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MAPPING THE
HUMAN HABITAT

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habitat:

1. the natural environment of an organism; place that is natural for the life and growth of an organism: a jungle habitat.
2. the place where one is usually found.
3. a special environment for living in over an extended period, as an underwater research vessel.

[1755–65; < Latin: *it inhabits*, 3rd singular present indic. of *habitāre*, frequentative of *habēre* to have, hold]

*Webster’s College Dictionary*
The purpose of this thesis is to explore the interplay of certain concepts with the evolution of town planning theories and ultimately the dissemination of the discipline of urbanism at various instances in the second half of the 20th century. Primarily, it deals with the introduction in architecture and planning of the concept of habitat—a term derived from biological and ecological studies that came to express the attempts of a generation of town planners to modernize man’s living environment, eventually representing the institutionalization of contemporary metropolitan planning. The narrative is by no means a comprehensive historiographical review of a discipline, or an inclusive record of a term’s usage—it follows some key individuals, events and collaborations that marked the main concept’s formulation and development. As a study, it highlights certain institutions and publications as well as the influence they had on the formal expression of urban planning methods. At the same time, it addresses the efforts to define the human living environment and promote the city as the human habitat.
Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, Sigfried Giedion and Jose Luis Sert at the CIAM X
The habit of distinguishing ‘individual habitat’ from ‘group habitat’ does not make any sense. *Habitat* is always a group habitat in opposition to *habitation*, which is necessarily individual and familial.

*Georges Candilis, Encyclopædia Universalis*
ATTEMPTS TO RECONFIGURE THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

Expressions of a new generation

Although fairly prolific, by the end of the 1930s the members of the CIAM Congresses had yet to be internationally recognized as active and expert urbanists. Especially in the USA – where the New Deal-triggered urban development rendered pragmatism a *sine qua non* element of town planning – the abstention of modernist masters like Gropius and Le Corbusier from large-scale commissions kept their work in the shadows for a large part of the American public. In an attempt to promote the CIAM’s version of urbanist principles, which had been summed up in the *Charter of Athens* in 1933, and at the same time assert their timeliness after the onset of World War II, Jose Luis Sert published in 1942 a volume fully titled *Can Our Cities Survive? An ABC of Urban Problems, Their Analyses, Their Solutions: Based on the Proposals Formulated by CIAM*. Thoroughly illustrated with several projects of CIAM members, the volume was also intended to stand in as a planning textbook; while at the same time facilitate its author’s acquaintance with the American academic environment.¹ It was published by Harvard University Press, along with Siegfried Giedion’s *Space, Time and Architecture*, which was a major success at the time; Sert’s handbook didn’t quite share this fate. Though promptly distributed to various governmental boards and agencies, as well as university libraries, it was met with strict criticism concerning its role in delineating the fundamental principles of city planning. One of the foremost critics was Lewis Mumford, who had already declined the author’s proposal to write an introduction. His main argument was that the four basic functions that the modernist planners had associated with urban planning (namely dwelling, work, recreation and transportation) were insufficient in describing the full scope of interactions taking place in such an environment. Of course Mumford, a sociologist, considered a major flaw of contemporary city planning the overlooking of any kind of sociopolitical correlation, which

could provide equally distinguishable urban features; without them, “there is only an urban mass...”\(^2\) The failure of the “functional living” concept to convince the critics of the CIAM principles would nevertheless hint to a shift in the public’s expectations of urban planners. Moreover, it would amplify a divide within the Congresses themselves – between the founding members’ generation and certain groups of younger modernist architects who had studied during the war. At the same time, the ambivalence of the older members, especially Le Corbusier, regarding the post-war conditions for the organization of living space, intensified that dissent.

