

World Planning Schools Congress, Shanghai,

July 2001

**The formation of the Commonwealth Association of Planners
Network of Planning Schools: a response to the Istanbul+5
development agenda.**

Professor Cliff Hague

President of the Commonwealth Association of Planners

School of Planning & Housing
Edinburgh College of Art / Heriot-Watt University
Edinburgh, Scotland.

Contact details:

Professor Cliff Hague,
School of Planning and Housing,
Heriot-Watt University / Edinburgh College of Art,
79 The Grassmarket,
Edinburgh Eh1 2HJ,
Scotland.

email: C.Hague@eca.ac.uk
fax: +44 131 221 6160.

Abstract

The Commonwealth Association of Planners (CAP) is an organisation that links the professional planning institutes around the countries in the Commonwealth (for further details see www.commonwealth-planners.org.uk). These countries vary greatly in size, affluence and culture - e.g. they include Canada, Australia, Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Bangladesh, Mozambique, Barbados, etc. CAP is seeking to develop "CAPNOPS", a network of planning schools in Commonwealth countries. The network will facilitate "twinning" arrangements between planning schools in different countries. The paper describes the forms that such twinning might take, including staff and student exchange, collaborations on curriculum development, quality assurance systems and joint involvement in comparative research. The scope for international accreditation through CAP is also discussed.

The paper sets the discussion of the development of a Commonwealth dimension in planning education in the context of the UN's Habitat Agenda, and the "Istanbul+5" process of monitoring and reviewing progress towards the Habitat aims of adequate shelter for all and sustainable urban settlements. It argues that in many Commonwealth countries the colonial legacy of town planning has created a set of structures, practices and concepts that have marginalised professional planning from concerns of the urban poor. It explains the way CAP has sought to address the challenge of uniting planning with the development agenda of poverty alleviation, capacity-building and better governance. It suggests that the development of the CAP Network of Planning Schools can contribute to this process in a positive way.

Introduction

This paper welcomes the increasing globalisation of planning education that is represented by this historic congress. Planning has developed in local or national canisters. Planning and planners have suffered from the fact that different national statutory codes have so fundamentally defined planning practice. This stamps planning with parochial status. In contrast this paper argues that the Habitat Agenda (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, 2001a) has provided a useful focus worldwide on the challenge posed by the development of human settlements. In the context of the review of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (the "Istanbul+5" process) undertaken by the UN General Assembly Special Session in June 2001, the paper argues that there is a need to develop international institutions that link planners and planning education. In particular there is a need for bodies able to forge connections between planning schools in the North and in the South. The Commonwealth is seen as suitable vehicle for this purpose since its membership comprises a third of the world's countries, with great diversity and drawn from the North and the South. The Commonwealth Association of Planners wants to set up a network of planning schools, and this paper explains the thinking behind that proposal and the way it might be made a reality.

Planning in the Commonwealth: The colonial legacy

The Commonwealth accounts for about a third of the world's population and countries. Thus it clearly is of global significance, the more so since it includes some of the richest countries along with many where per capita incomes are less than \$1 a day. The growth rates of some of the Commonwealth's mega-cities are the highest in the world - the UN predicts that Dacca will grow from 7.8M in 1995 to 18.9M in 2015; Lahore from 5M to 10.7M; Karachi from 9.8M to 20.6M, Bombay from 15M to 27.3M; Lagos from 10.2M to 24.4M. The numbing scale of these figures mean that it is easy to forget that the growth rates in the smaller and medium sized urban settlements are often greater still, and that in African countries in particular GDP per capita and life expectancy has fallen.

The overwhelming majority of the countries in the Commonwealth experienced some form of British colonialism. Since colonialism implied an extension of control over land and space, it is not surprising to find that a form of land use planning or to use the phrase from early British legislation, "Town and Country Planning" was frequently practised by the colonialists. These practices have been discussed elsewhere (e.g. Hall 1996, King 1980, King 1990, Home, 1990, Qadeer, 1983, Simpson 1985 etc.) What is significant is the form that such planning typically took, its institutional ownership and distributional effects.

