European Council of Town Planners
Conseil Européen des Urbanistes

The New Charter of Athens 2003

The European Council of Town Planners' Vision for Cities in the 21st century
Lisbon, 20 November 2003

Introduction

The European Council of Town Planners (ECTP) is confident that in the 21st century Europe will advance decisively towards the goal of integration. Within this developing framework, the ECTP presents a common and widely shared **Vision** on the future of European cities (Part A). This is a vision of a network of cities, which will:

- retain their cultural richness and diversity, resulting from their long history, linking the past through the present to the future;
- become connected in a multitude of meaningful and functional networks;
- remain creatively competitive whilst striving for complementarity and co-operation;
- contribute decisively to the well-being of their inhabitants and users;
- integrate the man-made and the natural elements of the environment.

Within the New Athens Charter 2003, the Vision also includes a framework for implementation (Part B) consisting of:

- a brief summary of the main issues and challenges that affect cities at the beginning of the third millennium;
- the commitments required by spatial planners in realising the Vision.

This 2003 version of the New Charter of Athens is addressed primarily to professional planners working throughout Europe and those concerned with the planning process – to give direction to their actions, for greater coherence in building a meaningful network of cities in Europe connected through time, at all levels and in all sectors.

Spatial planning is vital for the delivery of sustainable development. In particular, it concerns the prudent management of space, a critical natural resource, limited in supply, but with growing demands upon it. It also requires trans-disciplinary teamwork involving different skills at various scales in long-lasting processes. The particular attribute of the planning profession is its ability to take a range of issues into account and to translate them into spatial terms. The ECTP is aware of both the variety and the universality of the planning profession in Europe as it takes into account the rich diversity of its cities and regions.

PART A

The Vision

1. THE CONNECTED CITY

In the second half of the 20th century, many dire predictions about the future of European cities were expressed. They included the lowering of productivity, abandonment and implosion of central areas, rampant crime, heavy pollution and dramatic environmental degradation, as well as loss of identity. Happily, these predictions did not materialise, although today the cities of the Old Continent are far from ideal as they face daunting challenges.

In response, at the dawn of the new millennium, the European Council of Town Planners proposes its vision. Neither a utopia, nor an outlandish projection of technological innovations, it focuses on the *Connected City* – and is essentially a snapshot of how we would like our cities to be, now and in the future. This vision is a goal towards which we, the planners of Europe, are committed to work and to contribute, to the best of our professional abilities - a goal that can be achieved by the combined efforts of all honest stakeholders in the processes of sustainable urban development and management.

The connected city is comprised of a variety of connective mechanisms acting on different scales. These include tactile and visual connection to the built environment, as well as connections between a diversity of urban functions, infrastructure networks, and information and communication technologies.

Connecting Through Time

Ancient settlements were created to provide shelter and safety for people and to exchange products. They gave rise to organised societies, developed a wide range of skills, became highly productive and grew into powerful centres of civilisation. They were built in carefully selected places, maintaining a clear distinction between the city limits and the surrounding rural and natural areas, even when fortifications became obsolete and were removed.

Compared to urban areas in many other parts of the World, European cities are distinguished by a long history of development, closely reflecting the characteristics of the political, social and economic structures of nations. It is this history and diversity which has made them different.

By contrast, the cities of 21st century Europe are becoming more difficult to distinguish, as human activities, initially located within urban centres, are now spreading widely into the hinterland, consuming rural and natural areas. Transportation and other infrastructure networks, constructed to serve and connect these dispersed activities, actually fragment and degrade space – the major non-renewable natural resource. Slowly, but inexorably, the new complex networks link together small and large cities, so as to create an urban

continuum, already evident in many parts of Europe. In it, the classical cities become just a component of the new networks. The effects of this damaging trend inevitably must be addressed in any vision on the future of cities.

The future is built at every moment of the present through our actions. The past provides invaluable lessons for the future. In many respects, the city of tomorrow is already with us. There are many features of present city life which we cherish and value, and which we hope to bequeath to future generations. What is the basic problem with our existing cities? In our view, it is the lack of connectivity, not only in physical terms, but also in relation to time, which affects social structures and cultural differences. This does not just mean continuity of character in the built environment, but also continuity in identity, which is in our view an important value to be fostered in a dynamic world. For the future, the notion of the network city needs to be stressed, a series of poly-centric urban networks, many of which transcend national boundaries within the new Europe.

2. SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

Social balance

The future welfare of humanity requires people to be considered both as individuals, with specific freedoms of choice to be maintained, but also as communities connected to society as a whole. This is an important goal for the connected city, which is responsive to the interests of society as a whole, whilst having regard to the needs, rights and duties of various cultural groups and of individual citizens.

Facilitating multi-cultural expression and exchanges among different social groups is necessary but not sufficient. There are large economic disparities to be tackled within the European Union, which are seemingly generated by the present system of free markets, competition, and globalisation. If these trends continue, they will lead to the rupture of the social and economic fabric. To avert this, a new approach to governance must emerge, involving all stakeholders, and tackling social problems, such as unemployment, poverty, exclusion, criminality and violence. Thus the city which is connected socially will be able to provide a high degree of security and sense of ease.

Although these noble social objectives go beyond the scope of the planners' mandate, the connected European city of the 21st century will also provide a wide range of economic and employment opportunities for all people living and working within it. At the same time, it will secure for them better access to education, health and other social facilities. New forms of social and economic structures will provide the diverse framework required to eliminate social disruption created by imbalances.

Involvement

Future European cities will be used not only by resident citizens, but also by other consumers of their facilities and services on a permanent or a temporary basis

(commuters and visitors). There will be foreign low-skilled workers, as well as highly educated professionals (residing for long or short periods). Most probably these two groups will figure prominently in the activities of a number of cities. As a consequence, democratic institutions will respond to the needs and well-being of all these social groups. Current systems of urban governance, limited mainly by the votes of permanent residents, will not be able to respond equitably to the new social conditions, especially in matters relating to urban development. In the connected city, new systems of representation and participation will be developed, making full use of easier access to information and the wider involvement of active citizens' networks, thus giving them all - residents and users- a voice on the future of their urban environment.

Sufficient time must be built into the decision-making processes relating to spatial planning and development, so that social links can be established, and positive interactions facilitated. At the same time it must be acknowledged that in the connected city of the future, many groups of residents, both permanent and temporary, will be content to make use of urban facilities and services without wanting to be involved in local decision-making. Nevertheless, they will demand quality and will be prepared to pay for the services and facilities which are provided.

Multi-cultural richness

Due to the growing trend towards European unification, which will have a slow but clear impact on mobility and employment patterns, European cities will again become truly multi-cultural, as well as multilingual. New connections will be established, involving a delicate and adaptive balance, so that they maintain both their cultural and historical heritage and character, and encourage each of the groups residing or working within them to retain their own social and cultural characteristics, and to play a commensurate role in considering issues relating to their social and physical environment. Sustainability – integrating the economic, ecological and social dimensions of change, based on participation and involvement – will be a pivotal objective for making this possible.

Connections between generations

The changing balance between the different age groups of an ageing European population brings the need to restore the ties of cohesion between generations. This new and growing social challenge must be addressed not only in social and economic terms, but also in the establishment of adequate city support networks and infrastructure, including new activities for the retired and elderly and public pedestrian spaces for interaction among all age groups.

Social identity

The personal identity of citizens is strongly related to the identity of their cities. The dynamics due to immigration in the connected city will contribute to the establishment of newer and stronger urban identities. Each city will develop its own social and cultural mix – a result of both their historical character and emerging developments. As a result,

there will continue to be a great diversity in the character and identity of cities and regions in different parts of Europe.

In the connected city, the exchanges among cultures in the urban environment and their communication and gradual fusion will give city life a much greater richness and diversity. This in turn will add to its overall attractiveness, not only as a residential environment, but also as a place for work, education, business, and leisure.

Movement & Mobility

In the European cities of the future, citizens will have a varied choice of transportation modes at their disposal, together with accessible and responsive information networks.

In the connected city and its regional hinterland, new technologies will be applied creatively to provide a variety of systems of transportation of persons and materials, and of information flows. At the local scale, technology and traffic management will be deployed to secure a decrease in the reliance on private vehicles. At the strategic scale, linkages between neighbourhoods, cities and regions will be facilitated by the evolution of the European transportation network, providing rapid, pleasant, sustainable, and economical connections between places of work, living, leisure, and culture. Within city networks, mobility will be improved by interchange facilities between the various modes of transport. These improvements to infrastructure will be balanced with safeguarding peoples´ options to live and work in quiet areas not connected to rapid transportation networks

The spatial organisation of the connected city will include a full integration of transportation and town planning policies. They will be complemented by more imaginative urban design and easier access to information, thus minimising the need for unnecessary travel. Ease of movement and access will be a critical element of city living, together with greater choice in the mode of transport.

