceptable actions. It is also possible, to have a negative direction of changes as much as a positive one. A development can act as a sponge-absorbing resources and activities distributing the surrounding areas. It can, also, act without a success to inspire "answers" requiring a certain situation. It can, from the other side, to motivate others to contribute time, efforts and financial funds. Program, strategy and design should be correctly imagined, if we are expecting a dynamic and productive process of urban changes to happen.

Contrary to the opportunist opinion resting on the short-term assumptions ("exploit advantages of a loan": "buy when prices are low"; build whatever is profitable) - a better guarantee of the urban quality can be attained from a strategic determination at the long-term. Therefore, an urban design must be based on methods, principles and programs.

And that is the Program of the Master planning, setting up the general and detailed tasks, as well as, the identification of the ways for their achievement, often, alternatively, depending on circumstances. Such plan set up intentions and methods, but not solutions shaping an environment. For, the key of the strategic sustainable design, as a process of changes we can influence on, lies more in the comprehensive than in the one-sided views on future. Each step of the General, Program of actions is determined and depends from the earlier stadium and real circumstances, and does not accept some fixed-model for the far future.

What is happening and when - is far more important, than a fixed picture of some final product. That supposes a development in sequences. However, is should be taken into account, that, although, the formation of the development sequences is the key characte-

ristic of the strategic urban design process - in an urban arrangement the events can be rarely controlled. Probably, it is more realistic to think about a design strategy as a complex series or network of opportunities having been created and exploited more than spontaneously offering some linear development.

It should be, also, underlined, that by such strategic concept of the trajectory of changes - the urban changes retain their identity. It is not sacrificed when it becomes a part of some larger whole. The survival of the individual identities (many owners, users, architects) enriches the town.

This consideration of urban architecture changes process, would not be a complete one, without the references about people making it to happen. The urban development is an integral one with the process of changes affecting that. The effective people are important in that process in the same way as a well imagined and conveniently operative development. The people are those accelerating a process. So, in a town, the instrument can be an executive organ of the local authority, in an other town it can be the very respected individual, a popular mayor, or some association of citizens, for example, some ecological associations giving ideas and suggestions to town authorities as a kind of the fresh perspective. If the above presented strategic framework is a sustainable one for the creative conceptualization of an urban environment - it is necessary to know the contextual conditions and influences of a town shaping.

#### **A SUSTAINABILITY OF QUALITY AND CATEGORIES OF INFLUENCING FACTORS**

Here, we are intending to express those human needs related to the settlements as "influencing factors", hoping that a way can be found on how to arrange them mutually, or perhaps, even, to measure them. However, the spatial man's needs and conditions can be expressed as the spatial influencing factors only. Others - general factors, which usually, could not be expressed spatially are of economic, social, political or cultural nature. In such cases, however, we will not be in a position to express them as spatial influencing factors. A population requesting better architecture, possesses a great power but not the spatial power.

According to Doxiadis, however, there are some cases within which, even, these general forces (thus, influencing factors) can be expressed spatially. The first is when these general factors are interested to solve a problem which can be expressed spatially. In that case we can give a support or resistance to these forces. The second case is when, even, the views of these general influencing factors have no spatial expression, but, however, these groups can be identified as belonging to one locality. In this case, these general factors, could help us to understand or, eventually, to solve the problems of this locality by adding them or by subtracting them from the total influence on that locality (12).

Spatial influencing factors are those having the biggest influence on the formation of the human settlements existing elsewhere, from the smallest urban units to the biggest wholes. We have to think about them, no matter if they are visible (as when they are expressed through the movement of people and cars) or, not visible (for example, the negative factors created by the proximity of a factory).

All in all, they are expressed through the functions of settlements and can be recognized by their physical formations, but only if factors form functions and functions lead to some physical forms of objects or networks.

Even, if, in some case, do not come to the right, correspondence among factors and functions, in that case, can come to a confusion. Therefore, it is better to consider the spatial influencing factors separately, even, if we are going to take the functions, and structure of settlements as an indicator of their existence (13).

It can be said, that, the relationship among spatial factors, function and structure of settlements is as follows:

- influencing factors of all kinds lead to the formation of human settlements;
- spatial influencing factors are those giving the physical meaning and some forms to functions;
- functions lead to the structure of settlements through the shaping of objects and networks;
- structure of settlements lead to its form;
- texture and density are the result of spatial factors actions within the structure and form (14).

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A systematic investigation of spatial factors call for a knowledge of their nature, direction, intensity and quality, as well as, ways by which they, can be incorporated, influence on other and formed into system of factors.

These, non-oriented factors, in space, according to DOXIADIS, can be subdivided into two kinds: physiology of spatial factors expressed through space needed for individuals normal functioning and TEXTURE of factors expressed through individual as a factor of connections conditioning models, form and their distances in spaces (15).

On the basis of these considerations three categories of spatial influencing factors can be determined:

- physiology factors
- non-oriented in space
- texture of urban fabric
- oriented in space.

PHYSIOLOGY spatial factors according to the above, are non-oriented. Air we need should has a determined volume, but not necessary to be equally distributed around our head, a garden needed to surround a house does not need to have previously defined space, while the territory of district needed for a village can have any shape under the condition that a certain number of hectares corresponds to every household, as well as, the territory supplied by a port, can have any form, under the condition that it can absorb enough trade exchange, and so, enable that port to be profitable. There is no any specific form or direction for these spatial factors.

