

## STATE OF THE PROFESSION

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President 1981-1984*

### Resolution of Crisis

1. Let us imagine a being from another planet visiting our world for the first time; and he asks many people the questions " What is the planning profession?" and "What is the state of it?".
2. From all the answers he may well come to the conclusion that there is a crisis of identity as to who we are: a crisis of purpose as to what we do: and that therefore the profession is in a critical state.
3. Let us also imagine that he asks "What is the state of your human settlements, your regions, towns and countryside?"
4. Would he come to the conclusion that they too are in a critical state?
5. Would he not think it odd - or perhaps typical of earth's human affairs - that planners were so evidently needed to help solve the crisis in human settlements - yet felt so unwanted and appeared so unappreciated.
6. The visitor to this World might visit the "World Bank" and find they do not know or register the "planner" as a profession or a skill which can help the World!
7. How can we explain this paradox to our visitor from space?
8. We might say it is a fault of communication in a noisy and complex world. We do not communicate among ourselves as planners and agree our identity and purpose: We do not tell our clients what we are and what we can do.
9. But considering the 20 years in which this Society of ISoCaRP has been active; communicating, exchanging ideas and experience; building up our identity; and considering the analysis of the State of the Profession contributed by our three Past Presidents, **I wish to suggest that our profession has now grown to a state when we can resolve the crisis:** We are ready to move from a critical state to a stable state.
10. The Chinese Character for crisis also means "dangerous opportunity". The time has come to seize this opportunity and to agree on who we are; announce what we can do.
11. Turning the crisis into this opportunity is dangerous because:
  - we may not agree among ourselves on who we are and thus make confusion worse confounded;

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Lyddon

- we still may not be understood by our clients and asked to work;
  - by stabilising on our identity, we may lose flexibility and the ability to change and develop.
12. I think our profession is strong enough to overcome those dangers; to take the risk and to seize the opportunity.
  13. How can we do it? I suggest two initiatives or two "communications":
    - a. An **ISoCaRP Charter** which states what physical planning is and what planners can contribute to the improvement of human settlements;
    - b. An **ISoCaRP Framework** into which we can weave our work so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts; greater than the results of each individual congress; and so that stability becomes fertility and continuity.
  14. If you agree our profession is now in a state to make these two statements, we will need to work at them. I can here only outline some ideas for each.

### **ISoCaRP Charter**

15. The statement will need to be short and specifically addressed to our clients. It will need to be in the form of "les idées forces", while avoiding "les idées fixes".
16. I would suggest there could be 3 sections:
  - a. What type of planning are we talking about?
  - b. What type of administrative system or client body is needed for planning to operate?
  - c. What unique capability can our profession offer to our clients?

I make some remarks on each of these.

### ***Type of Planning***

17. We all plan: a family; a holiday; the household budget. Planning is a basic human activity: it involves essentially making arrangements for the future.
18. It is a healthy activity: the World Health Organisation definition of health is " A healthy man, woman or organisation seeks and solves problems". Not to seek and solve problems is to be morbid, to be sick.
19. Noting then there are all types of private and public planning; what type of problems can we say we seek and attempt to solve in physical planning?
20. Basically I suggest **we are making arrangements for the future use of space by people**: and we attempt to secure that those arrangements are carried out.

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Lyddon

21. We can neither make those arrangements in a plan, nor secure that the arrangements are carried out by control or implementation, in an administrative vacuum.
22. Some form of planning system is necessary for us to operate efficiently and effectively. We note however that planning is also the management of uncertainty.

### *Type of System*

23. Here I will betray no doubt my planning origins, but I cannot avoid the conclusion that our Charter must state two foundation blocks and then five pillars, on which any planning system must be built if it is to be effective.
24. The two foundations of wider public policy are:
  - a. Some means of capturing for the community the increase in land value arising from physical change.
  - b. Some means of ensuring the participation of the community in decisions which concern them.
25. These are both issues of public policy which go wider than physical planning and should not be part of the planning system alone; but they are a vital foundation for any system, and on them I erect my 5 pillars. to define these pillars I would like first to go back to my basic definition of physical or spatial planning in para. 20 as "making arrangements for the future use of space by people". The arrangements will be concerned essentially **with change in the use of land or space; promoting or controlling** these changes. If this is accepted, then the 5 pillars or essential components of the planning system may be described as follows:
  - a. Definition of **type of change** in the use of land or building, which is to be the subject of the arrangements.
  - b. The allocation of a right or power to **make the arrangements** (i.e. to plan).
  - c. The need for permission to make the defined changes (separate from permission to build).
  - d. Right of appeal against refusal of permission.
  - e. The means of making arrangements at different scales and of resolving conflicts between scales.
26. If our Charter can define physical planning, and the elements of the system necessary for it to work, then we can go on to suggest the particular contribution which our profession can make.