Facilities and Services

According to the needs of present and future citizens, housing and services will become increasingly accessible – their provision will be flexibly adjusted to new and emerging patterns of needs. More housing will be provided at affordable prices, in addition to educational, commercial, cultural and recreational facilities and services. These will be supported by running costs that citizens can afford, and complemented by a strong sense of community identity and security.

3. ECONOMIC CONNECTIVITY

European cities of the 21st century will also be strongly connected at the economic level, thus inducing the creation of a closely-knit financial network of great efficiency and productivity, maintaining high levels of employment and ensuring a competitive edge in

the global arena, whilst adapting dynamically to changing internal and external conditions.

Globalisation and regionalisation

At present, economic activities are influenced by a combination of two main forces: globalisation and specialisation (local or regional). On the one hand, new economic activities will be more than ever knowledge-based, with both production and services applying innovative technologies. These developments will not necessarily be site-specific, but will be determined on the basis of economic criteria. On the other hand, there will be an increasing demand for rare and refined products and services associated with particular traditional production methods and typical places of origin. In the first case, their quality/price relationship will play a significant role in development decisions. In the second, qualitative characteristics will be predominant. Thus a balance will have to be found between endogenous and exogenous factors of development, this becoming a particularly strategic challenge for European cities and regions. With the opening up of Europe to the east, greater integration will encourage and strengthen the diversity of cultures, which will promote the establishment of new economic, social and cultural connections.

In such a context, cities will be called upon to make strategic choices about their economic orientation. They will have the option to interpret in local terms the demands and processes of globalisation, with the emphasis on increased diversity of opportunity. They will also be able to cultivate their own economic signature. Local and regional economies will be increasingly connected to the economies of other cities and regions, both nationally and internationally. Enhanced economic connectivity will thus contribute towards full employment and greater prosperity for the citizens of Europe.

Competitive advantages

In the 21st century, the cities that will be economically successful will be those that capitalise upon their competitive advantages. For this purpose, a high degree of multi-level connectivity will prove to be a major asset. Capitalising on the cultural and natural attributes of cities, managing their historical character, and promoting their uniqueness and diversity will be a significant advantage. In addition, providing a pleasant, healthy and safe living and working environment will add considerably to the attractiveness of cities for the demanding economic activities of the future.

A successful city utilises the best of its existing attributes, both endogenous and exogenous, to position itself economically. It constantly learns and adapts so that it maintains its advantages through changing circumstances. Trends must be continuously monitored, and multiple scenarios regularly examined in order to anticipate both positive and negative forces, and to take appropriate action.

City networking

To increase their competitive advantages, individual cities will be compelled to join various networks, which will function effectively as more or less integral systems, with cities as nodes, connected either physically or virtually or both.

These polycentric urban networks will be of various types, such as:
- networks of similarly specialised cities, which through functional and organisational co-operation reach the visibility, the size and productivity needed to compete or to develop common goals;
- networks, linking cities with different specialisations in order to supply to each other; specialisation may also guide the allocation of public projects among the same cities;
- networks of cities connected to each other in a flexible system of exchange of goods and services;
- networks of cities sharing common (economic and/or cultural) interests linked together to strengthen their profile and thus their competitive advantage.

The types of connections between the nodes of the different networks will be strongly related to the types of flows, which will move either material goods or information / functional elements.

Such polycentric networks of cities, connected in various ways, will support the distribution, growth and strength of economic activities throughout Europe. Defining the new networks and positioning individual cities within them will require a considerable involvement of experts who will translate those dynamics into spatial strategies.

Economic diversity

The economic connectivity of European cities will not be to the detriment of their diversity, but will contribute to it, as participation in a collaborative system will encourage specialisation and diversity, based on the competitive advantages of each city. The factors affecting economic activities (cultural and natural heritage, existence of educated and skilled work forces, pleasant environment, strategic location and others) will be combined in different ways in each city, thus contributing to urban variety, and allowing each city to determine its own balance between economic prosperity and quality of life.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL CONNECTIVITY

Input-output

As human beings belong to a living species, maintaining a possibility of contact with natural elements is not only a source of well-being, but also a prerequisite for survival. The environmental aspect of sustainability, however, is not only restricted to the

maintenance and expansion of natural areas within our cities and their periphery, it involves many other elements.

