

STATE OF THE PROFESSION

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(elements of his speech, held in Stockholm, 1981))

Complexity and Responsibility

Since its creation, AIU/ISoCaRP, and more specifically in its Text Programme (LYON 1967) has committed itself to analyse several factors of this complexity and its relation with the planning profession.

Thus a progressive and continuing procedure has been initiated to deal with clearly defined themes, congress after congress, which has enabled ISoCaRP until today - and I hope also in the future - to better understand planning in its complexity and its evolution, and to develop a better competence in the practice of our profession and of all those who work towards the same task.

The major characteristic of any urban project is its complexity

Urban projects are complex: apart from their physical, geographical, functional dimension, other elements are at stake: political, social, economic, cultural, architectural, the management of the built environment and other activities of the public and private sector.

This complexity puts a heavy responsibility on planning

The planner has always been concerned with material aspects, taking care of defining the spatial planning of territories and urban design. These tasks were favoured by a basic education which was in most cases that of the architect or geographer who developed spatial perception. But this is not enough any more.

The urban project is interdisciplinary in its essence Planning is team-work

To enable the Planner to relate to different disciplines and their specialities which lead to planning, the planner must have - above his initial competences as regards spatial matters - knowledge on the contribution of each discipline: sociology, economy, culture, politics.

Hence, the importance of education and of interdisciplinary practice

The work of AIU/ISoCaRP (Aix-en-Provence, Tunis etc.) has already thoroughly dealt

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with this problem, but today we have to note that examples remain rare.

The planner's approach progresses with time

The urban project can be defined in general terms, it is progressive though in its application. Interferences of all kinds show up: conflicts, contradictory interests, economic context, the evolution of political perceptions, the general public. Adaptations, compromises have to occur.

Contrary to the architect, the planner does not carry out his work alone. He has to adapt it and adjust all the time in conjunction with his partners.

Third source of complexity: the management of conflicts

The planner has to devise, to propose solutions - respecting the main lines defined earlier and preserving the future. His profession evolves more and more towards the **task of mediator, of negotiator**. He has to listen, without prejudice, and to understand the different actors in each sector, to help them in the dialogue between them, to perceive the collective interest.

And there, the planners are on the edge of a razor, facing influences of contradictory interest groups.

Urban projects are firstly of a political nature, which progressively materialises through operational actions. The planner has to take care of translating and rewriting these actions - through dialogue which he stimulates. He has to propose an operational methodology, elaborate the programme and the documents and to monitor and control their operational implementation while being well aware of not signing away future options.

But we should not forget that the planner is subjected to moral, social, political pressures of conflicting interests in the transcription of a political urban project.

In all these steps, there is risk of failure of initiative! Planners participate in actions which can have effects on economic and social justice. Their proposals and transcriptions can lead to profits for some and to negative consequences for others and at the same time create privileges and disadvantages.

Thus this major responsibility implies a great rigour for planners, an ethic, a deontology which, although they apply to the planning profession as a whole are essentially personal.