

Success of the City in the 21st Century: Identifying priorities for further WSE work

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● At a time of a world crisis, it is good that we finally managed to get together here in Berlin. We missed many colleagues who had to cancel their attendance at the last minute. But the fact that almost half of those present are new members of the Society is a great pleasure for us all.

The first meeting in the first year of a new millennium: what more natural for the WSE than to provide an opportunity for its members to think together about defining success in future human settlements and also identifying ways and means by which WSE could contribute to this success along the lines of its aims and objectives, that is to say, through

- development of knowledge;
- expansion of education;
- stimulation of worldwide interest; and
- promotion of an interdisciplinary approach,

always with regard to optimizing human life in space, and within a balanced relation between nature, anthropos, society, shells and networks.

● The subject is enormous and the time available very limited, even for a very general reconnaissance of world conditions. Nevertheless, a variety of factors made our experience exceptionally substantial and memorable. We have been exposed to statements referring to facts, trends, fears, aspirations, change and constancy, research work, theories, and examples of positive achievements at present, with emphasis on basic pre-conditions for success. Furthermore, especially rewarding was the fact that participants were particularly skilful in identifying subjects which should be endorsed by the WSE, in fulfilment of objectives such as the development of knowledge through research and a variety of other initiatives.

● My notes on priorities for future action that were suggested – directly or indirectly – at these exciting meetings are endless. Coming back to these is a first priority that I would like to propose for all of us. We have no time for that now. So let me limit myself to two points deriving from my concern to maximize results, which both relate to communication:

- discussion, and
- dissemination of information.

● **Discussion:** To be frank, I cannot pretend – and I am sure none of us could – that we had sufficient time to fully appreciate ideas and proposals. No one had a chance – due to the pressure of time – to raise questions, ask for clarifications, go deeper into the meaning of things. With the exception of the presentation on New Berlin, we were deprived of time for discussion among participants – an international group from different backgrounds, with different experiences and in different fields. Would not discussion be also a first step towards establishing connections and thereafter a starting point towards the process of interdisciplinarity? We seemed to forget that our meeting was conceived as a symposium where participants are mainly expected to exchange ideas and discuss in a leisurely atmosphere, and not as one of the usual conferences with soliloquies put on record and then in proceedings, a strictly academic practice.

Meetings are among the means that the WSE uses for direct access to knowledge. But we cannot ignore the fact that they also offer the opportunity for members to meet and establish better relations and possible options for collaboration as members of a community with special goals. Having the maximum intellectual profit with minimum sacrifice of time and energy is one of the dimensions of sustainability with which most of us at this gathering seem to be preoccupied. On any future occasion we should capitalize on discussion. We learn, we understand, we share, we connect and help ourselves to go further ahead.

● **Dissemination of information:** This concerns the members of the Society; the international community of experts who are – or should be – by definition, interested in human settlements; and the public at large.

I am sure you will all agree that we need to make every effort to revise, enrich, expand or reduce, and definitely edit all documents made available to us at these meetings and have them ready as a reminder, a basis for any future action, also with regard to educating public opinion. In the past, we in the WSE have inherited the practice of producing a brief document with the central message from each meeting. In the case of our meetings in Berlin, we did not produce such a statement. Would it not be appropriate to adopt such a policy for any future meetings of this kind?

● Under the circumstances, to conclude, in my capacity as Editor of *Ekistics*, I ask our Society to accept my proposal to consider all the material available or to be made available, and proceed with its publication in a future issue of *Ekistics*. In such a case, my problem in the immediate future is to convince you how essential your collaboration is for such an effort.