The CIAM commenced again after WWII with the 6\(^{th}\) Congress in 1947, set in the English town of Bridgwater. There were other four to follow in the next nine years, and the 10\(^{th}\) Congress would mark the dissolution of the institution in the form it had initiated. During this decade, the CIAM discourse would be dominated by the search for *Habitat*, as the need to define the term often superseded its architectural manifestations. At the same time, this quest coincided with the attempts of the younger generation of modernists to influence the CIAM actions. The replacement of the *Charter of Athens* with a *Charter of Habitat* can be considered the primary objective of the majority of the members. Still, some prominent figures stood out for their contribution in giving shape to this concept or advancing its development. One of them was Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, an English architect and town planner that had studied in London and Berlin right before the war and became involved with the CIAM through the MARS group, the member association of British architects. She would soon forge a strong collaboration with founding members like Sigfried Giedion; and her secretarial role in the post-war CIAMs would signal the start of her influence in the discipline of urban planning.

CIAM VII, set in Bergamo in 1949, was the first Congress with Tyrwhitt in the role of secretary general of the Council. She would keep this position till the end of the CIAMs, even after Giedion’s and Sert’s resignation. She was acting at the same time as a median and personal assistant to Gropius at first, then Giedion and Sert – as their lack of fluency in using the English

language rendered her services of crucial importance when it came to proof-reading manuscripts or “coming up with the right word”\(^3\). In that capacity, Tyrwhitt was the one responsible for most of the official wording in the CIAM documents and proceedings.

Le Corbusier had intended for the 8\(^{th}\) Congress to deal decisively with the means and processes of habitation that needed updating over the past 15 years; as such, he proposed the production of an official Charter, hinting on the previous document promoting the “functional city”. Tyrwhitt was the first to identify the problem with the *Charte de l’Habitat* terminology; sensing that an exact translation would hardly capture Le Corbusier’s intent for a more general notion, she suggested retaining the French expression instead of a “Charter for the Habitation”. After all, she noted that several members, including the MARS group, had opted to accept a wide interpretation of it, talking about “civic centers”\(^4\). This term would eventually compete with *habitat* in the consequent CIAM VIII in Hoddesdon, in England. The MARS group would act as hosts and organizers; as such, they were urged by Sert to work towards linking their proposals with the much contested theme: “L’ Charte de l’ Habitat”. The British architects and town planners would agree to Sert’s point, insisting though on the translated version of the *civic center*, they proposed as the theme for CIAM 8 “The Heart of the City”.

This phrase would first appear in public a few months before the actual Congress – at the Festival of Britain in the early summer of 1951. The Festival, organized by the government of Clement Attlee to give Britons a feeling of recovery in the aftermath of war, intended to promote the British contribution to science, technology, industrial design, architecture and the arts. In this context, a town planning pavilion was to be set up in the grounds of an Exhibition of Live Architecture in Poplar. Jaqueline Tyrwhitt was hired to prepare the scheme and select and organize the visual material, as well as the accompanying text. To that end, she tried to provide a setting that asserted the purpose of planning as the understanding of people’s needs and the attempt to develop them into better beings. The pavilion consisted of a series of bays depicting

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4 Ibid., p.126
a single town relating to “the lives of eight typical inhabitants: a baby, a schoolchild, an industrial trainee, a young married woman, a factory worker, an office worker and an elderly couple”. By showing these individuals in various instances of their private and social lives, the connection was made between the living environment (namely the city) and the inhabitants’ well being. The visitors of the exhibition could also see the progress of 14 New Towns being built in Britain at the time in line with this reasoning; and near the exit they would be faced with a large diorama depicting the “Heart of the Town” – where, according to Tyrwhitt’s text, the social activities constitute “an essential part of a healthy community”.

Following this theme, the CIAM VIII was the first to link the public space of the city with its center – what the MARS group had termed its “heart” or “core”. Giedion was firm that the core of the urban space should be a defining and solitary feature, available to all, save motor vehicles. This architect-defined center would become a preoccupation of many urbanists over the following years, including Kevin Lynch. The outcome of the second Congress on British soil might not be a conclusive statement on the principles of Habitat; the way though was paved for a people-oriented urban environment, through the searching for an architecture of social collectivity.

