PERMANENT AND ORGANIC PLANNING TO GET URBAN COHESION

1.   Integration and disintegration of cities

1.1. Introduction

Large concentrated population tend to segregate social groups and to create social exclusion.
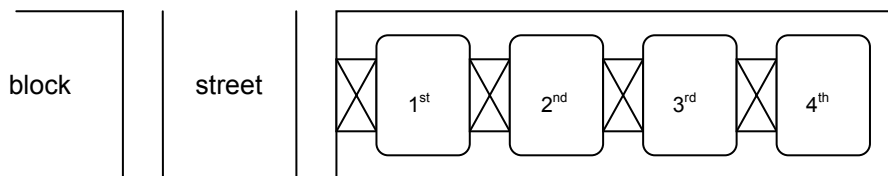
Planning objectives are however asking for more cohesion among people and social inclusion.

The answer must be a planning strategy to develop a better integration of territorial components, built-up areas with green areas and human settlements among them.
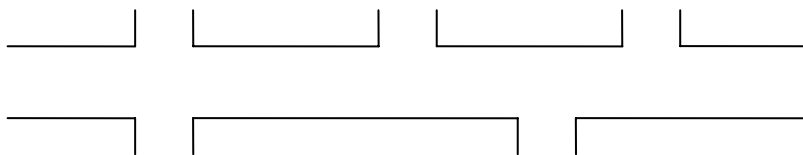
Social integration does not mean mixing people of different socio-professional levels or of different ethnic groups but avoiding their segregation and conflict through a balance between integration and privacy. Distances between settlements and size of homogeneous settlements are crucial elements to attain those objectives.

It is interesting to see how ancient lay-outs were able to avoid segregation while socio-economic differences were very strong.
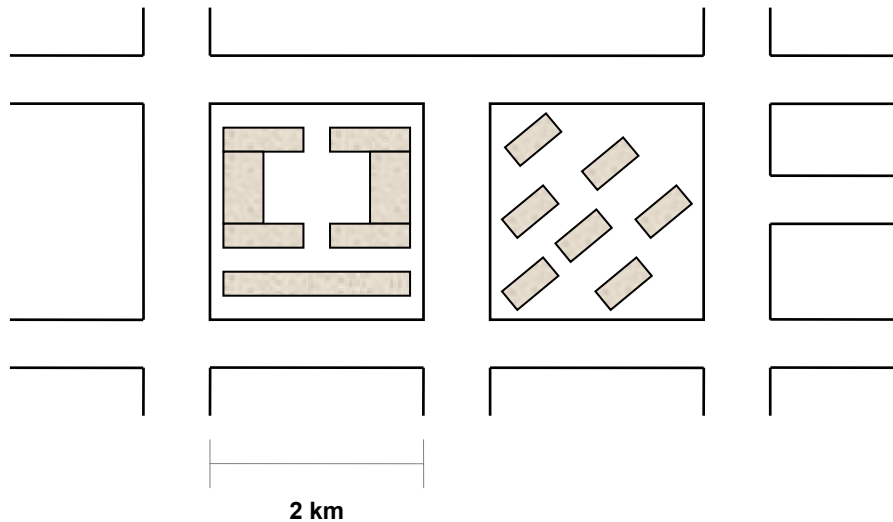
Mexico-city showed a system of "pátios" starting for the main-street and progressing towards the interior. Urban social "sedimentation" brought rich people to the 1st pátio and then other social groups accordingly to their social importance until the poorer that settled in the last one of the "pátios". Each group could feel their own privacy but not feel segregated outside the urban quarter.
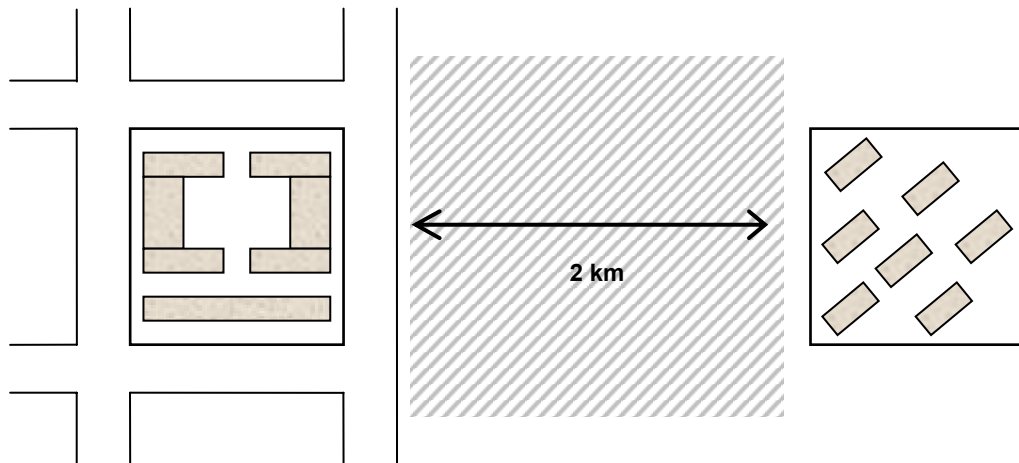