TEXTURA, as a factor, also, is a non-oriented one. It holds all elements or their parts in certain models and in a determined distance one from others. People sitting in a room, houses built in a settlement, cars at express-way, towns of the same category, distributed in an open plain - form models defined by physiology factors and factors of texture.

We can, for example, have such factors attracting every person willing to listen to an orator to a certain point. These are centripetal factors (forces), but, it does not mean that all persons in an auditorium will be near the orator. When people stand up - they need a certain space, while when they are sitting - they need much more space. But, contrary to oriented factors in

space, physiology influencing factors and forces of texture do not gravitate far from certain spaces, for, their tendency is to occupy space. "These factors, as forces, do not have any direction in space, but they gravitate to widen enough providing space in the range from certain minimum to certain maximum, to all their elements (persons, cars, houses, plants). Beyond these points, texture is liable to decay, because there exist a limit of widening. If we wish to avoid such a decay, then, we should go to some solutions at multi levels.

But, people do not need no physiology space and right relationship with others only. They also need, to be, as near as possible, to the localities of their interest attracting them to the factors which are oriented in space. Oriented factors in space can be subdivided into several kinds depending on their focus. This focus can be a point (crossing of roads, water tower, etc.) or a line (highway, coastal line) or a surface (plain attracting agriculture etc.), or, perhaps, a volume (church visible from all surroundings).

Some basic kind can be extracted from above, such as:

- central factors have some focus point
- linear factors have some line as focus
- surfaces factors, have some surface as a focus point
- volume factors are uncommon.

It is possible that physiology factors and forces of texture, can be so large requesting as much as possible territory for their widening, that the settlement is forced to divide over the uneven land, occupying valley where the linear factors are intensified due to the new negative factors conditioned by the form of a landscape. It is completely clear, that the intensity of factors is so important as their direction in space and, that, altogether, they form a system having considerable importance for human settlements generally, and for urban environmental quality, in particular.

Only in several cases, the measure of influencing factors is done systematically today. For example, in motorcar traffic eventual problems can be shown by so called "traffic picture" and therefore revealed. This is very important, specially for new settlements.

However, as such studies do not take into con-

sideration the influence of settlements texture, they, often, use to predict a general picture, and, usually, do not lead to the solution of complex problems. The systematic measuring of influencing factors is being undertaken today by various economic, technological, sociological analysis of urban situations, extracting from them some indicators and generators of influence on the quality of the environment, but this be treated later in a separate chapter.

### **Changeability of influencing factors shape**

Taking as a whole, that, the factors shaping a settlement, and having into account direction, intensity and quality, they are forming a structure of influencing factors of settlements which we could call the changing factors of influence, with regard to neither direction, intensity nor quality of these factors do not remain in a state of stability (18). Changeability of influencing factors is related, also, to individual elements of the system. We shall take the traffic system as an example to illustrate the above opinion. During the peak up hours the largest number of cars are moving along several main streets, within specific territories, which are created by linear factors. During the night, happenings are opposite: the most problems are evolving due to the texture influence - from a need for parking. The system is changing continually.

It is important to find out a method enabling to take all influencing factors into consideration, in such a way, that, we can follow their changes, and so, to form an opinion about the whole structure of influencing factors or the changing influencing forces. Such a method could be based on a set of tables as the one showing the total amount of influences in any given moment, for any given settlement or its part.

After defining the factors attracting or refusing the elements of some settlements to certain points, we can measure influencing factors connecting them. In that way, we will have the actual changeable factors of the influence in an operative state. If in that state we put changing factors in detail, then, perhaps, we can include all important influencing factors in our settlement.

Because of the fact, that in the larger urban units, the probability of correct predictions are increased, then, we can conclude that the

Table 1.- Spatial forces within the framework of driving force

Challenger of forces		CATEGORIES OF FORCES									
		Centre	FORCES OF DIRECTION						Forces texture		Physiology
			Linear		Surface		Volume		people	houses	
		geom.	non-geom.	geom.	non-geom.	geom.	non-geom.				
CONDITIONS	Geogr.										
	Topogr.										
	Climate										
	Econ.										
	Social.										
	Politic.										
	Techno.										
	Culture.										
	Etc.										

wider territory of investigation, the better we can operate by changing influencing factors.

**From changing influencing factors to structure and form**

Having considered the nature of changing influencing factors, we can continue now to the analysis of the settlement structure, bearing in mind that the changing influencing factor is an essential part of this analysis. If correctly formulated, that factor incorporates all the influencing factors created by man (physiology, texture, direction) as well as, those created by the existing conditions which we have to convert into the adequate influencing factors.

There are cases "when a changing factor from given factors is not sufficient to define a structure" (19). This occurs when the conditions do not create enough possibilities (for example in a plain) and when there are not enough influencing factors (highway, big factory etc) which are first of all created by man settlements. In that cases, even, the basic structure can't be achieved by changing factors, but, it must be formed from those creating settlement which must be combined with the existing and needed changing factors. This is more obvious going to the lower urban units.