As the generation chasm had become apparent over the definition of the term, it was decided that the 9th Congress should also attempt to declare the Charter of Habitat. Albeit now the older members were troubled over the exact meaning that such a document would have. As noted by Tyrwhitt, Le Corbusier himself was certain that habitat was related to living space, though extremely unsure of its relationship with other aspects of dwelling. After all, habitat would define in French both the living conditions of a creature and the actual dwelling – but an English translation would remain far from accurate. Sensing that arbitrary interpretations would cause the subsequent Congress to fail again, the CIAM Council met in 1952 in Sigtuna,

5 Ibid., p.133
6 Ibid., p.133
8 Ibid., p.218
Sweden, where they would prepare the ground for a future common understanding of the member groups. In Sigtuna the full scope of conflicting views was unveiled – the French, Swiss and Swedish groups commenced several debates on the appropriate use of the *habitat* term. It was argued that in the sense of “dwelling” or “habitation”, habitat could have well been exhausted as a CIAM discursive tool; it had to be seen as an entirely new conception. Alternative themes were proposed, ranging from simple translations as was the Italian version of “Carta dell’Abitare”, to completely different, as was the “Right to dwelling”. The MARS group of British architects favored the English wording of “Charter of Habitat”, with the provision that “Habitat” should be seen as something larger than a dwelling.\(^9\) Once more, the meeting would conclude by transferring the debate to the next Congress. Nevertheless, the CIAM IX, convened in Aix-en-Provence in 1953, was officially themed in accordance with the Charter of Habitat. Characterized by the innovative presentation of the younger generation’s projects, it dealt with the functions of living as they would have evolved over the years. The intention of Sert, Giedion and Tyrwhitt to assemble the conclusions in a book that would bear the title of the *Habitat Charter* never materialized; neither was the publication of the Congress proceedings.\(^{10}\)

The only official document dealing with the Habitat concept would eventually emerge out of the Congresses. After the fruitless ending of the CIAM IX, the workings of the various member groups to influence their course intensified. This proved the most suitable moment for the leading figures of the dissenters to pursue a closer association, leading to the formation of Team 10. Initially the name of the committee responsible for organizing the 10\(^{th}\) Congress, it prominently included the British Peter and Alison Smithson, the Dutch Jaap Bakema and Aldo van Eyck, the Greek Georges Candilis, the Italian Giancarlo de Carlo and the American Shadrach Woods. Meeting in Doorn in Netherlands in January 1954, they restated their intention to keep *Habitat* as the theme for CIAM X. This time, they proposed a new working method of its implementation, by expressing the “vital human associations” making up a city. Conclusively, they agreed to produce a summary of the meeting’s discussions in the form of a “Statement on Habitat”. According to that, the dwelling can only be considered as a part of the community,

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\(^9\) Ibid., p.222
\(^{10}\) Ibid., p.226
while at the same time interacting with it. Habitat would be concerned with the particular house in the particular type of community. The Statement was seen as a continuation of the Athens Charter, but not having the status of a “Charter of Habitat” – that would be the objective of the forthcoming CIAM X. Nevertheless, the “Statement on Habitat” would serve another purpose as well – although conceived before its authors would be formally recognized as Team 10, it subsequently acquired the more polemical title of Doorn Manifesto, given by Alison Smithson, and can be considered as the foundational document of the group. This manifesto contained one of the last official manifestations of the term. The 10th Congress failed to materialize the “Charter of Habitat”, despite Giedion’s argument that CIAM had a “moral obligation” to produce it.¹¹ Instead of further interpreting attempts, the members of Team 10 focused on the demonstration through their work of the “human associations”. More specifically, Peter and Alison Smithson would later revisit aspects of the habitat concept with actual projects besides their writings. In the “This is Tomorrow” exhibition, in 1956, the Smithsons constructed an installation referencing this concept in the smallest typical scale. Their aim was to provide a context to the human living space, through a series of “fundamental necessities of the human habitat”¹². The exhibit, called “Patio and Pavilion”, was a symbolic representation of this habitat. An enclosed space, the patio, represents the “piece of the world” which constitutes one of the foremost needs of habitation. The very next one is the need for a sheltering structure, the pavilion, which sits in the center of the patio. Both patio and pavilion were then furnished with objects that would again symbolize the things man needs from his environment; the image of a wheel would thus stand in for the necessity of movement.