This colonial planning typically sought to ensure orderly and efficient lay-out of suburban areas for the colonialists themselves and, to some degree and in some

places, for those members of the indigenous population involved in white collar work linked to the colonial power. King, (1990, p.47) noted that military and political dominance were central to early colonial development, Thus one of the key concerns was to create a cantonment as the base for the military. Such areas were described by Qadeer (1983, p.187) as “a unique spatial idiom”. Typically the cantonment was located a short but essential distance away from the "native settlement", and their layout was typified by the design ideals of military engineering - straight lines and wide roads allowing efficient, unhindered movement of troops.

While the cantonment is perhaps the most unambiguous expression of town planning based on colonial priorities, it is by no means the only one. The lay-out of the residential areas for the colonial administrators and ex-patriot entrepreneurs was again a conscious exercise in planning. Such areas typically lie between the cantonment and the native city and are characterised by low density housing in large compounds set back from wide roads in well landscaped environments. There was a ready transplantation of ideas about garden cities / garden suburbs in the first third of the 20th century, in part because both in the metropolitan homeland and in the colony the low density suburb or self-contained garden city offered a practical alternative to the squalor of the old established urban area. In contrast the colonial planning approach paid relatively little concern to the native city which was typically a dense organic network of narrow lanes, bazaars, small industry and crowded houses. It would have posed a formidable challenge to the orderly mind of military engineers and the their colleagues who were early town planners.

The situation is summarised with characteristic panache by Peter Hall (1996, pp189-190). He says that in British India and in the colonies in South and East Africa, produced “mini-capitals”:

“In all consultants produced plans based on the fiction that these cities were completely white with, perhaps, a separate Indian bazaar area at a respectful distance; Africans were either assumed not to exist, since they were officially supposed to be farmers, or were herded into squatter reservations with the aid of mass deportations and pass systems”.

Hall continues “The basis was hygienic: the government medical service, invariably of military origin, had a virtual stranglehold over the planning system.”

In many countries the legislation and the training of planners was also derivative from the UK. Thus, for example, we see mechanisms like Improvement Acts in countries like India and Singapore (Teo, 1992). Such laws directly repeat the language of earlier nineteenth century UK legislation. The Indian Town Planning Act of 1915 was based on the 1909 Housing, Town Planning Etc. Act in Britain. Similarly, the training of planners drew inspiration from the UK (Muller 1993, p.5) and tended to follow the technical and physical base that was dominant in the

UK itself in the first half of the twentieth century. Likewise there was some development of professionalism and of professional bodies that directly reflected British institutional practice, and was distinct from the continental European model, for example. What emerged therefore was an orthodox planning professionalism - the idea that planning is a neutral, technical exercise carried out on behalf of the public by a group of experts. This stands in stark contrast to the political reality defined by the quotations above from Hall (1996).

From at least the late 1950s this orthodox view of planning was coming under increasingly critical scrutiny within the UK, as social scientists began to challenge its assumptions and pose the fundamental questions of "who benefits and who loses?" However these were to be minority voices until into the 1970s. Indeed the professional orthodoxy was stoutly defended by an established group of planners who both sincerely believed in the orthodox view, and had political control over the professional organisation to allow them to enforce that view against their critics. It is not surprising then to find that as decolonialism occurred, there was nevertheless considerable continuity in the planning ideas, legislation and methods. An example is the Master Plan for Singapore produced in 1958, of which Teo (1992, p.168) said, "The silent assumptions of British planning practices, that is slow and steady rate of social change and minimal public sector intervention in planning, were also apparent in the plan".

There was a period when, in some newly independent countries, "planning" began to mean economically based plans geared to modernisation through co-ordinated state investment. Such programmes tended to develop in parallel to the traditional "town and country" type of planning rather than to forge an effective link giving a spatial dimension to economic development. However, the onset of neo-liberalism and globalisation, indebtedness and structural adjustment programmes from the late 1970s saw a turning away from such planning experiments. Regulatory town and country planning continued to exist, though at the cost of some credibility in the face neo-liberal ideology and of rapid urbanisation.