The most entangle aspect of this process is the definition of relationship of different kinds, of influencing factors. This definition depends on many factors: economy, sociological structure, political conditions, technological and cultural level. These relationships can be defined only on the ground of the criterions or values which

are assumed by the citizens. By knowing the criterion we can develop, from the structure of the influencing factors, a model which will be the valuable model leading to the definition of the structure and form.

**SUSTAINABILITY OF QUALITY AS A TWOFOLD DESIGN PROCESS**

Relationship between a man and his environment is a complex one. Taste of people, culture, styles in architecture varies by time, but the SPACE REMAIN CONSTANT. Because of that, here is an accent on spatial arrangement, composition and perception of values. And that comes in the domain of the urban design which should incorporate both FUNCTION and BEAUTY into a coherent whole.

We are, thus, talking about the process of the urban design. It can be within a micro whole, for example when the subject is a square, street, then, it can encompass a grouping, that is a block as, for example, town centre or a housing area - neighborhood unit. Finally that process can be observed as a MEGA whole making to total town.

Concerning the size or the character of the urban environment, we should, first question: Which kind of urban environment we are willing to achieve? That is a very complex and key question. The answer is not so simple, if we are going to achieve a clear conception of what we are intending to plan, and shape and for whom. From our earlier critique review on the existing practice, we realized, that, it was, often, done "FROM ABOVE" to below, without taking into account such factors as nature and

man - they we made conditions of a locality. Today, in the changed social, political and economic conditions the vector of a design must take a reversed direction, that is to say, this process must be developed in an inductive way going "from BELOW" to above. In other words, the main accent, today, should be put on the theme: how to achieve a character of the human environment by the design? So, the priority is given, to the promotion of the local environment design at a micro and group level. Both levels have a function and that should be shaped in an artistic way. It means that the urban design of a certain environment, in order to be truly successful, must be perceived as a twofold process.

This aspect represents the key matter which should be dissolved in the long debate on the nature of the urban form and urban process. In spite of their obvious connection, the arguments about the town form and process, often, show a shortage of the consciousness, whatever the relationship is there.

As a result, the decision on a design is hardly related to the context of buildings. Similarly, it seems, the planners, have little understanding about urban form.

However, in the wider MEGA context, the towns become a battlefield of fighting among the followers of an idea about the town as a "big chance" and those keeping the prospectus of "vision on town", based more on a citizen's philosophy. In the first case the followers see a developing town on the basis of the land, as a "buying and selling goods". In the second case, the followers of the "vision of town" see a land more in the terms of their "usability values".

A we have seen earlier, in all spheres of the creative thinking, as in this process too, series of movements and contra movements have arised expressed through a first idea followed by another, getting some distinguished place in the sense of the meaning. What is clear, is that, before we attempt to fuse a concept of urban form and urban process in any significant way, first we have to achieve better agreement than it exist today.

For the moment, we have to go back into the historic context, and remind ourselves of some values extracted from certain messages. We

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have seen that every town is a unique phenomenon. Culture, functions and history have given its own individual stamp to a town appeared from special series of circumstances.

Often, this simple fact is being ignored, because the towns find their context on the drawing boards of planners, architects and enterprisers. This is why today's circumstances should give their own stamp. First, should be learnt from the lessons, existing practice, in the domain of housing occupying the two third of the town's territory.

Earlier, from the critique review on the housing spatial organization, we have seen, that the idea of the subdivision into blocks as "neighborhood units" have had both positive and negative effects. In a positive sense, the neighborhood units have got their own validity by accepting social arguments into their framework. The negative side of this idea, lies in its superficial application. When it was already accepted in a wide extent, the planners began this idea to apply anywhere, whether at a green uncultivated land, or in the town centre, old or new quarter. It is ironical, that the perfect solutions have produced opposite effects in relation to wishes.

What are lessons for the sustainable urban quality in the contemporary housing conditions?

The idea of the "neighborhood units" has its valid background either by what is offered, or by what is represented. Among other things it can be seen, in its role to protect individuality, as a defender against the trend called "mass society". At the same time, such a concept of settlements enables "structural communal spirit" or, in other words, "capability to create and to identify from inside".

But, regardless of the valid background and, as such proved respectation, in today's market conditions, it remains to us to fight against rigidity. While the concept of settlements, according to the previous practice, and as a product of the design idea, has been perceived as the first step of investigation of the town concept structure and form - it is very important to continue further research towards the formulation of a "theory of town process". It is, therefore, important to make distinction between "PLANNED" towns wholes - commu-

nities and "PLANNING" of these communities. Some principles are, of course, common for both concepts, as, for example, "identity" and "stability". They are the key matters, because of the support to the four elements, essential for the town culture: 1. common memory, 2. intensity of towns energy, 3. communications, 4. point of stability.

From these considerations arise an idea showing that, today, we need a theory explaining HOW TO PRODUCE A TOWN FORM.

How to begin?

From the experience within "planned community" we have seen that the most power has been given to the politicians and professionals. As a contrary, the principles of "planning" (of neighborhood units, blocks or settlements) refer to us, the citizens should have a kind of control of their own destiny, in other words they should be included into decisions influencing their life on, as well as, should be treated with respect from those making decisions in the name of others. This is not only a principle expressing some satisfaction of participation in the town's life, but, it is founded on a belief, that the people themselves represent an enormous resource waiting to be reactivated.