¹¹ In http://www.team10online.org/
¹² Alison and Peter Smithson, Changing the Art of Inhabitation, ellipsis London Ltd, 1994, p.109
The Smithsons’ *Patio & Pavilion* installation, that was intended to be a symbolic representation of Habitat (from *Changing the Art of Inhabitation*)
Jaqueline Tyrwhitt would inevitably play a mediating role during the Council meetings to organize CIAM 10. Already divided between the younger members who pressed towards the formalization of the “Habitat Charter” and the “old guard” who favored Le Corbusier’s proposal for a “summing up of the CIAM experience”, the Committee met in Paris in 1955. The meeting would ultimately seal the end of the old guard’s influence; Tyrwhitt helped produce the official document called “The Dwelling: Statement of Principles” and validated Giedion’s affirmation for the theme of the CIAM 10 – “The Habitat: Problems of Inter-Relationships”. In fact this came along Giedion’s statement that “the city is above all a matter of interrelations, encounters, the confrontation of you and me, the inter-action of the habitat of the individual with the society”\(^\text{13}\). He would go further in admitting the incompatibility of the Athens Charter with this concept; in a published collection of his articles and lectures, he concluded that “the four main functions of urban planning: living, working, recreation, and communication, as they were stated by CIAM in 1933, have lost their balance and their inter-relationship...”\(^\text{14}\). Though eager to work on the preparation of such a *Charte d’ le Habitat*, Giedion was persuaded by Tyrwhitt to leave the carrying out of this task to the younger generation.

Perhaps the most important contribution though of Jaqueline Tyrwhitt to the final CIAMs (and also to town planning in general) was the dissemination of Sir Patrick Geddes’ work and the acquaintance of the younger generation of urbanists with his writings. Geddes had been a most influential biologist, sociologist and pioneer of the early town planning movement; his multidisciplinary knowledge had benefited his involvement in the study of cities. Linking the concept of biological evolution with the evolution of society, he had observed the modernization processes in India’s colonial environment. On that ground, he attempted to reconcile the evolving social grid with the actual planning of urban areas. In the early ‘40s, Tyrwhitt became interested in the principles Geddes had developed, and started to pursue their understanding. Having published an assessment of the Scottish theorist’s work in India in the book *Patrick Geddes in India* (1947) – a copy of which she later sent to the Indian Prime


\(^{14}\) Ibid., p.181
Minister Jawaharlal Nehru – she followed it with a much popular abridgement, *Cities in Evolution* (1949). Tyrwhitt was encouraged by Lewis Mumford, who was equally influenced by Geddes’ writings, to keep researching and publishing his oeuvre. Her main interest lay in the Valley Section, a concept formulated by Geddes which tried to relate the people with the place they inhabit and their working and living ethics. She wrote *The Valley Section, Patrick Geddes’ World Image* in 1950, having carefully picked and edited relevant sections from parts of his works. The book was intended to be published right before the CIAM 8, as her purpose was to present a complementary element to the CIAM discourse on the heart of the city. The valley section would also provide a strong imagery to counterpoint the CIAM grid as an analytical tool. The Section was essentially a visualization of the typical evolution of social life along a landscape section from the mountaintop to the sea. Geddes used it to demonstrate the dynamic interaction of humans and nature via linking “Place, Work and Folk”; thus creating an image useful to geographers, planners and sociologists alike. Tyrwhitt strongly believed that this image could become a comprehensive diagram of the dynamics of the urban ecosystem by linking temporal/objective and spiritual/subjective activities. Thus the CIAM discourse would be enriched with a tool to implement the social aspect of planning. When the members of Team 10 issued the “Statement on Habitat” after the Doorn meeting, they had declared among others: “To comprehend the pattern of human associations we must consider every community in its particular environment.” The diagram made by Peter Smithson to illustrate the Statement, was directly based on Geddes’ *Valley Section* in order to show the types of human settlements (from individual dwelling to a large city) relating to themselves and their environment – being an illustration of *human habitats*. The Doorn Manifesto was approved by Giedion, but particularly Tyrwhitt was pleased to see the evolution of the Geddesian principles she had tried to propagate. After meeting with Team 10 to discuss their plans for CIAM 10, she was “highly impressed with the seriousness and imagination” they displayed in their suggestions.