The essence of this planning tradition was to apply principles of amenity and functional efficiency to the development of land. It operated on the basis of a set of space standards and a presumption in favour of the segregation of land uses and users. Once these principles were applied to some forecasts of demand, a plan could be drawn that would allocate the "right" amount of land to the "right" use in the "right" locations. Once a plan existed that met the statutory requirements and carried statutory authority, then the task of planning was to exercise control of development in a manner consistent with the plan. Perhaps the classical example was under the apartheid regime in South Africa, where this form of planning provided a powerful mechanism to enforce exclusion on the grounds of inappropriate development. However, where the state was weak and/or saw advantages to itself and its clients in disregarding restrictions on

development, then the plans became a best a hindrance and at worst a total irrelevance and planning itself lost credibility.

Globalisation and rapid urbanisation

Of course this is all very generalised, and there are exceptions. Perhaps the most notable is the case of Singapore, where the state has been strong and there has been a strong grasp of the need to use planning to position and re-position the country within the rapidly changing global economy (Teo, 1992; Thornley 2000). However this is the exception not the rule. Lowe (1992) suggested that between 70 and 95% of new housing in most poorer countries is unauthorised, and plans are typically long outdated and impossible to implement - for example the plan for Nairobi dates from the mid 1970s, and Hague (1997 p.143) described the situation in Faisalabad, Pakistan. Thus not only are the inequities of colonial and neo-colonial planning no longer acceptable, but also the traditional plan and control, technical and physical model of planning is now severely disabled by rapid urbanisation and by globalisation. The pace of development is simply beyond the capacity of planners to produce urban-scale master plans: the data is not available and the attempt to calculate need then map locations in some detail is simply not feasible within the available resources. Equally important is the attitude towards urban growth. Part of the colonial legacy is a presumption that urban development is intrinsically problematic - hence the need for a plan and an associated regulatory control system. In reality, not only is the spread of urban areas literally unavoidable, but the development community has embraced globalisation and with it the perception that cities are "engines of growth" that have the potential to solve a range of problems (UNCHS 2001b, p.xxx).

There has been an important recognition of the strengths of the informal economy and of informal settlements as means of addressing the needs of people in poverty, while also contributing significantly to aggregate economic growth. This body of thinking now has a long pedigree, going back at least as far as Turner's critique of traditional state-centred slum clearance and housing provision (e.g. Turner 1976). Increasingly in the 1990s it was a view that the international donor and development community agreed with. At least as important is the fact that there have been some outstanding examples of groups drawn from the urban poor self-organising and intervening in the development process to achieve real improvements in their living conditions, and to tackle deep rooted inequalities such as those associated with gender (see, e.g. UNCHS 2001b). The implications of these trends for the orthodox form of planning are bleak. At best such planning can be seen as ineffective, but at worst it can be seen as a barrier to the relief of poverty and as hostile to the interests of the urban poor.

The UN summit on settlements at Istanbul in 1996 was an important landmark. It led to the adoption of the Habitat Agenda by the nations of the world. This implied a need to rethink planning to make it relevant.

Orthodox planning	Habitat Agenda
Regulation and control	Enabling development
Hierarchy of plans provides top-down, centralised framework for decision	Decentralised, bottom-up basis for decision
Presumes state has power and acts in the public interest	Partnerships with NGOs and private sector
Design of finite plans	Governance and management
Professionals as experts with right answers	Professionals as enablers and partners in dialogues
Gender blind	Gender aware

UNCHS 2001b (p.xxxiv) make a similar point:

"The new planning is less codified and technical, more innovative and entrepreneurial. It is more participatory and concerned with projects rather than whole urban systems. Planning expertise is increasingly sought not only by the state, but also by the corporate sector and civil society... What is controversial is not urban planning per se, but its *goal*: whether it should be directed chiefly at efficiency, reinforcing the current distribution of wealth and power, or whether it should play a distributive role to help create minimum standards of urban liveability".

While these dilemmas and sentiments are especially acute in respect of the post-colonial countries, they also have a resonance in the countries of the developed world. For example, in Scotland the Scottish Executive has for the first time stated that the planning system should contribute to the achievement of "social justice" (Scottish Executive Development Division 2000). There is scope for planners in such countries to learn from the ways that NGOs in some poorer countries have developed innovative approaches to participation, and have helped recast the idea of planning itself. Concerns with gender equality feature strongly in the Habitat Agenda and remain issues to be adequately addressed in the planning practice many countries.