- Perhaps the major issue in the 21st century will be **the wise use of resources**, especially natural, non-renewable ones**,** and primarily space, air and water,
- A major step will be to **protect cities from pollution** and degradation, so that they can maintain their usefulness.
- The cities of the new millennium will manage **the input and output** of resources carefully and economically, by relating them to real needs, and using innovative technologies, and in minimising their consumption by re-using and recycling them to the highest possible degree.
- Energy production and use will be a major concern, with **unprecedented levels of efficiency** and an increasing use of renewable energy sources.
- In addition, the city will cease to export its wastes to the surrounding areas, and will become a **self-sufficient connected system**, treating and re-using the majority of input resources**.**

A similar environmentally sensitive approach, involving risk assessment, will be used to minimise the impact of natural disasters. Thus, earthquake damage will be contained by limiting urban development in seismic-prone areas through appropriate zoning. Rivers, torrents, and floodplains will be used, via catchment zone management, to mitigate the effects of floods and other extreme weather phenomena caused by climate change and poor engineering. Forests and green areas in and around the city will be increased, so that they are able to play a major role in improving air quality and stabilising temperatures. These measures will also have positive side-effects, in mitigating the impacts of rampant urbanisation.

Healthy cities

Environmental management and the practical application of the principles of sustainability will lead to a city that will be altogether healthier for human habitation. In the future European city health hazards in food and materials from toxic substances will be largely eliminated. These measures will be complemented by a wide range of health and social services, with an emphasis on prevention, equitably available to all citizens.

Nature, Landscape, and Open Spaces

The opportunity for all to live and work in proximity, **connected to well-maintained elements of cultural and natural heritage**, such as significant landscapes, archaeological sites, monuments, traditional neighbourhoods, parks, squares, and other open spaces, water bodies (lakes, rivers, wetlands and the sea shore), nature reserves, and rural areas will be carefully preserved and facilitated. Spatial planning will continue to be an effective tool for the protection of these elements of natural and cultural heritage, as well as the vehicle for the creation of new areas of open spaces which connect the urban fabric.

The emotional connection between human beings and their environment – their sense of place - is a fundamental need for successful urban living. The best-loved cities and urban places offer a rich and positive environmental experience. Environmental quality is a major factor in guaranteeing the economic success of a city – it also contributes to social and cultural vitality.

Energy

New forms of energy, obtained from non-polluting and renewable resources, will be used to cover the energy needs of 21st century cities, especially in key sectors, such as transportation and microclimatic control. In addition, energy delivery systems and facilities will become highly efficient through innovative technologies, while energy consumption will be dramatically reduced. These breakthroughs will have very positive side effects in curbing air pollution, greenhouse gases and climate change.

5. SPATIAL SYNTHESIS

The economic, social and environmental connections described above will have a strong impact on spatial planning.

Spatial linkages

Through careful planning and other appropriate interventions, the **spatial networks in and around cities will be enhanced. In the Connected City,** the essential functions of city centres and other key nodes will be maintained and improved; communications and transportation networks will serve these efficiently, without allowing the latter to sap their vitality.

At the same time, the natural areas of the Continent will be effectively protected against the extension and multiplication of these urban networks, through a combination of regulatory and stimulatory measures, as well as by promoting awareness of their value and the essential need for conservation and enhancement

Connecting through character – continuity and quality of life

In parallel to these spatial considerations, the attractiveness of European cities will be maintained and enhanced, thus contributing to an improved quality of urban life for all, since nearly three quarters of the European population lives in its cities. **Urban design will be a key element of the renaissance of cities**, to break down the isolation between parts of the city and to achieve retention and continuity of character, in the face of the impersonal trends of homogenisation. There will be a number of policies, measures and interventions, in which the planner will play a key role. They will include:

- The **revival of urban design** to protect and enhance streets, squares, footpaths and other thoroughfares as key linkages in the urban framework.
- **Rehabilitation** of degraded or inhumanly planned pieces of the urban fabric.
- Measures to facilitate **personal contacts** and opportunities for leisure and recreation.
- Measures to ensure the **individual and collective feeling of security**, as it is a key element to guarantee urban well-being.
- Efforts to create memorable urban environments derived from **specific *genius loci***, thus enhancing diversity and character.
- Maintenance and cultivation of a high level of **aesthetic excellence** in all parts of the urban networks.
- **Conservation** through planning of all significant elements of natural and cultural heritage, and the protection and expansion of open space networks.

Each of these positive developments will be handled in **different ways in each country and in each city**, depending on local historical, social and economic conditions. At the same time, however, cohesion within the expanded European Union will increase, as its administrative and social structures mature, and guidelines on planning matters are gradually incorporated into the *acquis communautaire*. Through this process, common objectives for the cities of Europe will come to be widely accepted, whilst their diversity and the unique character of each will be highly prized and maintained.

