Planning for the 21st Century

Sten Engelstoft

This paper attempts to develop some questions relating to the future of European cities. It has three key elements: (1) an evaluation of the renewed and increasing interest in urban problems, (2) an identification of the main trends and problems associated with the future functions of our cities and finally, within this framework (3) an evaluation of the possible links between science and technology on the one hand and cities on the other.

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REVIVAL OF URBAN CONSCIOUSNESS

In the developed industrial world, cities are both the place where social demand is generated and managed and where, in an increasingly global scientific and technological context, new modes of industrialization, new forms of transport, information, communication and technology-based services are being created. The effects of a large unified European market will accentuate these phenomena by offering cities new perspectives and generating new problems. It is expected that the more technology and the economy internationalize and globalize, the more cities will recuperate both a *local and global* function as the importance of the national economy is reduced.

After experiencing years of decline, European cities have entered a new historic phase of development, apparently revitalized by economic re-structuring, new technologies and other transformation processes. Despite these tendencies, it can be argued that many cities remain in crisis. The problems they face are very different from those of 20 years ago; city managers are grappling not only with the new pressures of growth but also with the legacies of the recent past, for example, traffic congestion, social deprivation, concentrations of ethnic minorities and environmental pollution.

Cities are also having to brace themselves to meet the new problems expected in the 1990s, for example:

- The triple challenge of international competition, Europe without internal trade barriers in 1993 and the globalization of the economy;
- population ageing and international migration;
- geo-political change in central and eastern Europe;
- multi-level institutional structures (for instance concerning the environment);
- impact of new technologies and innovations.

It will be an important challenge to the city, national and European institutions to alleviate the problems and adjust to meet the new challenges and opportunities. Only then will cities be able to play a full part in the inexorable movement towards adaptation and European integration. At the moment, the spirit of collaboration that is required between cities is often overshadowed by survival strategies based on the perception that cities are actually competing with each other in a zero-sum game.

This perception, the legacy of recent transformation problems and the new challenges and adaptations will undoubtedly influence the sustainability of our cities as well as their creative and innovative potential.

THE CATCHWORDS

Urban places, Cities, Towns, Metropolitan areas, have very much become the focus of attention in recent years. This is particularly true in connection with the quest for economic and industrial growth. The actual content and meaning of an urban concept is highly problematic; it often seems to be dependent on the context in which it is used (Drewett & Engelstoft, 1990). In the present paper, however, a city is regarded as an administrative body represented by decision makers or actors; it is a local region of particular 'power' depending to a large extent on the political set-up.

Cities all around Europe strive to position themselves in a new developing urban system, and the ideas of science-parks and technopolises, teleports, together with all kinds of investments designed to improve urban functionality are being continuously encouraged. At the same time however, a whole range of problems often associated with cities arise. These include pollution, traffic congestion, crime, delinquency and social problems. Urban problems and solutions to these problems, as well as urban potentials for growth and development are thus continuously and increasingly attracting the attention of politicians and researchers. For instance, in 1988 in France, the prime minister created a special committee on urban problems, a 'Délégation à la Ville' and the British House of Commons has recently had a vigorous debate on future investment in traffic solutions in London in order to improve the functionality of this city. In recent years, Danish political debate has included the possibilities of strengthening Copenhagen and the Copenhagen region (including the Malmö-Lund area in southern Sweden) to the possible

benefit of the whole area (Matthiessen, 1991; Matthiessen & Wärneryd, 1992).

The growing interest in urban problems can also be detected within the work of various national organizations and agencies. Recently, for instance, a new section of urban development has been set up as part of the Dutch Institute for the Organization of Applied Technology Research (INRO/TNO) in order to improve the future possibilities for strategic actions of individual cities. In Italy, this year's triennial conference in Milan ('Triennale di Milano') was dedicated to the future of European cities.

At the same time, the work of international organizations also reflects increasing interest in urban problems. In OECD in Paris, for instance, the 'Group of Urban Affairs' has within their new framework programme on 'Urban Affairs' launched a programme on 'Urban Impacts of Technological and Socio-Demographic Change', a programme particularly concerned with possible spatial consequences of new technologies. Furthermore, the OECD recently co-organized an international conference on 'Cities and New Technology'. Another example is a recent conference, organized by the Council of Europe, bringing individuals together, (politicians, civil servants, planners and private entrepreneurs), who are in one way or the other responsible for urban development. The purpose was to determine, on the basis of concrete examples, the paths followed by major towns in Europe in order to develop urban strategies and innovative programmes. Furthermore, the conference formed a part of the Council of Europe's effort to prepare an *'Urban Charter'*. All these activities together are a part of a vast number of ventures related to the increasing interest in urban problems.