An example from London during the time of "Thatcherism" shows the clash between those making decisions and those to whom an urban environment is devoted to that are the citizens. The job of the third actor - the planners - was brought down only to the level of "development control". The result, according to G. Nicholson (director of planning London fund) is a "total absence of any vision", then adding: "it is achieved a culmination of lacking of ideas" (20).

From these and similar reasons, the PLANNING AS A PROCESS, should be a reaction against the long term fixed models guiding to non impression. There is a number of ideas which should be tested before the process of planning, as a practice, can be converted into the planning as a theory.

What first should be done is the investigation of some territory, in order to test certain ideas. These ideas are: 1. people have their feelings of PLACE which is important for them, 2. people have their conception of community

they live in. 3. people can consciously notice limits of place; 4. that the locality and community are inter-related; 5. that it is possible to plan localities in full sense of the meaning; 6. that is possible to establish a process of decision making respecting locality and community, and 7. when localities are fully expressed, they will make easier taking into the process of planning and urban design.

After such an investigation work, the examining comes; how any of these findings can be fit into the existing organizational structure, what can be a block, neighborhood unit or some territory having an historic identity. Then a consideration of the problems: should be done which territory will be determined as a "BASIC PLANNING UNIT". The following step is, to begin the process of the spatial conceptualization, that is, to make an expression of shaping.

The third phase of this work, is related to the establishment of the "planning standards" list. Standards have been, to a certain extent, discredited until recently, mainly because of criticism of their non inflected nature. Although it is true that standards can drive away the first desirable intentions, if applied at an empty space, however, they are essential, in order to achieve any sensitivity in the process of making decision.

#### **QUALITY OF ENVIRONMENT AS AN AESTHETIC PHENOMENON**

As we have seen earlier, our picture of the exterior environment is being modified by a number of spatial EXPRESSIONS as, for example, shelters, frames, marked places etc. Here, in the picture of the environment we also include FUNCTION, in order to get, according to LINCH'S criteria, a SPACE in reference to PLACE inducing pleasant emotions. Such a SPACE should:

1. not be (within the span of comfort): too warm; too noisy; too bright; too cool; too calm; too filled out or too empty; too steep; too dirty.
2. be diverse giving the inhabitants some choice of the environment desirable for someone in any time.
3. enable an action people willing to commit to.
4. have a clear formed identity such as:
  - recognizable
  - commemorative
  - impressive



- attractive
  - different from other locations
  - a "feeling of place" is the key of the emphasized appearance and the full meaning of an environment.
5. have its recognizable parts such:
- arranged that any observer can see them in their mutual relations
  - to perceive their model in time and space
6. be visible in full meaning:
- its visible parts, not only connected to each other, in time and space,
  - but connected with other aspects of life: functional activities, economic and political models
7. have an influence in the intellectual, emotional, and physical development of the individual, particularly, on the children age, but, also, on other ages.

So, in fact, by twofold process, we have formulated a basis for the form synthesis. But, it is still in a theoretical sphere. Our aim is an urban aesthetic and its application. The first step in that direction is making a typology of residential buildings, after that follows a process of grouping these building. Methodologically, there are several possibilities.

Making sense of such a process lies in ideas. The designer uses to synthesize the technical and aesthetic problems into one coherent whole - idea, and out of that appears form. The contemporary aesthetic clearly expresses the situation: there are two possibilities to observe an aesthetic form out of the phenomenon: the beauty of a form should be found in the object, what is at a trace of the old theory of imitation (MIMEZIS), or, it should be found in the subject guiding to a psychology of enjoyment, more exactly, to the theory of the autonomous creation (POIEZIS) (22).

If the designer neglects the above aesthetic criterions (mimesis and poesies) and assumes FUNCTION only, under the market influence for example, that is, then, a routine method, and the result is a certain failure.

However, it is enough, for the designer in considering a project task, to take into account the basic aesthetic principles, on by and a confirmation that he is on the right way of a true creation. In this way, he will be in a state to make a right choice of the design method,

and so, find out a correct approach to problems, according to his capabilities and affinity: his ontology and anthology.

Enriched in such a way, he will realize that:

- Designing from the urban idea is a synthetic perceiving of the subject area (land, houses, streets, etc.) and the aesthetic stand points the unique idea originates from.
- In an urban design, the form should express the essential thing; the essence does not rests in the form (as in fine arts) but it is, as necessity, incorporated by its structure, opinion and art production.
- A building, by itself, has nothing common with beauty, since, in essence, it is a technique and function. And that is the feature - practical function inaugurating the aesthetic valid moment over the real mimesis or unreal poesies and composition. The function must be imprinted into a unique composition, so that it is appearing only in the realized object. That is where the beauty lies in relation to appearing. So, the form is expressed from the essence of the things: function and substance.
- A practical function and material of a building, or, their grouping, are put into the effect, in a real and construction way, and, as such, are presented to the observer. Only in a practical way it works organically and convincing. And, the essence of organic is a function.
- A conflict between the practical and beauty, the designer solves within their synthesis: functional composition (proportion) and dynamic composition (expressing of ideas).
- The starting point in architecture and urban design, is in a practical function. In that context, HARTMAN points out: "As the first, an architect composes a functional composition and going further backwards everything is related to that composition. From that, not forced, arises a relation of life true, or, untrue, according to that, the spatial and dynamic composition can be harmonically included in it, or it will be lost in non-organic appendix, embellishments, illusory forms" (23).
- Another aspect should be taken into account, in this process of synthesis: That the contemporary aesthetic, shortly, underlines, that, there is no an absolute criterion of

beauty, but there are the objective possibilities in forming a judgment about it, is some idea achieved truly in the art's entity.

