Toward the Development of a Comprehensive Planning Machinery for Metropolitan Areas

Industrial and post-industrial technological change has made possible societal and environmental change of an unprecedented nature. Urbanization, a manifestation of such change, has taken place at such speed that it is providing one of the greatest challenges to Man's innate desire to comprehend, and lend order to, society and its environment.

The metropolis, the apothesis of the urbanization process, compounds the problem of comprehension and control. It distorts to a maximum the imbalance that exists in society. Within any one country it provides the focal point for the greatest concentration of population, skills, services and wealth, and yet, at the same time, within itself there is often found the greatest poverty and illhealth. To correct this imbalance does not require, as early writers (such as Howard and Wright) on the urban crisis have implied, the elimination of the metropolis. However it does require that in bringing about economic and social improvements to the nation as a whole, we turn our attention to the metropolis. For, given our present state of technology, high standards of social and economic welfare are produced only as a result of (whether this be either directly or indirectly) concentration on a metropolitan scale. A way must be sought by which the good things in the metropolis can be made available to a greater part, and hopefully all, of society and the bad things eliminated. Essentially, this first requires a comprehension of the forces of societal and environmental change and their interaction and, following from this comprehension, an organized re-orientation toward desired goals.

Our inability to comprehend is the product of our traditional single cause-effect accounting. Unfortunately, we cannot account for societal and environmental change in this manner — least of all in the metropolis. We have to recognize the complexity of the interdependence of urban subsystems before we can lend order to their direction of change.

The planned process of change in the metropolis must by truly comprehensive. The planning of sub-systems (such as that for transportation systems) must be considered within the context of the metropolitan region comprehensive plan. Likewise, the metropolis must be recognized as only a part, but integral part, of the nation as a whole. Perhaps it is even more important to stress that the traditional emphasis on land-use and service planning be adjusted to give equal consideration to economic, social, political and administrative activities. Te plan, in addition to presenting a model of a future situation must also present the process by which the desired future situation is to be realized and by which continual adjustments will be made to the plan.

The following description of a comprehensive plan, which emerged at the 1967 Toronto International Conference on Metropolitan Problems, organized by the Toronto Bureau of Municipal Research, is useful to note.

A comprehensive plan has previously been described by this writer as consisting of:

a) A model of an intended future situation with respect to i) specific economic, social, political and administrative activities; ii) their location within a geographic area; iii) the resources required; and iv) the structures, installations and landscape which are to provide the physical environment, for these activities; and

b) A programme of action and predetermined co-ordination of legislative, fiscal, administrative and political measures, formulated with a view to achieving the situation represented by the model (1).

The description an expansion of an earlier United Nations definition, is a useful one that applies equally to the metropolitan and non-metropolitan situation. Just as the above description of the plan implies that adjustments will probably be required to be made to the administrative and political structure so it also implies that a wider cross-section of society must be involved in playing a part in the planning process.

The findings of the same Toronto Conference indicate that experienced planners from both developing and developed countries prefer a

(1) Miles, Simon, *Report of Stage Three: The Seminar-Conference Toronto August 6-16, 1967, The Centennial Study and Training Programme on Metropolitan Problems*, page 10 (The Bureau of Municipal Research, Toronto, 1968).

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multi-purpose metropolitan-wide authority to many single-purpose metropolitan authorities.

However, the existence of an additional, or lower, tier of authorities (again multi-purpose), or even of deconcentrated administrative districts of the metropolitan body, is often thought desirable in orden to keep certain aspects of government services close to the people. The choice as to the number of tiers of local government must be made when one is faced with demarcating the metropolitan planning unit. This unit should embrace the socio-economic region of the metropolis, which is most easily delimited by the commuter zone. As Blumenfeld points out, the commuter zone can generally be defined as the area within 40 minutes travel time from the centre of the metropolis by the commonly accepted local form of transportation (2). Obviously, within a technologically advanced country, a metropolis could have an extremely extensive commuter zone making for a similarly extensive metropolitan tier of government. More properly we might refer to this as the metropolitan-region unit, henceforth.