Within the Commission of the European Communities, the increasing interest in urban problems can be seen by the expanding number of programmes dealing with various urban-related problems, which are currently being undertaken. However, whilst no formal urban policy exists, the growing awareness that urban problems are important may be detected by the fact that at least four of the EC-General Directorates (DG's) are presently involved in major programmes concerned with urban issues of some kind: These are the General Directorate for Employment, Social Affairs and Education, The General Directorate for Environment, the General Directorate for Science and Research, and the General Directorate for Regional Policies.

The individual cities themselves have also become more aware of their potential as important actors within all kinds of activities: In recent years, several networks of cities have been established for different purposes. The 'EUROCITIES' is such an example, started and run by the cities themselves in order to fulfil *the desire of a certain number of large European cities to value the interests and*
European conceptions of cities before the Community institutions and the national governments (EC-newsletter, 1990); thus it is clearly a political instrument created in order to influence policy-making.

MAIN PROBLEMS IN RECENT URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The inherent diversity that exists in the European urban system makes it difficult to generalize about development trends. Nevertheless, cross national comparative urban research has identified similar evolutionary trends which exist across varying national contexts; what varies is the level of development that each national urban system has reached (Hall & Hay, 1980; Cheshire & Hay, 1988).

Whatever the level, post-war Europe has experienced dramatic changes within its urban systems as well as within the structure of the individual cities. All countries of Western Europe have faced some form of urban expansion. A development trajectory of Northwest Europe illustrates some key aspects. Some of the aspects of the developments described in the following can also be identified in southern-, central- and eastern European cities although it has been argued that the underlying mechanisms are culturally determined and therefore the relevance of transferability of experience is questioned (Leontidou, 1990).

In the 1970s, due to rapidly increasing incomes, rising standards of living and a booming car-ownership, (combined with a decreasing quality of life in the major cities), the areas surrounding the larger cities went through a remarkable period of 'growth'. This growth took place firstly in terms of population and later in employment and economic activities outside the traditional city areas. It was a growth associated with economic transformation related to the decline of traditional urban manufacturing industries and the decay and urban obsolescence of inner city areas. Tertiarization, diversification, and rationalization of industries took the form of an 'economic suburbanization' which expressed itself through growth of small and medium sized subdominant cities. The result was a network of dominant and subdominant cities, emerging as a consequence of technological innovations within transport and communication; by some researchers the development was even referred to as desurbanization (Berg et al., 1982). From a research point of view, the development led to an urban systems perspective on urban structures rather than the earlier focus on individual cities. This stage of modern urban development is sometimes described as a period of 'antimetropolism' (Vonk, 1989). The period was dominated by policy ideas on general decentralization, self (local) government, and 'city-social' problems such as better quality housing and

urban renewal, i.e. problems relating to the consumption process (the sphere of reproduction) were in political focus. During this period one might generally talk of a comparatively large scale of public involvement, including attempts of various types of planning in the social and economic processes.

In the 1980s however, trends have given rise to considerable debate because of uncertainties arising from lack of sufficient empirical evidence. Certainly one view is that the 1970 pattern, referred to above, has consolidated itself with only one important new dimension: the core areas of the urban networks have started to be revitalized. The period may be described under the headings of 'reurbanization' and 'urban revitalization'. The cities of Europe have witnessed a considerable revival of their older inner city areas. Obsolescent physical structures of earlier years have been demolished and replaced by new ones; some of the most striking examples are the transformation of old harbour-related industrial areas such as the London Docklands. The examples are numerous. It is typical however, that the majority of projects have come into being through some kind of public/private venture rather than as straightforward publicly-planned development.

The urban changes of the 1980s, in contrast to the changes of the 1970s, have been dominated by a complete restructuring of the urban economy. Within this period, most larger towns have experienced further decreases in jobs in traditional manufacturing industries and simultaneous growth in what could be described as business-related tertiary employment; this has become relatively more important because of general industrial decline. The changes have been carried out and financed primarily by private investment (banks, insurance companies, pension funds etc.). Due to central government retrenchment, this development has also been characterized by privatization. These changes are often referred to as urban revitalization. It is characteristic that growth has essentially taken place in the private sector, notably in the sphere of production - goods and services.

Along with industrial restructuring, the cities have experienced the simultaneous rise of completely new lifestyles associated with the people engaged in the new activities. An influx of new well-to-do groups has led to widespread gentrification, and the increasing importance of business and leisure trip visitors has resulted in a massive increase in demand for various cultural facilities, goods and services. In fact, the rising demand for cultural events has been used as a feature or instrument in the revitalization process. In particular, American academic literature is rich in new words invented to describe the new urban actors: YUPpies (Young Urban Professionals), SINKIes (Single No Kids), DINKIes (Double Income No Kids) and TWINKIes (Two Incomes Nanny and Kids).