- We are talking, often, about the "spiritual validity" of something. The situation has cleared up, by bringing in into a connection with "the law of objectivism": every product producing the human spirit, or, an art creation, is the disclosure of some, spiritual content into a reality (24).
- When a building or, a grouping of buildings, get an aesthetic validity, - the prerequisite for that would be the value of mood, what is pleasant, and, if such a whole is fitted into an natural milieu, the feeling of a vital value. The validity, by HARTMAN, lies in the appearance itself" (25).

All that shows, that, the world of urbanism is a specific large universe, in which is within the present times abridged both past and future. And that speaks about a number of possibilities of an author, having in mind that the aesthetic of investigation has no end. It is in the best way expressed by KENZO TANGE who says:

"In order to find out the new solutions satisfying human wishes, energy, and prediction, I am together with other architects of the young generation, gravitated toward prevailing over the imperfect state of our traditional way of building, and so called modernism, in such a way, attempting to find some new spatial shapes, which are better adapted to human emotions. That energy I would like to perceive as vitality" (26).

At the end of this common search toward BEAUTY, here are some more directing opinions. The designer - creator, in urban design, next to the knowledge from urban technique, must unavoidably possess also a knowledge of aesthetic, not as a canon, dogma, but as a critique of conscience and intuition, as a reliable support in discovering the most suitable solution, that is to say, critique as a moral imperative of creation in urbanism and architecture.

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## URBAN SITUATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

### Feasibility of changes and effects on quality

In investigating the various types of urban situation, we have, to consider what changes are the most relevant and suitable. A change has, always, been unavoidable in any possible urban situation having been economically justifiable, but, also, at the same time, it must enable an urban quality.

The main types of urban situations which should be considered, in the terms of size of settlements and their realistic and acceptable potentials for changes, are as follows:

1. Large towns (including those having special character).
2. Medium and small size towns.
3. Historic towns and protected areas.
4. Suburbs.
5. New towns.
6. External edges.

Considering wider sense, the most kinds of urban changes occur within the town's centre or within the frame of secondary centers for the categories (1) and (2) of the above mentioned. In these centers, changes, can be manifested in diverse forms including:

- urban restoration on a planned-integrated basis, with the specific plans of development, also, by the general policy of local planning, including certain implications of the radical terrain cleaning;
- new/locational development by filling in of empty land, on an integrated or "ad hoc" basis, occurring in any part within the territory of the current feasible economic or other activity;
- protection of urban environment, often, included into urban restoration, or other forms related to the approved changes of use;
- reconstruction/demolishing of the existing entity (where restoration and filling in are not feasible) arising from the entities of dilapidated houses or economically not profitable context.

Seeing from the aspect of the changes feasibility, we have, also, to consider the environmental capacity for a change. Very few places are fully immune on changes, but some places are, probably, more vulnerable than others. This

can mean not only more liability to a change, but, also, that these places will experience non pleasant state, if the effects of such change are hardly considered in advance. Observing the categories of urban situations earlier mentioned, we can formulate several conclusions.

In the centers (under 1) - the large town's contexts, there is a big probability, or, a state requiring unavoidable changes (due to the high degree of economic activity and adequate land value) but, at the same time, is increased a degree of "obliged care" for the protection of some revitalized and, also, humanized context. In some over populated and the neglected internal town's situations, the shortage of investment, reduced economic activities, can be corrected, only by certain action introducing funds, pragmatic planning and, in some way, by the power of particular circumstances.

On the other side, in the medium and small towns, the sphere of activity for a larger extent of the development, is considerable smaller, although this will not prevent some ambitious and competing investors. In the case of these towns, the local environment and character are more and more vulnerable in relation to changes, in various degrees, both in the form of opposite development (where local economy is active) and in the form of power loss (where the local economy is stagnant or falling). In most cases, usually, some new development is necessary, but, we are repeating again, this must be "in context" in the terms of scale, location and all-inclusive character. It will be important to insure keeping the traditional local purposes, in a form of the mixture "full of life", what is the essence of a real character in so many towns, despite of size or configuration. Generally, the smaller town "the more personable" character. Large towns can be very formless. So, we have seen the main types or scales of urban situations which would be, probable, touched by a change. A change in almost all such situations, is being manifested, normally, in the terms of an economic change or a functional role.

Reversely, it will determine to which extent an urban territory will grow, remain static or fall. This will then, have an effect on urban quality through the types of land use for those protection included in that process, then, level of

activities and physical basis of a change, for example, planned/non planned or, cohesive/ additionally arranged. The role of changes for towns can be complex or, a sensitive one, more exactly, a delicate one, as it is the case of a gradual transition of some historic town centre into a larger shopping/administrative centre, or changes can be simple, unexpected, and, even, brutal as it is the case of some non-planned achievement.