The very nature of globalisation now forces connections, classically in the link between urban form, transport and greenhouse gas emissions in wealthy countries and the consequences of climate change and sea level rise for countries like Bangladesh and many small island states. Faced with global threats such as this, and the huge issues of how we manage urban change to achieve sustainable development, competitiveness and social inclusion that are key ideas in the European Spatial Development Perspective for example, (European Commission, 1999), there is a need to share learning between different countries and between professional planners and other stakeholders in the development process, not least the urban poor and their NGOs. The alternative is to see the increasing irrelevance of the idea of planning.

To effect such sharing, to make the connections, organisations and institutional structures are necessary. It is important to grasp some of the positive opportunities opened up by globalisation and the spread of ICT, and to make every effort to overcome barriers that perpetuate poverty and under-development, and which are evident in systems of higher education and more specifically in planning education and the planning schools. We need to grasp the opportunities that can be realised through decentralised networks rather than traditional hierarchies, and to forge imaginative and inclusive linkages that foster multi-lateral learning and support. This is what the Commonwealth Association of Planners is now seeking to do.

The Commonwealth Association of Planners

It is not the aim of this paper to recite the history of CAP - indeed much of that history is not only unpublished but also ill documented. Liu (2001) made a brave attempt to pull some of the information together into a critical and analytical framework. CAP formed in 1971. The professional planning institutes in Commonwealth countries make up the membership of CAP - there is no individual membership. During the 1990s the organisation was relatively inactive, and struggled to overcome the hurdles of operating at a world scale when some members did not have access to effective telecommunications. At Auckland in 1996 CAP recognised the significance of the Habitat Agenda, but subsequently failed to really focus activity around it.

Since 2000 CAP has been able to reinvent itself, with support from the UK's Department for International Development, which sponsored attendance at an event in Belfast in June 2000. A key feature of the Belfast meeting was the involvement of Homeless International and people from a poor people's NGO, Shack Dwellers International. This marked a deliberate attempt to embrace the spirit of the Habitat Agenda, and to extend the perspectives of the planning profession. Since then CAP has began to re-enrol and extend its membership. It has set up a web site (www.commonwealth-planners.org), and will hold an international conference in Queensland in October 2001 linked to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. This event is being supported by the Commonwealth Foundation and by the Australian international development agency, so that planners from poorer Commonwealth countries can take part. Since the summer of 2000 CAP has produced 3 issues of a newsletter, and distributed these in hard copy and electronically. In addition it has taken an active and visible role in the work of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements (a vehicle for Commonwealth advocacy in support of the Habitat Agenda) and in the Istanbul+5 process at the UN General Assembly Special Session in New York in June 2001. It has also formed a Women in Planning Network (Olufemi, 2001).

The aim then is to make CAP a dynamic learning network of planners around the globe, united around the need for planning to be seen to be able to contribute to

implementation of the Habitat Agenda aims of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements. Planning schools in the Commonwealth can become major players in this vision for CAP. As is evident at this event, the cause of planning education internationally has benefited from the development of the international groupings of planning schools. While some existing networks include Commonwealth members, there is scope for a Commonwealth body able to build bridges between North and South, South and South and North and North and to reach out and include planning schools, teachers and researchers and students in poorer countries, or to assist in the development of a planning education infrastructure in countries where it is currently lacking. This is a task that CAP wishes to take on. The paper now explains how it can be done.

The CAP Network of Planning Schools

What follows is in the nature of a consultative exercise. This paper is being launched here in the hope of being able to capture the responses of a significant number of planning academics from Commonwealth universities. It will be published on the CAP web-site and comments will be invited. Copies will be sent to those planning schools in the Commonwealth that CAP can identify, and then feedback will be sought to put before the CAP meeting in Queensland in October.

The **aim** of the Network will be to foster collaboration and exchanges amongst planning schools who are in Commonwealth countries, so that they and their members can advance the understanding and practice of planning in the context of the Habitat Agenda. The link to the Agenda is vital, because, as argued above, without connecting planning to the needs of the growing number of the urban poor, and without a commitment to planning as an inclusive process, a part of good urban governance, the exercise will be fatally flawed, even if it achieves some mechanical successes.