IX century Lisbon-city used to show higher classes on the main avenue and lower/poorer classes on small secondary streets, with similar result.

Even if we get two contiguous residential areas, not more than 200 meters from each other, there will be no real segregation due to the continuity and proximity of houses.

2 km

If instead of 200 m the two settlements would be 2 km distant then the sense of segregation would be clear and marginality could develop, followed by exclusion phenomena, and then criminality and "ghetto" situations.

2 km

1.2. City integration — the concept of belonging to a place
a)   Key issues:
- Distances, space, size and shape, scale.
- Community size, identity and heterogeneity, privacy.
- Communication, accessibility, language.
- Organic activities and specificities balance and jobs.
- Get together, cultural understanding, respect.
- City building — spontaneous, planned, illegal.
- Internet and tele-links, communications.

b)   Planners point of view:
Planners need to make a synthesis of all these key issues but having in view the plan of the city, its future and its successful development.
The objective is the integration of the city but with two aspects to be considered:
- **A.** Integration of cities and communities must not forget the balance between integrating people and also offering spaces of privacy, individual and group privacy.
- **B.** Integration of very big cities (more than 1.000.000 inhabit. or more than 100 km²) can eventually be better dealt through a group of urban units of smaller scale, organized into balanced constellations, or constellations of constellations.

c)   **Territorial models:**

Specific territorial models can help to get a good balance between integration and privacy of spaces but size and shape always play an important role, mainly do to the accessibility offered to people to get together. Distances are important but transport facilities and communication also contribute to a sense of more or less being together.

e)   **Distances and size:**

On can measure distances between people through a kind of table and trying to understand their meaning:

0,5m — 1,5 m — 5 m — 15 m — 50 m — 150 m — 500 m —1,5 km — 5 km — 15 km— 50 km — 500 km — 1.500 km — 5.000 km — 15.000 km

Each one of these distances can have a meaning, like, respectively: to kiss, to dialogue, to have a meeting, the house length, the help distance, round the corner, the nice distance to school, maximum comfortable walking distance to public transports or to go to work, town diameter, maximum distance to suburbs, week-end place, summer holidays, continental travelling, intercontinental travelling, very long distance intercontinental travelling.
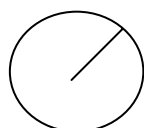
Around 1,5 km we can get a key threshold, linked with the concept of walking distance.

Now if we want to go deeper on the understanding of distance one can measure the price of transport, or the time needed to do it. But we can also think about the human scale of the community through another dimension, the size of the group where one can get:

<div align="center">

1 person
4 persons
16 persons
64 persons
250 persons
1.000 persons
4.000 persons
16.000 persons
64.000 persons
250.000 persons
1.000.000 persons
4.000.000 persons
16.000.000 persons
64.000.000 persons
250.000.000 persons
1.000.000.000 persons

</div>

It is easy to foresee some strong identity within a group of 4.000 persons, or even 16.000 but a group of 4.000 or more always asks for some variety to avoid a sense of ghetto. A circle of 1,5 km radius can easily offer the sense of belonging to that place to all residents (d = 100 inhabit/ha → 64.000 inhabit).