16 Ibid., p.137
17 Ibid., p.169
18 Ibid., p.169
The Valley Section, by Patrick Geddes, links man with his inhabiting place and working culture. The Smithsons’ Scale of Association sketch is based on the Valley concept to illustrate the types of human settlements (from the Team 10 Primer).
The largest scale

One of the biggest influences on the post-war CIAM reasoning was the conditions prevailing in France, where most of the influential members resided and conducted their practice. Modernization of the French state during the 30 years that followed the liberation from the Axis powers and the end of World War II had proved to be a catalyst for a swift social change as well. The availability of everyday consumer durables and amenities, along with various technological advancements, the rise of the Welfare State and the solidification of the middle class, all contributed to the retreat of a large part of the urban population to their domestic environment. The home was now a space of modern, comfortable and desirable living – ultimately leading to the gradual dissociation of middle class from the public sphere. This withdrawal into the private “bubble” of domesticity and consumerism had all to do with the sense of security and comfort a private home denoted in the post-war years. That could be perceived as an “individual” or “familial” habitat, a modern dwelling that provides an all-inclusive environment for man to live in\(^\text{19}\). As public housing became a priority for the welfare state, more and more dwelling units were produced, sparking an increase in both the financial and urban/architectural aspects of the housing sector. In the ‘50s and ‘60s, the grand ensembles and the habitats à loyer modéré, social housing blocks of reduced cost and industrialized construction, provided accommodation to the masses, tackling the previous housing shortage of the war period.

The process of post-war modernization though would give birth to a problem that would trouble architects and urban planners for decades to come. Major urban centers witnessed the overcrowding of people rushing in to claim a part of their own domestic environment; what was so far a matter of quality became a matter of quantity. The young generation of modernists was indeed the first who would try to incorporate the aspect of the mass into an architecture still under the spell of “less is more”. Most prominent of all, the collaboration of three

architects and theorists, Georges Candilis, Shadrach Woods and the Yugoslavian Alexis Josic, worked towards the realization of what they termed as “Architecture for the Greatest Number”. Their experience from the late CIAM congresses, agonizing to define the human living environment formed the basis of their partnership, inaugurating in 1955. They would focus on the dwelling and the culture of inhabiting the urban environment, either in the context of the “core of the city”, or “habitat” – as the Congresses had reached no unanimous preference on a formalized expression. Their work though would highly contribute to further solidifying the habitat concept, by adding a new layer – the Culture of Dwelling. As a counter-measure to the mass culture that ensued with the rapid modernization, they proposed a “culture of dwelling” (with the term translating in French as culture d’habitat) relating it to individual practices instead. This culture would be represented through humanism and regionalism. Humanism invoked the social aspect of habitation, the notion that inhabiting a place constitutes an everyday practice of life. Regionalism tied the act of dwelling to the place itself, by invoking the organization of a certain landscape that facilitates its inhabitation. Overall, this culture would be channeled through architecture and planning in order to reconcile man with his environment. Of course, terminology would once more prove of crucial importance in distinguishing the new approach; the “functional living” that had dominated the early CIAMs would be superseded by the “culture of living”, hinting again to the more sociological point of view preferred by the younger generation. Candilis, Josic and Woods would linger on the use of the habitat term, making it part of their new perspective of dwelling.