A new model for Europe

In a global community, which is trying to find its common future amongst recurring conflicts and often-flawed political and economic experiments, one of the main contributions of Europe in the 21st century will be the new model of its ancient and modern cities: **cities,** which are truly **connected,** which are innovative and productive, creative in science, culture, and ideas, whilst maintaining decent living and working conditions for their people; **cities, which will connect the past with the future, through a vital and vibrant present.**

PART B

B1 – Issues and Challenges

Long-term trends should be considered carefully in terms of their possible outcomes on the future development of cities. History has shown that the future is largely determined by the past – thus, trends as they appear at present should be examined critically. At the same time, it must be accepted that the real outcomes of current trends cannot be predicted because unforeseen developments may also exert a large influence.

In this part, *trends* are described on the basis of four main groupings:

- Social and political changes
- Economic and technological changes
- Environmental changes
- Urban changes

Under each of these groupings, the expected influence on cities is considered, together with the possible *issues* and *challenges* - both for cities and planners.

1. Social and political changes

Trends

Whilst the forces of globalisation are spreading out over the entire world, new expressions of "Europeanization" appear to be evident in the "Old Continent". Boundaries are rendered less meaningful by the unification process and times and distances tend to be less significant. Citizens of different countries come into direct contact, and cities compete with each other on a global scale.

The culture of cities is influenced not only by technological innovations, but also by the contrasts between cultures that immigrants bring with them. Moreover, the constant ageing of the population together with the decrease of the average time spent at the place of work, and the rapid change in the socio-cultural composition of the urban population, lead to diversification in the demands for services and products. Next to that, more and more people using the services provided by a city live elsewhere, so that new groups of "city consumers" and "city users" are appearing alongside the resident citizens.

Throughout Europe radical changes in governance are influencing the context for the planning and management of cities. Deregulation and privatization are providing new ways to finance and to enable developments. Cities, forced to compete for investments often adopt an entrepreneurial style of management with shorter timescales and more financially-led objectives, quite different from those traditionally associated with the activity of local governments, which primarily represent the public interest. This is

expressed, for example, by the development of many public/private partnerships, strong engagement in city marketing, and the promotion of flagship investments. This is sometimes also accompanied by the neglect of public participation in the planning process. Gaps in democracy may be opening up in cities where there is an over-reliance upon the private sector to deliver the social benefits of development.

Issues for cities

Although travel times seem to shorten or disappear, it does not mean that accessibility increases for all. Many deprived city dwellers are excluded from the benefits of modern communications, transportation, facilities and services. Areas for rich consumers often tend to develop within gated environments, whilst poor city-dwellers remain homeless or live in declining inner city areas and suburbia.

In the west of Europe, many citizens feel threatened by the large number of immigrants - feelings of hostility may develop, fuelled by misunderstanding and prejudices between different cultures. Fear of crime and of man-made and natural catastrophes may add to the sense of urban insecurity.

The ageing European population and a changing family structure and family ties are determining new social challenges, as well as new city infrastructure requirements.

Tremendous financial and social problems faced by many cities lead to deficiencies in local democracy, while public authorities leave parts of their responsibility for the collective interest to the free market. Citizens, feeling abandoned by their democratically elected representatives, lose faith in the official authorities. Less acceptance of authority, less patience and public involvement, may result in selfish and consumerist attitudes.

Challenges for future cities

Some key concepts like sustainable development, urban identity, community life, as well as safety, health care and medical assistance, are becoming increasingly sensitive matters for planners and the planning process.

The growing need for an urban environment that offers quality of life next to health and tranquillity poses an important challenge for cities to develop a future in which aspects of social, economic, and environmental sustainability are balanced. Developing new identities on the basis of emerging cultural influences is also one of the big challenges that cities have to address. City life should seek to develop a large diversity of cultural groupings able to co-exist next to each other and respecting each other's traditions. Moreover, European cities should evolve in a way which allows free internal migration that enables the citizens from Member States to move and settle easily in most of the member-countries.

The restoration of ties and social solidarity among the different age groups seems critical for the future well-being of urban populations.

Another important challenge is the development of innovative processes of local democracy - seeking new ways to involve all stakeholders in order to increase participation and secure the common interests of all groups. Citizens' participation provides a better understanding of people's demands and may start a cultural evolution leading to the acceptance of a diversity of solutions, in order to cope with different needs of different groups, whilst preserving a shared identity for the whole city.

2. Economic and technological changes

Trends

At the beginning of the 21st century, the speed of technological development - based upon research, innovation and its diffusion in a wide range of sciences and techniques - is faster than at any time in history. It is affecting the way of life, the economy, the spatial structures and the quality of cities and towns.