From that level onwards it will be easy to get some segregation of people (economic, cultural, ethnic…). This is why a group of 250.000 can eventually gain integration if social organization is done on the 64.000 level, corresponding to 4 units. A kind of threshold for integration.

$$\Pi r^2 = \frac{64.000}{100}$$

$$\therefore \Pi^2 \cong 225 ha \qquad\qquad \therefore \Pi = 1{,}5 km$$

Each one of the levels presented on the list has a specific meaning, respectively:

1 to 4 — my own identity and of my parents, 16 to 64 — my building or my extended family, 250 to 1.000 — my street or my block, 4.000 to 16.000 — my neighbourhood,

64.000 to 250.000 — my urban quarter or town, $1x10^6$ to $4x10^6$ — my region or sub-region, $16x10^6$ to $64x10^6$ — my state or my country, $250x10^6$ to $1.000x10^6$ — my federation or my continent. And going back I can feel my identity according to the different levels. As an example:

> I am European
> Portuguese
> "Beirão" (Central Region)
> "Conimbricense" (city of Coimbra)
> From "Sé Nova" (Sé Nova parish)
> From "Alta" (Alta quarter)
> "Coutinhos" street
> Manuel da Costa Lobo, myself.

People can feel all these identities (8 levels), depending on the level one is considering. Territorial planning can help citizens to recognize their space and then to contribute to a better psychological balance.

It includes the sense of belonging but also the sense of getting help through the solidarity of the other members of the group.
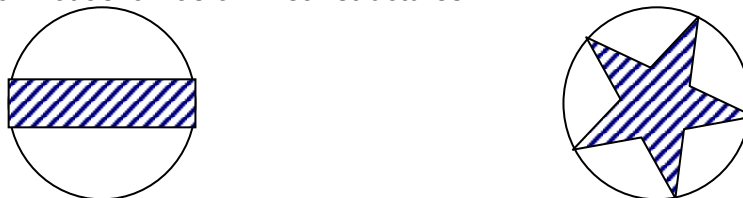
f) Shape:

The shape for an area with great capacity of getting a sense of unity to the residents could be the ideal circle ⊘ . To cover the territory one have to rely on the hexagon ⬡ as the best shape, high levels of compactness and concentration:

$$C_{comp} = \frac{S}{S_{poligon_{convex}}} = 1; \; C_{conc} = \frac{S}{S_{circle}} = 0,94 \, .$$

Shapes like the linear ones can have good compactness (can attain 1) but low concentration, Shapes like stars can correspond to very low compactness but concentration not as low as on linear structures.

Administrative divisions with a kind of star shape can very often bring anomalies of citizens' sense of belonging between the arms of the star (inter-digital territory).

g) Integration/privacy:

The citizens' sense of integration can bring negative reactions if privacy is not also offered to people. There are moments and circumstances when people want to feel their individual or group privacy. This is why families want a house and individuals want their own bedroom. But also families living together for long time in a neighbourhood or in an urban quarter can feel happy to have their own way of living. A new resident can be "*persona non grata*". This can be exacerbated if the group of the quarter is from a specific ethnic group.

In any case, planners must bear in mind that successful integration of people also asks for respect of privacy, of individuals and groups.

Otherwise one can expect negative social reactions. Privacy offered does not mean — of course — lack of freedom.

> If a building or group of houses is specially designed to fit to a specific group of people this does not mean the exclusion of other citizens willing to live there, but housing policy must avoid forcing people to leave within a group of different traditions and behaviours (namely the way of living on the street or square). What is important is to relate the spaces and avoid big distances between different communities. On the other hand, it is advisable to create spaces and functions to facilitate a kind of get together.

1.3. Understanding

On a diversified community or group of communities it is not possible to get a good integration without mutual understanding. It must be a common language and a good knowledge of each one cultures.

Ignorance is very often the base of misunderstandings and antagonism. Education and cultural events can help to overpass difficulties. Part of the problem is knowledge and the other part is the moral attitude of respect towards the other. This is why wise people stop to abuse of their freedom if it can hurt or offend others. This self-control shows education and a civilized way of living together.

If I can receive someone in my house and if his beliefs are different from mine I can:

1st   avoid talking these maters as a kindness to him;
2nd   talking about these matters because the person coming to my house has to respect my way;
3rd   show my disagreement with the visitor point of view, trying to offend him because of his beliefs.
4th   Forgetting completely all about disagreements, not wasting my time thinking about what could be the best attitude.