### An environmental capacity as the indicator and determinant of quality

All factors, we have already seen, can be covered by the term "feasibility of changes". We have to consider the question of "capacity for changes" again, but, now, in the context of influences on urban quality. Here we introduce that as an important and very relevant means for control or urban quality, not only for historic towns, but, also, for urban environment generally. By series of representative examples, a methodology and identification of significant themes, can be formulated relevant to typical urban situation, according to the characteristic functions or changes and levels of activities.

Generally, the approach is such, that, from the identified situations and important points, we can identify a number of indications of "capacity of environment" suggesting, then, a level of activities or kinds of changes which could be adequately fitted into, or, alternatively. Some of the important analytical themes which could be applicable on studies of various towns include such as follow:

1. Size and form of place and how they contribute to character and surrounding.
2. Influence of public open space on character of a place.
3. Effect of large and high buildings on local landscape, historic buildings, "urban nature", silhouette and main look.
4. Quality of certain buildings and activities having certain effect on them.
5. Transport network and, its relationship with character of town, in terms of the created activities with an accent on then public transport advantages.
6. Appraisal of land development potentials.

From the preceding considerations, we have seen that there is a usual relationship and

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some interaction among urban roles, changes and growths. This will have a strong effect on urban character and quality. We have seen, also, that there is a similar interaction between "state" and "indicators" when we take "capacity of environment" as the main means in regulating an urban quality. In examining the connection between state and indicators it should be clear, what is their meaning. The "state" in this context, is a normal situation of pressure on urban form or character. The "indicators" are an external manifestation of effects or influences of these pressures. It is important to know, that, they can arise either in the form of facts about the nature or root of problems, or in terms of some identified needs for elements of control. Because of that, we can talk both in terms of indicators and environmental capacity regulators, as they are influencing urban quality.

#### **Urban quality and foreign experiences**

In a process of making decisions on urban design, it is interesting, that, public participation plays an important role in directing town's arrangement in Europe both in West as in East of that continent. This is because all countries experiences new or increased building activity according to the growth of their economy. Local authorities with its inhabitants, have their share in that process, in terms of the provisions of some degree of planning policy or principles for guiding and control of design, at least, as much as related to the relationship with urban context or, restrictions of planning. And without effective policy and actions on environmental management - the centers of rapidly growing population are becoming the focus of serious degradation of basic resources, all over the world.

In Britain, according to M. PERFECT, an inflected system, arised goading and controlling design (in accordance with the national character). For example, where exists, series of wide established development planning policy, have been formulated semi-specific directives for planning and development, up to the specific local conditions about such things as are appearance of shops and their publicity (27).

In Germany, as a contrast (in accordance to the national character) in the process of activities

much more legal is connecting and the strict hierarchy of planning system - from regional planning to down, without bringing the organizer into a doubt on, what is allowed or not. As the result of such an approach, the German planners gravitate towards greater specialization and technical orientation, within a very definite and fixed policy, giving clear and specific directives for almost every situation. The product of that is the fact, that, some of the best examples of European town planning can be found in Germany. For example, the town pedestrian system and arrangement of communications (including public exhibit of visual forms), then, high density residential development, as well as, revitalization of buildings. This is, also, related to the strong architectural roots of majority of the German planners.

Comparatively, there are differences between the two systems: from those reflecting the influence of some system on people, development and urban environmental quality, up to the real design of buildings. While some of the fundamental differences in approaches are a result of social and cultural inequality, so far, it is not likely that all of them will disappear together.

On the contrary, each side of Lamansh (it is still a "big division" between Britain and Europe) has something to learn from each other, while the "ideological gap will, unavoidable, be made narrower".

From a presentation of B. STOJKOV we have seen that the most of European countries are undertaking steps towards changes of their planning systems, going from regional planning to down, all with the aim of a bigger adaptability on context.

In Britain, points out M. Perfect: as Europe is making progress in a constant way, we should not be exaggeratedly self-confident, that, our system is the best one. It is evident that we have much to learn from our European colleagues, and so, nothing less, when we have to answer the question how to come to urban quality (28).

All this speaks, that, we have, also, to fit into the system of the environmental management, and, particularly in the context of urban environmental quality through town planning.

#### **An appraisal of our urban situation and quality of environment**

In our country there is the law of planning and spaces arrangement regulating this matter from the country's level to regional planning and up to the urban design.

An "open wound" in our system of planning does not lie in a shortage of ideas about urban quality, but, in their implementation. This can be seen, first of all, in the hesitation of the authorities to keep strictly to the made decisions. If this is not corrected, we would enter into the 21 century with big burden arising from the lack of the settlement consciousness/about the need to live in a healthy and arranged environment. The problem of material poverty we have entered, is easier to solve than to raise a level of living, "where, beside the technical achievements, a great care is being given to the feeling of satisfaction within the spatial frame we are living in, where is the quality of urban environment is more expressive, intimate and attractive (29).

Therefore, before attempting to correct, improve or to convert some unhappy urban situation into one serving for well-being of people - we have, as a first, step to identify not only the weaknesses and shortages, but, also, and any existing level of quality and advantages. In other words, we have to make some kind of the constructive analysis of the situation, presenting all influencing factors acting for benefit or against the creation of urban quality, having in mind, the possibility to get benefit from the available physical and financial resources. An appraisal of our situation will, in essence, be some kind of identified action needed to achieve or to protect the urban quality over the perception of the external indications (indicators) and influencing factors (generators). This can be formulated by an adequate METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH.