The medium that allowed their partnership to implement this conception of habitation came through the CIAM associations. Candilis and Woods became affiliated with a building consulting office consisting largely of Moroccan architects and planners, namely the ATBAT (Atelier des Bâtisseurs). In 1951 the ATBAT started operating in Casablanca, opening the field for the modernist architects to reflect on the process of modernization in a developing nation. Such developing nations (many of which were still colonial grounds) had also faced a rapid urbanization after WWII. Therefore the conditions that the 7th and 8th CIAM had analyzed

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20 Ibid., p.122
regarding European cities had emerged all over the world. This became apparent in Morocco, as Michel Ecochard, head of the French-operated planning department of the country, stated in a report to the United Nations:

“A mass of individuals that the industrialization of the big cities, or the artificial creation of a new capital has grouped together in working-class neighborhoods. This phenomenon exists in a great number of countries across the world, therefore with very diverse populations:... North Africa’s shantytowns, American big-city slums, South African compounds and our European big-city hovels.”

As they realized that even more people would soon be in demand of dwelling space, the ATBAT architects coordinated their efforts in the application of the “habitat culture”. The colonial countries were even more appropriate for the implementation of this culture; the living environment there highlighted the tensions between tradition and modernity that the sudden modernization had created. Moreover, the lack of mass housing facilitated the introduction of the “architecture of the greatest number” in the colonies. Candilis would take this chance in order to demonstrate how the notion of habitat could be the mediating tool in this situation. At the CIAM Congresses he had joined the attempts to define the term; the work of the ATBAT in Morocco would allow for a broader perspective. For his interpretation, he would draw from the term’s geographical origins and the concept of dwelling culture that he had developed with Josic and Woods. Besides the meetings under the framework of the CIAM, Candilis elaborated on the concept in the architectural journal L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui and the Encyclopedia Universalis, where he would comment on the entry of habitat: “The habit of distinguishing ‘individual habitat’ from ‘group habitat’ does not make any sense. Habitat is always a group habitat in opposition to habitation, which is necessarily individual and familial.”

In Morocco, group habitat was apparent in the form of the bidonvilles, overpopulated suburban slums that housed the largest part of urban population. Candilis realized that reconciling the traditional

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22 Ibid., p.143
housing typologies of the bidonvilles with a modernized built environment could only be achieved through a habitat approach. The housing projects of the ATBAT in Casablanca and Fedala el Alia would be presented at the CIAMs – and they would counterpoint the “Heart of the City” grids coming from the British members. The projects would emphasize how influences from traditional types of dwelling could be adapted in order to fully exploit their advantages. In such a project study called Habitations musulmans / europeennes / israélites, the ATBAT group investigated the relationship of outdoor dwelling space and public realm in Muslim, European and Israeli houses. They ultimately developed new typologies by combining the traditional elements and the respective dwelling cultures. These projects would undoubtedly help Candilis and the ATBAT partake in the “Charter of Habitat” discourse. More than providing an argument though, they contributed in familiarizing the European architects with this kind of living environment. They revealed to the other modernists (including Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, who officiated the final Congresses) the role of architecture as link between the habitat culture and the modernization of the developing world.
The third Delos Symposium, in 1965
EKISTICS (Modern Greek: οικιστική) is derived from the ancient Greek adjective οἰκιστικός, more particularly from the neuter plural οἰκιστικά (as physics is derived from φυσικά, Aristotle). The ancient Greek adjective οἰκιστικός meant: "concerning the foundation of a house, a habitation, a city or colony; contributing to the settling." It was derived from οἰκιστής, an ancient Greek noun meaning "the person who installs settlers in place". This may be regarded as deriving indirectly from another ancient Greek noun, οἰκηση, meaning "building", "housing", "habitation", and especially "establishment of a colony, a settlement, or a town" (already in Plato), or "filling with new settlers", "settling", "being settled". All these words grew from the verb οἰκίζω (to settle) and were ultimately derived from the noun οἶκος, "house", "home" or "habitat".