Meaning of the different attitudes:

1st   civilized attitude, polite way, friendly behaviour;
2nd   arrogant attitude, sincere but not kind;
3rd   impolite and unfriendly attitude, provocative.
4th   uncivilized way, risky.

1.4. Visiting and enhancing

It is nice to include, in city management, a program of visiting all the city quarters periodically coordinated with urban qualification investments and underlining the aim of social inclusion and get together.

2.   Permanent Organic Planning — POP

2.1. Introduction

Town planning practice in Portugal was subject to several legal frame changes on recent years but general opinion thinks that it does not yet function well: procedures take too much time; urban design is split through multiple private initiatives bringing difficulties to their coordination; municipal management finds it uneasy to get financial means to cope with development needs. From other countries we hear similar complaints.

2.2. Planning as a process

Taking this practice as a base for building a new method of planning and management we came to a proposal that starts by a careful limitation of the planning-space and follows a system of permanent planning through alternating stages, following each other:

A. Professional transdisciplinary team and programmed studies.
B. Partners meeting, including citizens representants, having in view a brain-storming followed by a final convergence exercise.
C. Professional team studies.
D. Partners meeting, including citizens representants, having in view planning and projects options.
E. Implementation of options.

F.   Professional <u>monitoring</u> and studies programming.

Repeated from A to F as a normal routine.

Time for studies will be fixed beforehand and reviewed on stage F. Maybe 3 months for A and 6 months for C.

The meetings will last for one to four days and members of the groups will have full power to represent their services or institutions, in order to avoid any delay for taking options (timely options is one of the system key).

Citizens' representants will organize themselves to maintain a permanent contact and dialogue with citizens and support from professional planners.

2.3. Organic structure organization

The first movement to start this method will be:

1st **Local organic planning-spaces delimitation**, looking for a kind of space where people would feel a sense of belonging and of possession.

2nd **Regional frame delimitation**, looking for a larger organic space where the local planning-space could get a clear meaning, from population to morphologic and ecologic aspects.

3rd Subdivision of the local planning-space into smaller **organic units**, allowing get to a better definition of local components.

4th Organization of citizens representants (**citizens commissions**) and definition of their duties and way of acting.

5th Definition of a time-table for **planning stages**.

2.4. Main structural items

Studies must address infrastructures network (technical and social) and also underline the following aspects, besides the socio-economic base:

- Building typologies and functions.
- Conservation / rehabilitation program.
- Happenings, vitalizing the space, integrating people participation.
- Civil protection measures.
- Social inclusion (special issues and *ad hoc* measures).
- Jobs balance and social sustainability.
- Citizens' communication and information system.
- Green structure management and ecologic balance.
- Health conditions, urban environment qualification.
- Local image and symbols to protect or to create.

2.5. Identity

The identity of the place and the sense of belonging is very important and must be achieved in relation to each one of the levels: organic units; local organic planning-spaces; regional or sub-regional framing-space.

2.6. Organic planning-space

Organic planning-space delimitation us a crucial step within POP method not only for the success of planning design but also for the integration of citizens participation. It is necessary to organize a communication network to reach all citizens or their groups (families, collectivities, local administration powers, NGO, public service officials and "<u>bridge-persons</u>"). All those social partners have to organize themselves through the principle of representation committees. The normal size of meetings will be with approximately 16 persons.

Three of them will represent the citizens and the others will represent sectorial services like economic and social organizations, environment, public works, education, cultural bodies, trade unions, investors, touristic agents, legal experts. If there are, for instance, 50 bodies wanting to be represented, it will be necessary to accommodate them through joint representants. A main role will be taken by horizontal structures, responsible to organize the group of representants. The joint services or institutions representants could prepare the

meetings within sub-groups where main policies will be discussed and settled. Senior State Inspectors would be present and would take decisions on behalf of the group in order to get conclusions and common agreements within the time available (fixed before hand on a programmed time-table). Any services and institutions will probably react against having to take decisions before a longer delay to study the problems. To answer this issue it will be necessary to prepare civil servants for this new way of acting and the reason of the method is that a timely decision is better than longer periods of no decision or to forget participation of citizens or sectorial services involvement. Bit by bit people would become used to the system and only some really special cases would not take a final decision and would accept a provisional resolution, stopping some initiatives or investments for some time. But the decisions would be always taken on the "round table" with all the stakeholders and social partners represented. Decisions would be publicized every fortnight and for a week there would be the possibility of stopping there or by the Government either by the people, if 10% of the population of the organic planning space would sign a petition for a referendum.

