

Committee III
Human Beings and the Urban Environment:
The Future Metropolis

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for Conference Distribution Only

DISCUSSION PAPER

by

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on

Panayis Psomopoulos's
TOWARD MEGALOPOLIS

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Professor Galantay, in introducing the topic "The Future Metropolis" gives the following quotation:

"In 1950 there were only six cities with a population of million or more and their combined population was 44 million. By 1980 this had arisen to more than twenty five such cities with a combined population of over 250 million. By the year 2000 this number will rise to 60 cities with an estimated population of nearly 650 million. 45 cities with more than 5 million inhabitants will be in the less developed countries (Draper Fund Report) He then asks us, when discussing the various aspects of the phenomenon of the metropolis to be realistic and pragmatic in what we discuss. To qualify in being realistic and pragmatic I suppose one should pontificate only about those matters within the compass of one's own experience. Against the enormity of the problems predicted and the postulations so clearly set out by Mr. Psomopoulos who deals in his excellent paper, not only with the metropolis and megalopolis but also ecumenopolis, I feel a little light on any realism I might be able to muster. All I can do is to give you my opinions based on my own experience over the last 30 years mainly in British New Towns and tell you a little bit about our problems and some of the lessons we've learnt in the knowledge that our problems could be different from and the solutions not realistic to the less developed countries of

the world.

There are very many critical differences between the developed countries and developing countries, such as economic, cultural, political, climatic - including planning techniques and processes evolved over many years in the industrialized countries compared with the lack of a background of such experience in the developing countries. And yet wherever in the world there is an acceleration of urbanization and an explosion of population, unless there is to be chaos and misery there has to be some form of control, there have to be planning goals and there has to be political backing and commitment to action.

The rate of urban growth is now obviously accepted as a very major problem and is a primary preoccupation in most of the developing countries. Many of their Governments are increasingly following the example of more developed areas in adopting policies which encourage growth at specific centres, both in metropolitan areas and in towns and cities away from the large conurbations. Many of the problems to be found are common. These include:

Difficulties in ensuring balanced and phased development of housing, social services, infrastructure and employment; difficulties in co-ordinating the activities of a large

number of agencies which become participants in large scale urban development; difficulties in generating confidence in the new development resulting in difficulties in financing development and in attracting investment; difficulties in achieving and monitoring planning objectives; and then in the developing countries there is also the problem of shortages of experienced management and technical staff.

European countries have similar problems arising from concentrated urban growth which has been going on for a long time and the British experience might be of interest. More than 70% of Britain's people live in towns and cities of more than 100,000 population. Of greater significance is the fact that nearly 20 million people or 36% of the population live in the eight conurbations - clusters of once separate cities, towns and villages which have coalesced into continuous urban areas. Each of the conurbations is part of a constellation of lesser towns and villages from which large numbers of people travel to work and which an even greater number look to visit the centre as their principal centre for Department Stores and Specialist shops, theatres, concerts etc. Together the eight conurbations and the catchment areas form recognisable city regions in which 60% of Britain's people live and work. The largest by far is the

London Metropolitan region in which live 12.3 m. people. Within the core areas of the conurbations and other large cities and especially those in the northern half of Britain are most of the nation's 3 m. sub-standard houses and tenements, a legacy from the 19th century. These need to be demolished and replaced with modern homes with more space for recreation, schools and other essentials of modern living. Of necessity this has meant reductions in density, planned reductions in the housing and population capacity of the renewed areas. There is also on the national scale imbalance, in terms of economic strength and prosperity and in the quality of the urban environment, between the southern half of England and the older industrial regions of the rest of England, Scotland and Wales. The London region still contains the Nation's largest concentration of modern industries and commercial, Governmental and other public organisations. In an attempt to deal with these problems and trends Britain has, since 1945, pursued certain major policy objectives and devised machinery for implementing the policies.

