



Introductory Report by the General Rapporteur Fernanda Magalhães

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In our contemporary context, where the role of cities is fundamental, planning is a fundamental requisite for the provision of healthy, well-balanced and satisfying urban lifestyles for their citizens. A TRIALOGUE among the urban community, the public and the private sectors is now emerging as a matter of central importance. One hundred and twenty papers from thirty-eight countries clearly underline the relevance of this shift of emphasis. The move towards the use of a TRIALOGUE as a planning instrument might easily be interpreted as remarkable - a new paradigm in the profession. It means, in essence, the emergence of a new and dominant form of operation for the planning profession through the use of urban contracts. In these new potential contractual arrangements, skills such as negotiation and conflict resolution are essential if the partnerships are to be fruitful and consistent.

There is a widespread and ongoing complex process of de-centralization taking place within Local Governments. They are increasingly gaining new responsibilities for reshaping and redeveloping urban space. This goes well beyond their traditional role of simply being legislators and regulators. This new range of work has not always been accompanied by an increase in resource allocations. On the contrary, resources, adversely, have been shrinking. Effective strategies and creative visioning are now rapidly becoming the key elements in choosing the best and most effective use of available, and often limited, resources so as to spin off positive impacts and generate sustainable development – long term. Planners are being asked to advise the decision makers in their selection of key strategic sectors and projects which could have a multiplier effect for the creation of significant urban benefit and other added knock-on social and physical gains.

Planners and public agents must, therefore, learn a variety of new skills and take on, at the same time, new roles such as, for example, conflict mediation, negotiation and facilitation. These skills are mandatory requirements if the interests and viewpoints of the different stakeholders are to be reconciled. At the same time, they must learn how to mobilize the best available community and private sector resources. Creativity, politics and imagination are fundamental ingredients for growth and prosperity.

At the present time, the private sector is becoming increasingly important as a prime mover of urban development projects. The main challenge is how to balance its specific and legitimate need to generate profit. At the same time, the public interest must also be served. This duality of interest can be particularly onerous in projects where the commercial returns are likely to be low. Local Governments are now required to work in harmony with private companies and non-governmental organizations. Public Private Partnerships have a significant potential for creating synergies among the three sectors in a number of productive ways. The role of Local Government in Public Private Partnerships is also a key to providing mutual equity in terms of a more democratic distribution of benefits and profits, capturing them for public purposes, and establishing appropriate setups to allow active and real community participation. It is, of course, often necessary for the public sector to assume a degree of risk so as to ensure the viability of a project. This can often be achieved, among others, through A) the provision of land, B) fiscal incentives, C) special zoning determinations

and D) relaxation of building ordinances All of these measures appear to be the price that Local Government must pay to achieve their public policy objectives.

Flexible planning instruments coupled with development incentives, beside the more conventional and institutional ones of regulation and control – Master Plans, Zoning and Building Codes etc, are more than ever required. Those instruments are now a fact of life especially if the public sector is to become an equal and significant partner in the contemporary development process.

In this Congress, many authors have focused their attention on the topic of PROCESS and the questions that it raises. These include: 1. How can a shared vision among the different stakeholders be achieved? How can they be encouraged to participate in a TRIALOGUE? What tools and processes must we use to accomplish interesting scenario building? What sorts of general and particular difficulties do we face? Is a TRIALOGUE sufficiently fit for purpose or, do we need something even more comprehensive? In short, is a TRIALOGUE a real possibility or is it just a planning pabulum, a passing ephemera!

A number of contributors have been concerned about present day PLANNING practice and the many questions now surrounding it. They include: What sort of change is modern day planning facing? What is the role, if any, of traditional planning procedures in contemporary strategic planning? What new dynamics are being exerted on planning as a result of the pressures of globalization? What planning methods are we developing to help deal with rapidly changing urban dynamics? What is the relationship, if any, between our visions for the future and the development of strategic projects? Perhaps, it is in this sense of questioning, more than any other, that the many case studies presented here from all around the world, strongly highlight the richness and diversity of planning tools, practices and perspectives whether at local, municipal, metropolitan or regional level.

Last, but not least, USERS are clearly positioned as the foundational basis for the TRIALOGUE. This, in itself, also poses a number of questions. What, for example, is meant by meaningful participation? In what way do the size of a city (large/small) and its urban diversity represent a challenge or impediment to the empowerment process? How does the process move beyond simple consultation procedures to becoming truly representative? How can meaningful representative and reliable working partnerships be built? Are end users and social institutions getting the attention and response they deserve? What is the relative importance of power and money in the process? This latter question is, perhaps, the most powerful question of them all.