2.7. Regional frame delimitation

As the local organic planning-space, the delimitation of these regional spaces for planning frame would be the result of a joint study by local administration elected members and professional city and regional planners, in one side, and those from the central government services, in the other side. Issues from local level needing a regional view would be sent to a regional committee representing the sectorial services, NGO, citizens and other bodies. This committee would also be limited to 16 persons but each one could represent different points of view and would prepare the meetings by previous meetings of sub-committees to settle general policies and basic principles. Meetings could also happen every fortnight.

2.8. Organic units

Organic units would back the Local Organic Planning-Space, through a similar organization and presenting their opinions and worries. In the case of conflicting decisions between the two committees, the issue could be sent up to the Regional Frame Committee that could act as active mediator and find a common and timely decision.
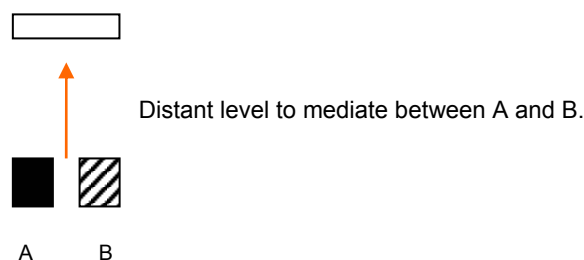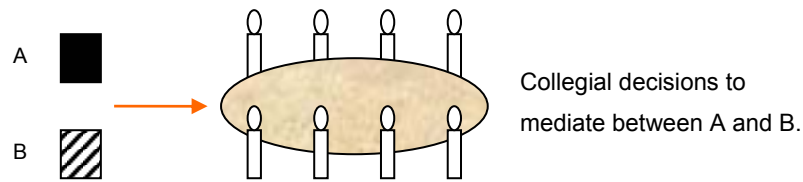
2.9. Active mediation

Active mediation is a civilized way to solve conflicts when alternatives A (white) and B (black) are supported by different people. To solve the conflict it is possible to ask the intervention of a 3rd person. If the person is a judge he can decide who is right — the supporter of A or the supporter of B. Another alternative is asking a mediator to look for a compromise, something like C (grey).

Town planners, however, do not like these kinds of choices. They refuse positions A and B and create a 3rd solution T, where the proposal T has nothing in common with the solutions A and B but convene the applauds of the two sides.

It's a complete new creation and can get the support of both sides — "it's red with yellow dots…, not grey!"

Healthy administration will ask for the right of not accepting the decision. If this case occurs one has to offer the possibility of a second judgment that must be more distant or collegial.

Distant level to mediate between A and B.

A   B

A ■

B ▨

Collegial decisions to
mediate between A and B.

2.10. Planning stages, permanent follow-up

Planning stages will permanently follow, through a kind of alternating steps, from study periods to brainstorming and to the options debate. As time-table is fixed beforehand there will be no chance to post-pone resolutions. Where needed there is also the possibility of a decision from a Central Government Inspector with full powers to take decisions, except to delay the process. Meetings cannot be cancelled before decisions are taken. After each meeting there will be a communication to all population and partners through internet, newspaper and announcement on the hall of the municipality, in order to publicize all main decisions.

Planning stages will follow permanently at all planning levels, simultaneously.

As planning-spaces can differ from administrative divisions there will be a protocol between administrations bodies involved to allowing a decision that would be publicized among all partners.

2.11. Plans timing

Portuguese law fix 10 years as the horizon for general Municipal Plans. It allows some changing on the plans after 3 years, but not before.

All these laws and metrics bring a bureaucratic side to plans very far from real needs.

Delaying resolutions always bring a sense of planning curability to cope with people's needs.

Permanent Organic Planning accepts revisions at every moment, through a process of debate, participation, evaluation and decision making. The important thing is to get a sound reason for the revision and to face the impacts and the price of changing, always through a very clear and participated way.