It is proposed that any planning school from a Commonwealth country be allowed to **join the network**, possibly for a small charge commensurate with ability to pay. Joining will mean an obligation to provide basic data about the school for the database, which will be compiled and held by the CAP secretariat. In return the school will receive a copy of that database or directory, so that it will have details of other schools, their programmes and research interests and contact details. A shorter version will be posted on the CAP web-site. In addition staff and students in a network school would be eligible to receive the CAP Newsletter electronically, and also to be kept up to date about CAP events.

However, it is hoped that the main **activity** in the Network would not be one way from the CAP secretariat. Rather CAP would encourage the schools to provide news and short articles for the Newsletter, and would run a regular feature on a CAPNOPS member institution in the Newsletter. The main activity within the CAPNOPS would be between the members themselves. The Network would be

a way of encouraging linkages and synergies between planning schools globally, backed by CAP and its secretariat. What form, might these activities take? Here are some ideas:

Two schools might agree to become "twins" or a group of schools within the Network might declare themselves to be partners, and develop a range of activities over a sustained period. Alternatively the Network could provide a looser framework within which individual staff or students might exploit new opportunities. Some possibilities might be:

- An undertaking by two or more member schools to facilitate **movement of staff and students** between the two schools. One form of this would be short-term student exchanges on the SOCRATES model that operates in Europe. In this there is an agreement to waive fees and to encourage and support student exchanges, and accept that the work done on the exchange can count for credit in the "home" degree programme.
- There could also be **staff exchanges**, possibly with house swaps to reduce costs.
- Another possibility is that the "twins" / partners may agree to **promote each other's post-graduate programmes** to their own undergraduates.
- A further possibility is the **sharing and /or joint development of teaching materials**. The electronic age makes this much easier. Thus there could be joint development say of teaching about approaches to shelter provision, or transport planning, or comparative planning systems. There might even be scope to introduce shared assessment, e.g. through emailing of materials and student reports, for example.
- There could be mutual support in **course development**, from the level of a programme as a whole to reading lists for particular modules.
- There could be scope to develop **joint courses** that give the students have some flexibility where to study.
- There could be shared approaches to **supervision**, enabling students to undertake supervised field work in another country.
- CAPNOPS could also be a basis to find **partners for bi-lateral or comparative research projects**.
- There could also be collaborations on **quality assurance**, exchanging ideas and best practices.

One issue that has been of great concern to planning schools in some CAP member countries has been **accreditation**. Many would like to gain access to some form of external accreditation, but felt that existing systems such as that of the RTPI are not easy to access and may not be appropriate to their local conditions and problems. CAP has recognised this as a problem but has so far failed to produce any solution. One possibility is that members of CAPNOPS could produce and operate a system of accreditation in association with CAP itself. It is not the place of this paper to set out how such a scheme might operate - e.g. whether accreditation might be for parts of courses or whole courses. The point is that there is an issue here that has not been addressed, and the advent of a committed group of planning schools working within CAP could produce innovative thinking and responsiveness to the needs of schools and their students.

In all this one cannot ignore the disparities that exist between planning schools in different countries, since some of the more general global inequalities are reflected within higher education systems. One hope would be that an inclusive network could be a way that the planning schools together sought to work to combat these problems, while also increasing their own attractiveness and competitiveness through mutual learning. It is important to note that a lot of innovative work is being done in some of the poorest countries, where approaches to participation in planning for example, constitute practices that others could learn from.

Conclusion

Globalisation is changing places and planning. The Habitat Agenda provides a challenge to traditional planning practice, professionalism and education. CAPNOPS could be an exciting new opportunity to use globalisation for the benefit of those in planning education and thereby to embed the knowledge skills and values needed to deliver the Habitat Agenda and to make planning relevant to the great challenge of creating sustainable human settlements.

Schools interested in CAPNOPS should contact Annette O'Donnell, CAP Secretariat, RTPI Scotland, 57 Melville St, Edinburgh EH 3 7HL, Scotland, or by e-mail at annette.odonnell@rtpi.org.uk .
--