The development and growth of the knowledge-based economy has changed dramatically the driving forces of urban development in Europe. Advanced "service producers" are becoming the leading activity in cities, while universal access to networked computer-based facilities allows for working at home, e-commerce and e-business. World-wide companies organise and manage their business activities independently from regional and national boundaries, utilising and deploying resources such as labour where the supply is cheap and available. The "localization benefits" derived from the concentration of manufacturing industries lose importance while the richness and diversification of activities performed in cities and the quality of the urban environment become decisive factors in the location of firms. International competition calls for both specialization and co-operation within city networks, virtual as well as physical. The knowledge-based economy not only changes the ways of production and the structure of employment, but it also creates new requirements in terms of urban systems.

Issues for cities

On the one hand, working on the web from home as well as e-commerce and e-business may result in less need for physical urban facilities. On the other hand, these processes may generate much more traffic for goods movement and delivery affecting already congested city centres. Most of the world-wide operating firms (industry and services) usually locate factories without developing any real commitment to the place, since international economic considerations are increasingly dominant over local social, environmental and security aspects.

Moreover, the globalization of the economy strengthens the impact of external factors upon urban development. Whilst providing new opportunities, it often weakens the traditional local economy leading to the depreciation of local assets and to the loss of economic and cultural ties between the city and its regional surroundings. Without a

responsive framework of local governance to protect the interests of disadvantaged social groups, economic forces may also lead to social exclusion and deprivation.

Challenges for future cities

The knowledge-based economy will be more important than conventional industries and the optimization of efficiency may result in more free time for citizens. This may be coupled to a greater choice of leisure services and activities, both in the real and the virtual environments.

The new types of economic activity may also result in less pollution, vibrant city centres, landscape enhancement, and more biodiversity in the urban fringe and the surrounding rural areas. Cultural, as well as environmental, qualities will be increasingly recognized as important competitive advantages for cities and the specific historic identities and qualities of each city will play a distinctive role in their development. Cities will also be bound to develop competitive advantages in order to secure their prosperity within the context of networks, which will develop on different scales and provide new forms of co-operation. An important challenge is to do that in such a way that the large majority of the population is positively and actively included.

3. Environmental changes

Trends

The physical environment is heavily affected by the increased scale of economic activities, by ongoing urbanization and land take, by the decline of agriculture and by expanding networks of infrastructure and services. Natural areas within and around cities tend to disappear under the economic pressure of expansion.

The physical environment is also menaced by pollution and by the wasteful consumption of non-renewable resources. Contamination of the soil, water and air is growing, whilst noise and light pollution seriously threaten the carrying capacity of the natural and human environments. Climate changes result in less stable atmospheric conditions with more rainfall, stronger winds, turbulence and rising sea-levels.

Issues for cities

Unhealthy conditions in cities result from polluting activities and the production of waste. Less open space, less biodiversity in cities pose a threat for the quality of city life and of public spaces. The state of the urban fringe around most cities is declining. Agriculture and open spaces are giving way to buildings, structures and activities which are inappropriate in rural areas.

Flooding, experienced almost everywhere in Europe, will fuel the feeling of insecurity. Even greater dangers of a rise in sea-level will affect the large concentrations of urban areas in coastal zones. Heavy storms, avalanches and landslides will add to the concerns about public protection from natural hazards.

Challenges to future cities

The threats of environmental impacts on cities pose many challenges for the future. Precautionary principles and environmental considerations must be included in all decision-making processes, and not only where impact assessments are obligatory. An ecosystems' approach must be embedded in city management. Balances must be found between economically based urban development and healthy conditions for living. Finding the financial means to enhance and protect natural areas and biodiversity is an important task. The need for environmental sustainability also requires careful management of space, for which planning is an essential tool.

The continued existence of agriculture in the urban fringe is essential to a well-balanced city. Its proximity to built-up areas, far from being a handicap, should be encouraged and promoted. Financial encouragement should be given to the protection and development of agricultural enterprises, particularly those which serve local markets or use organic methods of production.

4. Urban changes

Trends

The city has never been one continuous, dense, built-up entity, but has always included a variety of urban forms and spaces. The development of cities and regions is the result not only of modern planning techniques, but also of informal and unplanned developments in the past. The context for the future development of cities is changing. Information and communications technology allows for direct and immediate world-wide communication. Physical accessibility improves tremendously as a result of improved infrastructure, transporting people and freight in optimized well-managed networks that expand quickly. Systems tend to operate more efficiently, with much lower costs, generating new solutions and new urban forms and patterns.