### *The Job and Capability of the Physical Planner*

27. Since our profession first established the need to devote particular attention to the form and function of cities and regions, new professions and disciplines concerned with the evolution of human settlements have emerged; dealing with for example economic development, transport, social problems, housing, recreation and ecology. Most of these share with planners a common knowledge base.

28. Clearly one of our roles is to contribute to the federation of these skills engaged in seeking and solving the many problems of human settlements.
29. Such transdisciplinary work is for many problems essential: it involves sinking one's identity in the corporate team; while being clear where our particular contribution and capability lies.
30. Has our identity become too submerged? Have we become excited by new types of work, but which others may do equally well and lost sight of what it is we are uniquely skilled to do.
31. We should not let the **knowledge base** we have in common with many other disciplines absorb our **capability** to plan.
32. How should we express this capability? Here are some ideas:

The way land is used or re-used is important in all countries: our business is the rational use of land.

Physical planning is necessary in every country to pave the way for efficient and effective, physical action.

We join with others in the science of analysis, taking things to bits - but we **specialise** in the craft of synthesis; which is putting things together; making a coherent whole out of the parts.

**Function** asks for analysis, but **form** based on function seeks for synthesis.

Analysis of function relies on words and numbers, but form is based on revealing spatial relationships, through the visual image at a variety of scales simultaneously. We offer a view of the urban or rural tissue, a vision of the shape of place which responds to the territorial imperative for physical identity.

### *Who are the Clients*

33. Can we offer our clients some form of Charter like this which attempts to define the subject, the system, our capability? We will need to balance clarity with humility; this will come from understanding our clients.
34. We have I suggest 3 types of client:
  - a. Those who commission and pay us.
  - b. Those who act on our plans - that is the developer.
  - c. Those who suffer or benefit from our plans - the citizens.
 But also we serve the living, the dead, and those yet to be born.
35. This should give us humility. But we should also note that in some cultures and languages - certainly in English - the "planner" is anybody who makes a mistake. When planning works it goes unnoticed as the natural order of things (perhaps just because it is a natural and healthy activity).
36. In his State of Profession address in 1969, Sam van Embden, our first President,

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Lyddon

said: "We have to learn to plan as if we were not planning. This is more a question of mental attitude than of method; more of wisdom than of knowledge."

## ISoCaRP Frame

37. If then we succeed in communicating externally to our potential clients what we are and what we can do, how can we communicate among ourselves in such a way that adds to our wisdom and experience?  
Again I wish to suggest that the State of our Profession, that is the state of understanding we have built up between us in ISoCaRP, should allow us to move forward on this front.
38. Starting with the Text Programme Lyon, we have always looked for a relationship and continuity between the subjects we discuss at congresses and seminars. At present we have a theme "Implementation and Partners" which runs through three congresses.
39. Can we go further than this and look for a framework which will allow us to relate the **function** of each subject to the **form** of our profession?
40. We need to discuss this in great depth, but to start that discussion I would propose four "vertical columns" in our frame or matrix which would be:
  - a . **The changes** that have taken place and are coming in future.
  - b. **The current ability of planning** to deal with these changes.
  - c. **The research**, knowledge, understanding, of these changes which we need, in order to plan for them better.
  - d. **The new objectives** or improved practice which we should attempt to establish.
41. In each one of these vertical columns we could list the results of our past work and case studies. Reading horizontally we will find relationships and gaps. Future subjects and case studies can be related through all four columns. For example: for the Berlin Congress, 1985: the influence of implementation practice of economic changes, and the state of planning, looking for results for research and changes in practice.
42. Or by taking one "column" theme, such as Research in 1986, we could structure the congress to determine the research needed to improve practice in the light of current state of planning and economic or social changes: and at the same time record and revive the results of the Rome seminar.
43. I must apologize if, in a few words, I have not made myself clear: but I think we could find some way of recording and evolving our work in order to achieve continuity.

## Conclusion

44. In summary I have tried to suggest that after 20 congresses, 5 seminars, and 3 presidential reviews of the State of the Profession our Society and our profession is now in a state when we can and should:
  - a. Resolve the crisis of identity and respond to the crisis in human settlements
    - by stating who we are,
    - by announcing what services we can offer.
  - b. Evolve a framework for co-ordinating our discussions and seeking wisdom with humility.
  
45. I propose that we should produce an ISoCaRP Charter and an ISoCaRP Frame to show that our profession has "come of age" internationally and to celebrate, next year, the Society's 21st birthday.