- i. A national policy to control new factory and office building with the locating of factory building until recently controlled by the Government with the aim of injecting as much new industrial growth as possible into the old industrial regions or so called Development Areas. Generous financial aid is offered as an inducement.
- ii. A major objective is to conserve land and to secure the proper planning of the development and of urban re-development. Regional Plans and Studies were prepared such as the Clyde Valley, Greater London and the South-East Plan, giving a context to more

- ii. detailed planning. The 1947 Town & Country Planning Act and successive Acts placed on the local Authorities the responsibility of preparing and reviewing critical plans to guide, to promote and to regulate all development and redevelopment in their areas. As a result development has been better located, better related to central services and far less wasteful of land than in the inter war years. Ribbon development along roads has been stopped. Unplanned and sporadic building has been prevented and advertisement hoardings banned outside the towns and cities. One of the most successful achievements has been the preservation of countryside around the conurbations of large cities where 'Green Belts' have been defined to limit urban spread and to prevent physical expansion of the conurbations.
- iii. Then there was the programme to build New Towns and to plan small country towns to which industry and commerce and people could be attracted from the overgrown and over crowded cities.
- iv. A complementary objective is to clear large areas of slum houses and to renew the Inner City areas themselves.

The new and expanding towns are therefore an essential feature of a four part policy for Britain's great cities and city regions. Some of these policies have been more successful than others. But arising from this programme, especially from the experience of planning and building for 28 New Towns with new communities expanding at an accelerated pace, some realistic and pragmatic lessons learnt might be of interest to those with even greater problems arising out of rapid large scale urban and metropolitan expansion.

The following might give a few pointers:

1. Need for a national and regional context related to national policies, especially on the locating of industry

1. and employment and the provision of transportation and communications. To be successful major planning projects and major development on this scale need ideally to have stable multipartisan political support. Also the legal framework for the development should attract multi-partisan support so that private as well as public or government interests support the programme.
2. The assembling of land is critical and a government agency responsible for the development of a town or metropolis should have the power to acquire land at existing market value.
3. Any plan, especially that for a New Town should be a basic plan only - providing a broad framework capable of flexibility. A programme is important and it is the main device for concentrating the energies of all the agencies concerned in contributing to the project. The plans themselves should be prepared by mixed professional teams and must include, as well as indigenous experts with local knowledge those professionals who will stay with the scheme through its implementation. Wherever possible there should be continuing public consultation; the inhabitants of a town are the ones who actually create the town and its community. Their support is essential.
4. Concentrate responsibility for the construction of as many community facilities as possible with one agency and those



4. facilities for which you are not responsible use marketing and any other devices to create confidence.
5. Building a large new development is a very complex exercise. Some have called new town development sophisticated chaos. You will receive abundant advice and pressures telling you what you have to do and what not to do. More than anything else you need political support and people who are prepared to stick their necks out, take decisions, make errors and above all to get on with the job. Glossy consultants' reports will not build new towns. The only way to do it is to get your boots dirty.

But those of us living in the more privileged parts of our world can so easily be complacent and ignorant of the realities of expanding metropolitan and urban development elsewhere. The industrialized countries comprise only 25% of the world's population and urbanization for us concerns mainly the middle class - middle income group who are mobile, own cars and are able to show an increasing preference for living in smaller towns, less dense areas and in the suburbs, whereas in the less developed countries, slum and squatter settlements are increasing at twice the speed of the urban population and at four times the speed of overall population increases (Habitat, Nairobi, 1984). The poor who comprise the majority of those affected face a bleak future and as pressures on the urban

areas increase, human nature being what it is, the attitudes of the 'haves' harden towards the 'have nots'. In many countries as urbanization accelerates solutions, including that of conventionally subsidized mass housing, become inadequate and always there is the problem of insufficient financial sources.

This conference and Mr. Psomopoulos's paper, in particular, perform a service in delineating the problems and setting the global scene; the next steps have got to be realistic, pragmatic and immediate for the sake of no less than the future of the world.