Issues for cities

Better physical accessibility resulting from an improved transport infrastructure tends to create barriers and obstacles, especially to slower modes of transportation and movement. As a result, dominant physical structures lead to fragmentation of city neighbourhoods and landscape structures. Sub-urbanization and the spread of urban functions to surrounding areas also lead to longer travel distances and ultimately to deterioration in the quality of facilities and services. A decline in the use of public transport and increased use of private cars adds to the problems of cities.

In economic terms, the globalization process manifests itself in a world-wide dispersal of production as well as by concentration of management and functions in large cities. This may lead to the fast growth of metropolitan regions at the expense of the rest of the settlement network.

Increased disparity between different groups will result not only in changes in urban governance, but also in large areas of deprivation, contrasting with high-quality development schemes for the new economic activities and well-kept residential areas for privileged groups.

Challenges for future cities

New technological developments in communication, information and transportation should be applied in such a way that citizens and city life as a whole could benefit. New balances between historical and cultural assets and technology may result in the creation of new urban identities, which may offer more attractive urban environments. Technological developments should be utilized fully to support sustainability in future cities.

A new set of rules is required for urban design, where old or new parts of cities have to be planned comprehensively with appropriate solutions linking the past to the future. There should also be constant links between open spaces and built-up areas - at various territorial scales, from the neighbourhood block to the city, from city networks to Europe. Urban forms should integrate a social and urban mix and should improve the quality of life. Leisure in cities may become a combination of virtual and physical environments with yet unknown possibilities.

At the same time, it should be acknowledged that a large number of city-users are non-residents. For these people it is important to offer environments and services of high quality on a commercial basis. Planning activities should generate genuine involvement and safeguard the collective interests, an essential tool towards social sustainability.
Planning criteria for economic developments should strongly relate to the competition between cities and, for this reason, should apply strategic thinking to planning policies.

Lastly, the uniqueness of European urban culture, partly derived from its historic urban forms and ways of life, requires professional planners who have the awareness and the ability to relate the new urban forms to the needs of people in the 21st century.

B2 - The Commitments of Planners

This part of the Charter presents the commitments for professional planners practicing in Europe. It describes a set of values which should be embraced by planners in advising politicians and the public in striving both to achieve the Vision and to apply the principles for city development which are set out in the Charter.

Spatial planning is essentially trans-disciplinary teamwork involving different professionals and actors in complex processes. These commitments aim to identify the specificity of the planning discipline which distinguishes planners from other involved parties and, at the same time, to clarify the potential strengths of the profession, thus reinforcing self-confidence, cohesion and solidarity among planners.

The planner's role evolves following the development of society and of planning laws and policies. These vary according to the different political and social frameworks in every country where planners are acting either as visionaries, technocrats, managers, advisors, mentors, or instructors. Compared to other disciplines, the distinctive difference is that spatial planners must focus primarily on the interests of society as a whole, the settlement or the region as an entity, and the longer term future.

Spatial planners analyse, draft, implement and monitor development strategies, supporting policies, programmes and key projects and – like every discipline – they also contribute to professional training and research in order to relate education continuously to the requirements of the present and the future. Planners engage themselves actively in the various phases and scales of the planning process, although they cannot be equally involved in all of them at the same time.

It is widely recognised that planning is not solely concerned with plan preparation. It is also part of a political process aiming to balance all relevant interests – public and private – so as to solve conflicting demands on space and development programmes. This points to the importance of the role of the planner as mediator. Now and in the future the mediation and negotiation skills of planners will become increasingly more important.

The planner's role will thus be more demanding than at any time in the past. It will require increased design, synthesis, managerial and administrative skills, in order to support and guide the public planning process during all its phases: It will also demand a scientific approach, the achievement of social consensus which recognizes individual differences, as well as political decisions, leading to the implementation, management, monitoring and review of plans and programmes.

These complex and challenging roles require particular commitments for spatial planners engaged as political advisors, designers, urban managers and scientists in the 21st century.

The planner as a scientist is committed to:

- Analyse existing features and trends, considering the wider geographic context and focussing on long-term needs to provide full, clear and accurate information to decision-makers, stakeholders and the public.

- Access available data, taking into consideration European indicators, and adopt interactive means of representation to facilitate public debate and the common understanding of the proposed solutions and of the decision-making processes.

- Maintain an appropriate knowledge of contemporary planning philosophy, theory, research, and practice, which includes continuous professional development.

