Solly Angel Responds to Chat Questions

*The Nature of Order* Webinar, 4 March 2021

Brian Hamilton: Apart from the diagrams which you have told us about where did the photographs come from and how were they selected for the Pattern Language? Photos of Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier's work are featured in some of the patterns.

Ingrid King spent a couple of years looking at pictures books and proposing photographs for the book. That was her contribution to *A Pattern Language*.

Robert Krassner: omg, I am speechless, with all respect, I have never heard/saw more stupidity than in those videos.

I believe I already responded to this comment in my remarks during the webinar.

Brain Hamilton: In a zoom meeting with Andres Duany of CNU talking about the book he has edited called "The Transect" I asked what role does property values play in the implementation of this form of planning. The question could also be applied to the Atlas of Urban Expansion method of planning. Discuss

I believe that successful speculation on the urban periphery is largely the result of artificial shortages of developable land. If we prepare adequate lands for urbanization, speculation should ease up and land prices should remain affordable.

Savya: Are these facts not contributing to increasing the carbon footprint and contributing to climate change? Then we are contributing to doom and deviating from the path of building beauty.

Yes, urban expansion contributes to climate change because larger urban footprints require longer commuting distances. Securing the rights-of-way for an arterial road grid seeks to ensure that there is room for public transport and eventually for rapid bus lands and possibly subways, all of which will reduce carbon footprints while allowing access of all workers to all jobs and maintaining the productivity of urban areas.

Ross Chapin: This paradigm seems to be based on high technology and oil-based auto-centric systems.

Yes, it relies on high technology. Modern metropolitan areas, especially large ones, depend on long distance travel to be efficient and inclusive. This can be achieved by both private transport and public transport, but not by walking and cycling. Both longer-distance private and public transport needed to sustain productivity in cities can become less dependent on fossil fuels as they electrify and use clean energy.

Savya: A study of the limits of expansion could influence policy to consider dispersal of populations

Population distribution policies, in place for decades, have largely and uniformly failed. People vote with their feet and will migrate to where they see advantage for themselves. Freedom of movement within states is guaranteed by numerous human rights declarations.

Dave Hora: “Productivity” was mentioned as a goal a few times in the videos, and “quality of life the best cities have to offer.” Some of what we see through *Nature of Order* is that the ‘best of cities’ aren’t necessarily offering a whole or human quality of life. To what degree are wholeness of the land, beauty & psychology explicit goals of this approach? Or are they rejected as externality?

We have to put the values that are championed by *The Nature of Order* in perspective, similar to the hierarchy of needs proposed by Abraham Maslow. There are basic needs, like food, shelter, medicine that need to be satisfied before ‘higher needs’ can be satisfied. I agree that we are failing to meet the higher needs championed by *The Nature of Order* and that we should by no means neglect them. That requires that the culture we live in sees their value.

Or Ettlinger: Even if expansion is inevitable and planning for it is necessary, could not *Nature of Order* principles help in defining that expansion in a more wholesome way?

Of course they can, and they should.

Morganstan: Do you plan for what you think people will do/where they will want/need to go? Do you build to encourage where people should go? Or do you focus on making small towns/villages/rural areas more vibrant, with better services, resources, and connectivity (especially when considering young, educated people)? When connectivity increases, mobility increases, and expansion occurs. This necessitates planning for such.

Planners and architects have limited power to influence people’s decision as to where to work and where to live. Surely, as you suggest, you can make small settlements more attractive, especially for young people. Whether that will be enough to attract them there is to be decided by them. Large metropolitan areas, as I said, are more productive and more resilient to economic shocks than one-industry towns. They can sustain more specialized services and more specialized cultural and educational venues. They also offer more specialized jobs. A small town needs a lawyer and a doctor than can do everything. Neurosurgeons are hard to find. With increasing opportunities for virtual work, there is new life in smaller places far from the urban core, but with occasional access to the urban core for face-to-face contact. Cities and smaller settlements will function together more and more as integrated settlement systems.

Dagmar Calleja: Population Control!!!

Population control has been a universal failure and there is no need for it. Fertility rates are declining everywhere, even in Sub-Saharan Africa (but less so in oil-producing Arab countries), accelerated by rural-urban migration and economic development. The world’s population is slowly stabilizing.

Narendra Dengle: From the presentation it is not clear as to how the various 'sections' or sectors grow. What is the process of land acquisition? Traditionally work though important water, food, were kind of 'centers' of any settlements. So it is not clear what happens to the existing land uses-ecology, forests, settlements.

The conversion of land from rural to urban use radically transforms the existing ecology, much in the same way that the conversion of natural habitats to agricultural use destroys the original ecologies.

The process of land acquisition—and in our case only for rights-of-way for arterial roads and trunk infrastructure lines for water, sewerage, and drainage—varies from country to country. In the city of Valledupar in Colombia, where landowners on the urban periphery own large tracts of land, they donated the land for the arterial roads free of charge, knowing that the value of the land will increase when it is adjacent to an arterial road. In other countries, like Ecuador, for example, the law specifies that when land is converted from rural to urban use, 35% of the land needs to be transferred to public authorities for public use. In Israel, for example, it is 40% by law and a much higher percentage in practice.