#### **INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION**

##### **A general review on the various and policy of urban planning quality**

Visions of urbanism future, certainly, will have their roots in the contemporary contextual conditions and influences incorporated and further developed into the NEW TRENDS of the spatial and urban planning.

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That "NEW TRENDS" rests on the need for an effective planning, G.PICCINATO, in that sense, underlines, the innovation introducing more articulated recognition of all planning activities in a form of PROCESS. He brings that change with regard to the spatial organization explaining it by pointing out the two main reasons: 1. inefficiency of the traditional approach and 2. changing role of the main actors in that process: a progressive withdrawal of the State from the direct intervention on the economic and social field, and, at the same time, extension of the market influence. A conclusion is exerted, that "the new perspectives mean defining the rules respected by all actors, next to needed share in the aims and ways of development of a number of different actors in that process (30).

In Europe, it is perceived, that going to an effective planning we can't achieve that aim by the individual actions, but, as B. STOJKOV says: "by the dynamic integrative processes, per various lines, where the priority is given to the spatial one, encompassing network of towns, infrastructure, traffic, then, living environment, monuments of nature and culture, etc. According to his opinion: " The basic principles and aims of that document, recently assumed in Bratislav, are related to the increase of competitiveness, efficiency and successful development of towns and villages in 18 encompassed countries having balanced regional development and larger coherence in protecting living environment and, particularly, natural and cultural heritage, etc. (31)

However throwing light up on the way into the 21 century, from the aspect of this paper, it is particularly important to underline: what is the role of a territory in these processes of changes? It is certain, that a territory gives possible frame for the integrated actions, and in a sense incorporates the resource: financial, human, from various sectors, projects and policy. Assuming a territory as some, fixed element of connection-that together understand a meaning of places and sustainability of the urban quality, we are talking in this paper. And this bring us closer to the basic theme of an urban design where the term "place" means a complex context which could be interpreted by various keys: geographical, political, economical and cultural. As the territorial contexts are different it

is logical that the different answers will be got on a number of problems bearing contemporary circumstances and conditions. It estrange us from the global dimension of the contemporary development, and bring closer to that orientation demanding changes of the imposed programs and dynamic building in order to be conforming with SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES.

There are different climatic conditions and local building materials existing and special concepts of human settlements and social structure, specific and unique economy and demographic characteristics, then, cultural-ethnic features and spatial form values – which must enter into the structure of the synthesis and the concepts of the development programs and making of it a HUMAN ENVIRONMENT instead the imposed "models" and imitation of solution leaving difficult implication on the domestic man and his environment. In this context, the "visions" about Europe of the 21 century, should also be observed, as well as, the integrative movement being in the process. In any case, without connecting people, places and periods, simultaneously, the urban structure and forms of human settlements, would be an insignificant physical shelter, an abstract quantity of building (32).

An investigation of relations between MAN and SPACE within the wing of "developed" and "undeveloped", their "production and consumption of space" and all things arising from that in the process of urban environment development – will complete the picture of these different ways of living (33).

It can be said, that these factors will be reflected through PEOPLE having in mind their behavior showing a complex relationship with the characteristics of PLACE (distances, directions, locations, land use, groupings, etc) – which they use in their desire to organize and arrange a space. Underlining the meaning of place as a part of the human existential space, K.N. SHULZ says:

"Even long ago, man perceived that different places have different character; that character can be so expressive that it, in fact, determine all basic forms of our surrounding, contributing that the majority of people living there – feel that all of them belong to one and the same place" (34).

At the same time, these factors, during the time, have been expressed in the form of the variety and quality, confirming the historic development of every environment: expressing man's conditions and achievements, in time and space – an urban environment is a true index of his civilization.

In other words, that is the "places" where town citizens live, move and work under the specific ecological, sociological, economical, and technological, conditions which, altogether, leave physiological and aesthetic consequences on the individual.

Perceived as a SYSTEM in which a large number of elements are in balance (or not), filling in each other (or not) within the frame of the urbanization process – an urban environment has its structure where processes are accruing, in which exist relations, can be added some measures of quality, can be subdivided into periods. It has its land uses and focal points, its form and scale, as well as, levels, while in the core of all these elements is MAN (35).

### **Towards an appraisal of urban environmental quality**

In order to formulate needed analysis we have to decide which CRITERIONS are the most relevant for an urban situation, developing our basic approach to that situation from the relevant INDICATORS and GENERATORS. In that context, some basic criterions applicable to almost any situation can be emphasized, as, for example, capacity of environment. It can be found some auxiliary criterions which could be applied according to some specific situations (some significant presence of old buildings of high or low architectural/historic value).

Relevant "indicators" (positive or negative) can be in almost every form. Here, we are presenting them, in accordance to their occurrence with respect to form of the appearance:

#### ***Negative indications***

- excessive influence requiring car traffic & parking on urban environment
- destruction of architectural cohesion
- presences of "bad neighbor" on the land
- erosion of previously established urban environmental forms

- shortage of urban greenery and suitable street equipment and light
- weak state of pedestrian communications and needs.