- Contribute to training and education, supporting and evaluating the development of the planning profession throughout Europe, relating theory to practice.

- Encourage healthy and constructive criticism about the theory and practice of planning and share the results of experience and research to contribute to the evolving body of planning knowledge and competence.

The planner as a designer and as a visionary is committed to:

- Think in all dimensions, balancing local and regional strategies within global trends ("Think global, Act local").

- Expand choice and opportunity for all, recognising a special responsibility for the needs of disadvantaged groups and persons.

- Strive to protect the integrity of the natural environment, the excellence of urban design and endeavour to conserve the heritage of the built environment for future generations.

- Elaborate alternative potential solutions for specific problems and challenges, measuring carrying capacities and impacts, enhancing local identities, and contributing to their implementation programmes and feasibility studies.

- Develop and elaborate spatial development visions showing opportunities for the future development of cities or regions.

- Identify the optimal positioning of a spatial plan or scheme within the relevant (inter) national networks of cities and regions.

- Convince all involved parties to share a common and long term vision for their city or region, beyond their individual interests and objectives.

The planner as a political advisor and mediator is committed to:

- Respect the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity and equity in decision-making, in planned solutions and in their implementation.

- Support civic authorities acquainting them with proposals, objectives, targets, impacts, problems, and provide them with plans and solutions aiming at enhancing public welfare.

- Suggest and elaborate operational legislative tools to ensure efficiency and social justice in spatial policies.

- Facilitate true public participation and involvement between local authorities, decision-makers, economic stakeholders and individual citizens in order to co-ordinate developments and ensure spatial continuity and cohesion.

- Collaborate with and co-ordinate all involved parties in order to find consensus or solve conflicts by clear decisions prepared for the appropriate authorities.

- Strive for a high level of communication to ensure knowledge and understanding among the future users.

The planner as an urban manager is committed to:

- Adopt strategic management approaches to spatial development processes rather than just plan making to serve bureaucratic administrative requirements.

- Achieve efficiency and effectiveness of adopted proposals, taking into account economic feasibility and the environmental and social aspects of sustainability.

- Consider the planning principles and the aims and objectives of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and other European Union (EU) policy documents - in order to adapt local and regional proposals to European strategies & policies.

- Co-ordinate different territorial levels and different sectors to ensure collaboration, involvement and support of all administrative bodies and territorial authorities.

- Stimulate partnerships between public and private sectors in order to enhance investments, create employment, and achieve social cohesion.

- Benefit positively from European funds by stimulating the participation of local and regional authorities within spatial programmes and projects co-funded by the EU.

- Monitor plans in order to adjust unforeseen outcomes, propose solutions or actions, and ensure a continuous feedback linkage between planning policy and implementation.

ANNEX

Historical background

The New Athens Charter was adopted by the European Council of Town Planners (ECTP) in May 1998, at an international conference held in Athens. At that event, it was resolved that the ECTP would keep the Charter under review and update it every four years. This document, prepared by a special working commission of the Council, is the product of that review procedure.

It is important to contrast the ECTP Charter with the original Athens Charter of 1933, which contained a prescriptive view of how cities might develop, with high density living and working areas, connected by highly efficient mass transport systems. By comparison, the New Charter and this review focus on the residents and the users of the city and their needs in a rapidly changing world. It promotes a vision of *The Connected City* which can be achieved by planning and by spatial planners, as well as other professions. It embraces new systems of governance and ways of involving the citizen in decision-making processes, using the benefits of new forms of communication and information technology. At the same time, it is a realistic vision, in distinguishing between those aspects of city development where planning can exert a real influence and those where it has a more limited role.

Key terms

To facilitate comprehension, we include here the meaning in which certain key terms are used in the text:

- **City** (*polis, civitas*): Human settlement with some degree of consistency and cohesion. So not only the conventional compact city is included, but also networked cities, city networks and city regions.

- **Spatial** (*used in combination with scope, perspective, planning and development)*: Concerted consideration of space at its various scales, from the local to the regional, the national, the continental and beyond, including land, people and their activities.

- **Planner**: Professional involved in the organisation and management of space utilisation, specialised in the interpretation of theoretical concepts into spatial form and in the preparation of plans.

- **Connection** (or connectivity): Functional and operational relations of elements – in this case, mainly of cities in their broader definition.

- **Network**: Flexible entity consisting of connected units, with some common guidelines and the ability to respond selectively in a concerted manner.

- **Integration**: Organization of a system of elements based on common principles and developing a strong sense of unity.

Acknowledgments

July, 2003