



## **New Towns for the 21st Century: The Planned vs. The Unplanned City**

**Conference: June 4–5, 2009**

International New Town Institute, Almere  
The Netherlands

1.

The New Towns of the 20th Century were planned cities: built according to a blueprint designed by an architect or planner. Complete cities, rationally designed with a certain image of the city's future in mind, a perfect equilibrium of infrastructure, housing, services and a social-economic and cultural identity. But what has happened after the planners leave? New plans are being made, the original design is being adjusted, inhabitants appropriate the city, in short: the perfect equilibrium is shaken and the complexity of society takes over.

These initiatives after the planners have left are usually summarized as the 'unplanned', the 'informal' or the 'self-organized' city, definitions of varied phenomena which have as a common denominator the absence of professional planners. The unplanned city is made by inhabitants, entrepreneurs, developers, immigrants. While the planned city corresponds roughly to a top down approach, the unplanned city does with a bottom up approach.

Does this overruling of the planned city imply the failure of planning? Or is this appropriation, the so-called 'unplanned' additions and unforeseen use of the planned city actually the key to its success? Is it a sign of the coming of age of the New Towns, of reaching the point where they become a normal and real city?

For the next generation of New Towns, which is presently on the drawing boards from Western-Europe to China, to succeed and become whole, vital and socially sustainable cities it is of utmost importance to analyze the benefits both of the planned and the unplanned, of the top down and the bottom up, of the institutional and the self-organized.

Is it possible to combine both sides in the planning of the New Towns for the 21st Century?

2.

In this two-day conference the International New Town Institute wants to explore the relations between the planned city and the unplanned city in two ways: by looking at ways of *reanimation* for existing New Towns and of *anticipation* for future New Towns to programmatic, social and cultural change.

## Reanimation

INTI invites participants to explore existing New Towns and analyse how after the original plans have been built, these have been taken over by real life, and the unplanned city and self-organised building activities have decidedly changed and shaped the city. Secondly, to analyse how these 'old' New Towns have been revitalized and regenerated in recent years and how the unplanned urban culture and inhabitants are included in this reanimating.

*Example: How have fifties modernist high rise areas been taken over by the informal city and completely encapsuled by slum housing, transforming them from middle class neighbourhoods into hotbeds of socialist-activist reform? On a sociological level, is the relation between the 'informal' population and the 'planned', usually more suburban population, inevitably conflictuous? Can a sense of community and collectivity be the result of selfbuilt/selforganised housing? What effects have the unplanned commercial and housing activities had on the culture and the identity of the New Town?*

## Anticipation

Following this analysis the conference aims at drawing lessons for the future: by speculating how the planning of New Towns in the 21st Century can anticipate on unplanned activities, be responsive to inhabitants' input and to unexpected changes in political, economic or cultural context, thereby enriching both the planning profession and the city itself.

*Example: How can programmatical diversity be embedded in largescale planning to accommodate complexity in a way that formal diversity can never do? How can inhabitants' wishes and changing preferences be anticipated on in a serious and robust way in large scale planning? How can organisations be transformed to work in a bottom up way or include these practices in planning? Can there be any lessons for western New Towns in the informal cities of developing countries? Is a formal urban design inevitably contradictory with the complexity of today's society? What are effective ways to include different actors en organisations in both regenerating and creating new New Towns?*

## Program June Thursday 4 – Friday 5 2009

The conference has invited a number of worldwide renowned keynote speakers: Hernando de Soto, Peru / Alfredo Brillembourg/Hubert Klumpner (Urban Think Tank/Slum Lab), Venezuela, U.S. / Margaret Crawford (Harvard GSD), U.S. / Claudio Acioly, (UN Habitat), Kenya / Wouter Vanstiphout (Crimson), the Netherlands.

## Call for papers

INTI invites researchers and professionals of a variety of disciplines (economists, historians, architects, planners, artists, sociologists, anthropologists, politicians, policy makers, etc.) to take part in our call for papers and to contribute to this conference.

We are looking for a contribution which deals with the above subjects and includes one or more of the following issues:

-Analysis of existing and reanimated New Towns, focusing on the relation between planned and unplanned developments

-Self-Organisation, as an ingredient of planning New Towns

-Top Down planning & Bottom Up planning; what does a combination of these planning methods imply on the levels of institutions, actors, organisation and design in both existing and future New Towns?

A digital paper (appr. 200 words) can be sent to [seminar@newtowninstitute.org](mailto:seminar@newtowninstitute.org) before January 5<sup>th</sup> 2009. If you encounter problems at any point, please contact Ms. Margie Burger by email at the above mentioned address.