The pattern of these regions as they are developed across the country and the allocation of the functional responsibilities to the different levels of government will depend both on societal values and on the resources (human and otherwise) available.

Because of the interest of all members of society in having access to a city and because of the advantages of the large as opposed to the small urban centre, it becomes desirable to encourage the development of metropolitan-focused regions across the entire country. In Japan, where a flexible pattern of regions is emerging, the emphasis has been upon economic development. It is in the large metropolitan centers that most of the urbanization is taking place; their hinterlands are relatively lacking in urban development. Poland, on the other hand, makes a conscious effort to bring the services of an urban centre within close physical proximity to all members of society and a fairly rigid hierarchical system urban centres has been developed across the country. The French approach lies somewhat in between these two extremes in that a system of deconcentrated administrative regions has been developed to encourage economic growth in designated urban centres and at the same time to enable the local prefectures to play a greater part in planning the development of their region. However, the compromise is one which neither satisfies the demand for greater economic concentration (and hence, given the nature of economic growth, fewer growth poles) nor that of participation which, in this instance is limited to local adjustment to central policy. In Yugoslavia, the policy has fluctuated from that of intense concentration of economic activities in Belgrade, to improve the national economy as a whole, to one of similarly direct deconcentration of economic development to the (especially poorer) provinces with the objective of improving the social well-being of the population of poorer regions. For developing countries, the most important national objective is to reach a point of economic 'take-off' and consequently a smaller number of metropolitan centres may be desirable.

Whatever the number of centres of growth and levels of government, functional assignment to different levels of government must be carried out in a way which will assume integration of action. More attention must be given to strategie planning whereby key levers available to any one level of government can control either positively or negatively, the activities of lower levels of government and of private enterprise. Essentially, senior governments are responsible for ensuring that long and medium range plans are implemented (whether through central government actions or those of others), whereas local and metropolitan governments are responsible for implementing short range plans. Slight variation on the responsibilities of metropolitan-region governments will vary according to their territorial size. The asignment of development levers must be made with this in mind. These levers decline in number with the extension of the time and space horizons of the plan. The Report of the 1967 Toronto International Conference on Metropolitan Problems, referred to earlier, identifies some of the major levers open to different levels of government.

(T)here are few levers available to the senior government, although examples of these might be port location (or the relative significance of different locations and the implications of such developments as the St. Lawrence Seaway); airport location (the location of a third major airport in S. E. England is a national rather than local issue); railway and major highway location; provision of power supply (especially significant in those countries which do not have adequate power coverage for all parts of the country); and the selection of development areas (both new towns and regional development projects). The fulfillment of those functions for which the central government is responsible should also be seen with this strategic role in mind. Por example, the location, and even precise siting, of national defence facilities and major government offices will have considerable effect upon the activities of lower levels of government and private enterprise.

Key levers available to the metropolitan or regional governments are: the provision or location of major transportation links such as expressways and rapid rail transit (including the number and location of access points); the provision of major sewer and water (and, in some cases, power) facilities; the location of major institutions such as hospitals and universities; the location of regional parks; and, the location of major shopping centres.

Key levers available to local government and designed to stimulate private development are the provision or location of certain health and welfare institutions, schools, local streets, sewers and water (and in some cases, power) supply, and local parks. ... (H)ousing should not be used as a lever. This list is by no means complete, since different strategies of development have to be adopted according to local conditions. The point to be made is that by utilizing these levers of development, flexibility is still provided for private enterprise and lower levels of government in pursuing their respective roles. Also while these key levers have been described more in terms of their impact on spatial development (location, etc.) the timing of implementation is obviously just as important a lever.

The other type of lever open to governments is the provision of financial support or incentive for development (3).