#### **Positive indicators**

- strong local architectural character in terms materials and attractive mixture of purpose
- obvious directed and controlled changes contrary to sporadic and non-controlled growth
- sensitive maximization of existing natural characteristics or advantages such as topography and elements of water
- balances between commercial and settlements needs and purposes
- feeling of "historic continuity" up to date.
- feeling of order, organization and well-being.

As far as "GENERATORS" are concerned, ones that can be established for such indicators, then, very valid facts for the identification of needed actions can be obtained. Identification of generators, by itself, include knowledge of local situation, investigations, including talks with local people having direct or indirect interest, for the whole situation, and, particularly, having in mind the power of analysis and going further from assumption.

In the light of the basic criterion, it is important to underline the difference among those criterions mainly of economic, social, physical, and "visual" character (although in practice they can be overlapped and be in an interaction. Purists will say, that the "visual" criterion (as, for example, town's landscape) is too simple or, even, superficial, and that, as such, does not encompass problems (as are socio-economic factors and various shortages) which, in essence, underline question of urban quality. Our answer is that the interaction of all of these criterions, is the most relevant for a "balanced environment".

Although, it seems, that is not fully correct to take any of these criterions isolated, however, it must be said, that the approach respecting landscape still has real validity, influencing over urban character on the everyday life and perception of people, in a general sense. This is evident from many public representations (formal or informal), as far as urban quality is concerned. Power, validity and a relevant spatial-physical and visual approach, should not

be undermined, both from an academic critique or "right" professionals of planning (36).

#### **Sustainable communities: environmental management and planning of urban quality**

In the preceding chapter, we presented methodology, an appraisal of needs and environmental quality. Here, we are talking about environmental management in the context of the town planning and designing. These two aspects are interrelated or are, in an interaction. This can be observed separately only due to an easier presentation.

Shortage of a systematic methodology of the environmental quality management in spatial and town planning is not a case, because every space is characteristic by changeability, of state and a stochastic nature of process, what is, next to that, a characteristic of the complex systems. Management of such complex systems is based on the combined use of formal and non formal methods (37).

In that sense, B. STOJANOVIC proposed one functional concept model of living environment management in spatial and urban planning. The aim of this model is to suggest the essence of the model and the procedure for environmental quality analysis in a supposed spatial entity. This model presents relations between the subjects of management (State organ) expressing its interests through aims and policy of living environment protection, and means of management spatial and urban planning, and objects of management (elements of living environment) and position of management instruments: regulations, standards, norms, criterions and information (38).

Here, we take this opportunity to say, that in the further investigations, the effects of feed back, should also be considered, that is to say, the influence of living environment on some methodological changes in approaches to the planning of space as a cyclic process. An inclusion of environmental quality criterions in the phases of planning – understand changes and innovations, at least, in the following fields:

1. information system for planning needs
2. norms and standards
3. methods of work: spatial analysis and an appraisal of potentials

4. evaluation of proposed solutions of future state and actions in space
5. monitoring and forming of new "inputs" (39).

These changes aiming to achieve a better quality of life, should be arised at local level, from individuals, groups, and local governments, filling into the contemporary concept of sustainable development representing a wide span of forms of urban building and techniques with its social, fiscal and economic frames. In that context, urban design can also be included having an accent on "humanization", in relationship with the existing urban character, but, also, in an imaginative treatment of "themes" producing successful results in a way. Such results according to the concept of sustainability means:

- satisfaction of existing needs without destruction of changes of future generations
- increase and protection of social equality and equality in opportunities
- safe guiding and improvement of economic security
- protection and strengthening of natural environment.

A "sustainability" can't be achieved without the cooperation of both public and private sectors. That means that the aim should be the creation of a development which is democratically "useful" and opposing, to the individual feeling of self-confidence". Theoretically, it should be the product of the current situation where exist an increased happy relying on the cooperation between public and private sectors in a development. This cooperation can be realized in a number of forms including:

1. Participation in a common development, among the investor of a development and the local authorities, arising from the mutually agreed aims and the common funds for arrangement, without a State help.
2. The above case, but next to a State subvention through various programs.
3. A common action between the potential investor of a development and the local authorities (establishments etc) and various associations, etc., aiming to promote a higher standard both in their own development and in the development of those supporting them. Agency representing the associated investors who take care in that sense, that all their projects are

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supporting a long term program for the achievement of the environmental quality by a good design, a sensitive town landscape and an adequate care for maintenance of these needs.

4. As far as housing is concerned, up to some ten years ago, the stiers was on so called collective building, financed from some government funds. Now, in the era of the privatization, it is already visible building of family houses in the private ownership. Between these two extremes, arised in specific circumstances, remained the field of the housing cooperatives which could experience some kind of "reincarnation", if adequate ways of the cooperation among some kind of mobilization of the private resources and the government leans could be found. Also, there will be, open opportunities, that the private investors promote building of housing accommodation in a renting way.

5. Another further form of possible "common" action, can be realized in a situation where the local authorities can achieve some "progress in planning" by the improvement of the local environment, as the "benefit" from a commercial development – under the condition, that, the element of the "progress in planning" is physically relevant to the terrain for development, as well as, to the content of the plan, which have to be realized at that terrain.

6. In any case, these and other ways of cooperation do contribute in the search of ways for getting urban quality in the period that bears a heavy burden of the market influences.

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