URBAN TRENDS AND PROBLEMS OF THE FUTURE

Today, we are thus confronted with a series of problems associated with urban restructuring in the Western World; it is comparatively easy to describe and explain the present situation. Similarly, it is easy to speculate into the future as long as present trends are taken for granted; the problem is which tendencies will continue, which will change and which new ones will be added? Furthermore, the tendencies identified are often conflicting and it is difficult to establish which ones will be dominant in the future. There is little doubt, however, that the following problems or issues will prove important to the future of urban Europe:

Urban Social Tensions and Associated Potential Conflicts

The size of the total urban population is relatively stable but the composition of the urban population is changing rapidly. This is true demographically as well as ethnically. As a consequence, future urban populations will be highly polarized. On the one hand, we will encounter an ageing population and at the same time a growth in the number and size of ethnic groups (partly due to migration and partly due to higher fertility). On the other hand, industrial restructuring will create an increasing group of new, well-educated, well-paid, urban professionals. The equalizing effect of a growing middle class, which has been characteristic of the post-war period, now seems to be surpassed by new social divisions and a so-called *two thirds society* is appearing. Associated with this development, increasing social tensions will inevitably emerge as a growing number of *social conflicts*.

Structural Unemployment due to a continuing Restructuring of the Urban Industries

The change in the type of economic activities associated with cities is transforming the locational pattern of these activities. In turn, the demand for labour and people with special types of qualifications has needed changes. This development will emerge in the form of increasing structural unemployment: lack of skilled personnel within the new urban industries and at the same time growing unemployment within the unskilled labour force. Even though the problem is more complex than described above, in general terms it can be characterized as an emerging *urban skill-gap*.

Increasing Environmental Problems and a Deterioration of the Urban Environment

The environmental consequences of economic growth have manifested themselves clearly during the last decade. Size, as well as complexity, has made environmental

problems a central political issue which implies large investments, if significant improvements are to be achieved. Increasing urban pollution due to an expanding number of cars, rise in solid as well as fluid waste etc seems to be the inevitable result, and declining urban *environmental quality* is possible.

Urban Economic Crises relating to a Lack of Correspondence between the Functionality and Formality of Urban Areas

Within many countries of the Western World (particularly the so-called welfare states) the problem of combating unemployment and inflation whilst at the same time ensuring competitiveness and a positive balance of payments, has turned into a major dilemma. Changes in the composition of the urban population will inevitably lead to increasing expenditure on social and unemployment benefits. Unless new systems are designed to share the economic burdens of urban restructuring there is no doubt that an increasing number of urban *fiscal crises* will emerge, often closely related to the social conflicts.

The trends mentioned so far, are all characterized by being related to developments and restructuring processes which have already occurred or which are currently in progress. However, there are other important new tendencies which may be easy to identify but difficult to evaluate with regard to their full impact.

The Restructuring of Europe and the Position of Individual Cities under these new Conditions

Two events will influence and alter the regional preconditions in Europe completely. These are (1) the Single European Act i.e. the legislative framework of the Commission of the European Communities which has been designed to ensure the free movement of capital, goods, services and people within the Community, and (2) the crumbling of old regimes in Eastern Europe. Many people believe that the creation of a huge common European market, and eventually a single currency, will ultimately lead to a 'Europe of Regions'.

The term 'Europe of Regions' is somewhat blurred and ill- defined. However, in the present context, it refers to culturally and linguistically homogenous regions, often parts of national states but larger than municipalities. Regions such as Catalonia (E), Scotland (GB) or Bavaria (D) might provide good examples. If the importance of these regions as actors increases, there is no doubt that the position of the national state, on the other hand, will diminish. Hence, this development will change the position and possibilities of a number of regional capitals such as Milan, Barcelona and Hamburg. These cities will probably improve their possibilities as individual actors, whereas advantages hitherto enjoyed by national capitals

such as Copenhagen, Dublin or Lisbon might easily be at stake. Yet again, for cities such as Copenhagen or Berlin, the recent developments in Eastern Europe will offset their hinterlands, and thus improve their possibilities in the emerging new Europe.

Uncertainty about intra-governmental Decisions above the local (urban) level as well as inter-regional (urban) Competition

To the cities, which may be regarded as local areas or regions (though of a special kind and with specific problems), decision-making at the national or sectorial level poses particular problems. Such decisions often restrict the scope of action possible for the individual city. One typical example might be new national industrial legislation and labour market regulations, another would be new environmental directives. Inter-regional competition illustrates some of the paradoxes embedded in future urban development: Regional development often promotes fruitless competition between cities that ought to cooperate in order to obtain comparative advantages through specialization.