The complexity of this comprehensive strategic planning is that it calls for an expectation of

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(2) Blumenfeld, Hans, "The Modern Metropolis", *Scientific American*, New York, September 1965.

(3) Miles, Simon, *op. cit.*, page 42.

many developments persuant to one action. In real life this is what happens but the position is that we cannot anticipate accurately which actions will ensure the desired results. More developed technologies are now seeing the emergence of fairly sophisticated techniques for plan evaluation prior to plan implementation. Indeed, computers and systems analysis can be of assistance in all aspects of the comprehensive planning process. However, the author would wish to make quite clear the drawbacks of these techniques in a developing country. Until such time as accurate data are available, and not just plentiful data, the computer will be more expensive and less accurate a means for evaluating the plan than is the calculated guessing process. What must be ensured in utilizing this the calculated guessing takes place only after those charged with guessing have consulted with all persons responsible for all activities that influence the subject area under consideration. To the extent that this integration is formalized, so it will call for a multi-purpose area-wide governmental body. To the extent that it is informal, it will require well-educated and well-trained administrators and decision-makers. In fact the two are required. Both are possible — the former being more rapidly available than the latter which calls for long-term educational programmes. However the start toward comprehensive planning can, be made immediately with municipal reform and the assignment of responsibilities according to a programme for comprehensive strategic planning along the lines indicated above and influenced by the values of the population of the country in question.

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Urban Migration and Acculturation

The urbanization of planet earth —undoubtedly the most significant fact of the Twentieth Century— will probably take its place with the agricultural and industrial revolutions as marking the most profound changes in man's environment and the cultural changes resulting from his attempt adapt to that environment. This enviro-cultural transformation —population density and pollution in its environmental dimension and anonymity and bureaucratization in its cultural dimension— not only produces the bulk of the social problems man faces today, but generates the psychological barriers to the solutions of these problems as well.

The process of urbanization, which appears to be a century-long undertaking and which manifests varying characteristics in different areas of the world, is remarkably uniform in its overall patterns and effects. Thus, while in the United States (in contrast to Latin America) social and economic modernization ocurred simultaneously in the cities and the coutryside thereby enabling displaced rural youth to pursue careers in the urban based professions, the exclusion of one area of the nation, the rural south, from the modernization process, has resulted in the delayed migration of thousands of rural negroes into the nation's core cities. As a consequence, both the United States and Latin America are currently experiencing what Professor Halpern calls the "peasantization of cities" — the populating of urban centers with people who have rural values and life styles.

Seen in this light, the fundamental problem facing the nations of the hemisphere undergoing rapid urbanization is that of acculturation. That is, an understanding of urban migration and its effects must be based upon knowledge of the social and psychological mechanisms by which large groups of people who have been prepared to live in a social system dominated by face to face relationships, who have internalized the values of community solidarity and economic independence and whose behavior patterns are based upon convention, are confronted with the prospect of living in a social system dominated by bureaucratic relationships, whose values are secular, rational and individualistic and whose behavior patterns must be subject to impersonal, institutionalized controls.

The Sixth University Seminar of the Twelfth Congres of the Inter-American Municipal Organization will focus its attention primarily upon the acculturation process in the metropolitan area as it takes up the theme, "The Municipality Faced with the Problem of Internal Migration." The program is designed to consider this problem from a number of different perspectives. Urban migration is seen as resulting from a cultural revolution in the countryside which is not only driving people into the cities but is producing a certain pattern of life in the urban centers to which they go. The gap between these patterns and the behavioral requirements of urban life create barriers to acculturation which, in turn, create the conditions under which large masses of pleople are available for political mobilization by ambitious political elites. A final aspect of the problem has to do with the resources and techniques available to the society to provide the minimal urban services to the "barrios pobres" — urban sub-communities which, because of economic weakness, technological backwardness and traditional behavioral patterns, find it difficult to sustain self generating urban development.