Robert Krassner: To expand the city limits by urban expansion is the same as widen your belt of the trousers when you want to lose weight.

I completely understand your heartfelt aversion to urban expansion. But let’s look at your analogy. What does ‘losing weight’ stand for? It cannot mean losing population, can it? Yes, some cities in the developed world are losing population. Densities there will decline. But we are speaking of urban population growth in less developed countries. Cities in developing countries will add some 2.3 billion people to their existing population by 2050. This population will need to be accommodated in cities. Take a city like Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Say, it doubles in population in the next 30 years, from 8 to 16 million. Can you realistically accommodate this population within Kinshasa’s existing urban footprint, where present levels of overcrowding are three times those of Dhaka? Can you just force all families to share their plots with an additional family? Well, I don’t really see how you can ‘lose weight.’ But say by ‘losing weight’ you mean reducing GHG emissions? Thant makes sense. So you are OK with doubling the population, which should double emissions, but doing it by doubling densities. Again, I would support you if you could show me how to double the densities in Kinshasa in a realistic and pragmatic manner, rather than just demanding it and calling people stupid for not heeding your call.

Narendra Dengle: Has there been any response from the local communities to the urban expansion plans proposed ? One would like to know that.

There is a longer, 17-minute video on the Ethiopian cities that are engaged in expanding their arterial grid. In it, there are several interviews with local people. There is a lot of support for the initiative. It has made it easier for people to bring things to market and it has expanded their opportunities to find good jobs in the formal sector.

Tom Radulovich: I think the question of expansion depends on context. Cities that are going to double or triple in population will probably expand and figuring out how to do that better makes sense to me. Most US cities cover huge areas at very low density and needn’t expand their area much if at all. Christopher Leinberger’s research shows there’s more demand for walkable neighborhoods in most US urban areas, but our zoning laws mostly prohibit them. Most US cities can’t sustain their sprawling infrastructure; it’s a huge predicament. Infill and sprawl repair make more sense in the US.

I agree with you. In U.S. cities, there is a lot of room for densification. The challenge is to remove regulatory barriers to densification, allowing additional units on plots with single- that serve entire metropolitan areasfamily homes, and expanding zoning for multi-family housing.

Narendra Dengle: Who puts in the economic resources into Ethiopia for its Urban expansion and at what cost to the country?

Our initiative in Ethiopia required $0.5 million, which we received as a grant from New York University, so our services to municipalities in Ethiopia were provided for free. The funds for surveying, compensation, and road paving were from municipal budgets provided by the central government.

Robert Krasser: But in Africa, we will have the people… and if we are expanding there we will end up with the same problems than in US., e.g. rail transport will not be cost efficient.

Fixed rail transport networks that serve entire metropolitan areas and can supplant cars, vans, and busses are expensive and largely out of reach of cities and metropolitan areas in Sub-Saharan Africa. It is unlikely that they can be financed in the near and medium future. People will need to travel to work in vans and busses and we need to make travel in both modes more efficient. This is why we recommend the creation of arterial grids in these cities. These grids are meant to serve public transport, so that it can move faster. They can later be upgraded to rail transit, but this will take time. In the meantime, they can be operated using clean energy rather than fossil fuels. More generally, given the decentralization of residences and workplaces, there are very few metropolitan areas in the world that are fully served by rail transport, even though you and your colleagues continue to press for it as though it is a completely realistic alternative.

Ross Chapin: It seems we are discussing success strategies of growth. The lower side of the ‘S’ curve of growth —greenfield growth—success shows itself with big changes, high resource consumption, low complexity. It is opportunistic and eventually fragile. Beyond the inflection of the S curve—after hitting the limits of carrying capacities—success strategies change… to refined changes, less resource consumption, more complexity, interconnection and diverse … toward resilience. Think: clear cut vs. old-growth forest. We have moved in time beyond the inflection point. If we want to have a sustainable, humane, living planet, we must adopt strategies of the later part of the curve.

I completely agree with this analysis.

Dagmar Calleja: Population explosion is exponential...

People keep saying this, but it is not true. There is no population explosion. Urban population growth rates have been declining for decades and are now in decline in all world regions. Let’s look at the Latin America and Caribbean region, for example. The rate of growth of its urban population has slowed down markedly and is now likely to come to a standstill by 2070. More specifically, we can look at the doubling of the urban population in the region since 1950, shown in the figure below. We can see that the region’s urban population doubled in 15 years between 1950 and 1965. It doubled again in 20 years by 1985, and again in 35 years by 2020. But it is not expected to double again. It is projected to grow by only 27% by 2050 (U.N. Population Division, 2018, file 3) and by a maximum of 32% by 2070 when it will have stopped growing (my own projection). In other words, the region’s urban population will grow by less than one-third during the next 50 years before it stabilizes at 700-750 million people. The pattern is not different in other world regions and in the world at large.



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 **The growth of the urban population in the Latin American and Caribbean region, 1950-2070.**

Brian Hamilton: Are the maps in the Atlas of Urban Expansion all to the same scale?

No, they are not. Since cities in the Atlas vary in size from 100,000 to 30 million, they could not be mapped at the same scale.

Thank you all for the interesting questions and for the opportunity to respond.

Keep safe.

All the best,

Solly