Decreasing public Resources (internationally (EC) as well as nationally)

The changing world economy has reduced the availability of public funds. In general, this is true nationally as well as internationally. The reunification of Germany and the democratization of Eastern Europe will no doubt increase competition for available international funding. Within the EC, support has already been designated for Eastern Europe. Presently, the current resources are comparatively limited, there is little doubt that further development in Eastern Europe and closer ties to the EC will change this. Regarding EC funding from an urban point of view, it is worthwhile to remember that at present it is not possible to direct community aid to cities as such. Aid from the regional funds may be given to regions eligible according to certain objectives. However, in many cases such areas are heavily urbanized, for instance 'objective-2' regions which are regions with specific industrial problems. Specific *urban* aid would require a community policy for urban areas, and, as mentioned earlier, such a policy does not exist at the moment.

Increasing public-private Ambiguity (i.e. the increasing Importance of the private Sector)

Privatization is one of the important megatrends in social development within the Western World. To some people this means that the welfare state, at least the Scandinavian model, is in crisis. If this is true, it will certainly lead to acute problems in the bigger cities with their concentrations of underprivileged groups. Basically, however, it is

clear that the tendency is to turn away from cost-intensive public engagements towards strengthening the responsibilities and potential of individuals as well as that of private and semi-private bodies, often through quasi-governmental institutions (QUANGOs). It is furthermore obvious that decreasing public funding increases the demand for private capital. This will typically be provided by financial institutions undertaking long-term investments, such as pension funds or investment companies. However, there is a danger associated with this development that is specifically related to the possible lack of democratic control. The efficiency of private or semi-private engagements is closely related to their ability and freedom to act. For instance, at a recent conference a representative from the London Dockland Development Corporation (LDDC, a typical QUANGO) expressed the view that public involvement in planning ought to be as 'laissez faire' as possible. Furthermore, he suggested that the LDDC had the advantage over local administrations in that they were able to take 'unpopular' decisions as they had no future elections to face(!).

There is little doubt however, that future success in urban development will be closely related to the ability to create market-based *managed* competition.

Increasing international Spatial (urban) Competition and Cooperation

Seen from outside Europe, there has been a fear that developments following the Single European Act will lead towards increasing European protectionism. Several firms outside the EC have thus expanded their engagements in Europe and invested heavily in EC countries. This is true concerning Swedish, Norwegian and Finnish investments and certainly with respect to Japanese capital. In particular, the Japanese have been politically conscious in this respect and are currently introducing a new car 'for a country called Europe'.

There is no reason to believe that these investments will decline in the future, and the inter-urban competition for investments will undoubtedly increase. In this competitive game, the individual cities, through 'image creation', will attempt to present themselves as attractive *international centres of economic activity, commerce, culture etc.* The success of the individual city in the future Europe, however, will be related to its ability to find (and use) its owv specific characteristics i.e. to use locally rooted skills and traditions. Cities have to find their niche in the emerging new European urban system. Furthermore, the ability of individual cities to cooperate with each other will be crucial. Cities that remain outside the various networks of cooperation will find it hard to sustain development.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In evaluating the urban future and its related problems, one has to distinguish between general trends in the development of the urban system (*mega trends* or general opportunities) and the individuality of any particular city (the so-called *heritage*). The *general opportunities* are constituted from factors which are related to common (global or international) tendencies including population dynamics, economic restructuring and social differentiation. Contrary to the general opportunities, the *heritage* is more difficult to define. It is connected with history and culture, and thus constituted by a variety of factors specifically related to a given locality. It includes tradition and conventions as well as life-styles and many other elements embedded in the local culture; it is a legacy. Heritage is thus an expression of a diversity of modes of activities, and the heritage is important to innovators who are actually working in a specific environment.

Technology may help us to improve the urban realm and environment. It is very important, however, to stress that technology is only a means and not an end in itself. Technology can provide us with invaluable skills and opportunities in our attempt to create better cities. New technologies may also, however, create new divisions and conflicts in the urban setting. If we introduce new technologies because of their inherent and absolute qualities rather than in relation to the specific social context in which they are used, we risk creating a new urban barbarism based on individual differences in the ability to employ new technology. Social alienation and conflict will be the inevitable result.

The city, with its highly developed *urban culture*, is *the very essence of contemporary society* and is *a strong image of societal processes, which are multidimensional in time and space*. It is the perfect place to develop the intricate relations between research and development (particularly with respect to growth through technology) as well as the ramifications and interchange of private/public infrastructure. The framework of *(urban) problems*, as well as the *(urban) possibilities* mentioned above, makes it highly important though, that we support and develop the whole spectre of 'urban attributes' and that we do not restrict ourselves to a sectorial search for economic or technical solutions aimed at ensuring the highest possible economic growth rates.

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