Definition by the World Society of Ekistics
A new outlet

After the end of the CIAM as they were, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt was free to focus on her new acquired positions at the University of Harvard and the United Nations. The former was due to Sert’s personal invitation, who was the Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design since 1953. The latter resulted from her continuing involvement with various authoritative town planning institutions, which had by now elevated her to an expert status. As such, she was contacted in 1955 by Constantinos Doxiadis, with whom she had already met and collaborated in a UN symposium in India. Doxiadis, a Greek architect and experienced town planner, had been assigned by the Iraqi government to develop and implement a National Housing Program; he wished thus to establish an informational instrument to facilitate the actions of his growing firm in the Middle Eastern country. Sure of Tyrwhitt’s organizational abilities, he considered her suitable to prepare a monthly bulletin of international information on housing that would also be sent to all UN experts working in developing countries. Tyrwhitt’s acceptance of the proposal led to the publication of the *Tropical Housing and Planning Monthly Bulletin*, with the first issue appearing in October 1955. The journal would initially consist of “borrowed” articles and extracts from conference proceedings, UN documents and academic reports. The focus was now completely on the tropical regions of the world, reflecting Doxiadis’ field of interest, and the contents made sure to address the “social aspects of housing and community planning and the mobilization of self-help” in developing countries.\(^{23}\) The acquisition of even widely unavailable UN documents was possible by Tyrwhitt’s status as a United Nations counselor and insider; ultimately this exchange would benefit both the *Bulletin* and the evolving UN policies and initiatives. As chief editor of the journal during the first years of its distribution, Tyrwhitt was able to promote again the Geddesian philosophy on regional planning in the case of actual

surveys undertaken at the time in India. Her editorial comments on the February 1956 issue, echoing both Geddes and Lewis Mumford, would anticipate the beliefs and declarations of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme by more than 20 years:

“The task of original survey, then, is to educate citizens: to give them the tools of action, to make a ready background for action, and to suggest socially significant tasks to serve as goals for action.”

During the last years of the 1950s, Tyrwhitt came to be in quite a privileged position. As an affiliate of Harvard University, the United Nations, Doxiadis Associates and the Bulletin, she was right in the middle of every attempt to globalize the study of human habitation. Such was the renaming in 1957 of the Tropical Housing and Planning Monthly Bulletin to Ekistics: Housing and Planning Abstracts. “Ekistics” was the term Doxiadis himself had coined to refer to the science of human settlements, by referencing ecology and the inter-relation of man and environment. This would also mark the start of the ekistics movement, which would prove to be another step towards linking the regional planning philosophy with the planning of developing metropolitan areas. Doxiadis was certain to allow Tyrwhitt to pursue its formation into a discipline through her teaching position at Harvard; at the same time, the establishment of the Athens Technological Institute in 1958 commenced the institutionalization of ekistics by introducing a theoretical as well as practical course on urban planning.

24 Ibid. p.184
A global perspective

The ultimate step to disseminate this new discipline to anyone interested all over the world was again formulated by Doxiadis and Tyrwhitt in 1965. Doxiadis was eager to emulate the collaborative spirit that the now defunct CIAM had cultivated – he proposed organizing an “International Symposium on Urbanism”, held on the Greek island of Delos. Such a gathering would offer the chance to professionals and theorists from diverse scientific and national backgrounds to converse and exchange opinions. The Delos Symposium eventually spanned six days in both Athens and the Aegean island; the resemblance to the pre-war cruises of the modernists might have been apparent. The rapid urbanization of the early ‘60s was in the spotlight and the growth of the human settlements was examined through economic, sociopolitical and administrative factors. Many of the formative contributions to the first Delos Symposium would subsequently appear in the Ekistics Journal. In the editorial, Tyrwhitt (who had also acted as the sole secretary of the meeting) would highlight the dispersion of the ekistics ideals in the work of several young Japanese architects and planners – associated with what was already known as the Metabolism movement.25

The conclusion of the Symposium found Doxiadis certain that the ground was fertile for a new institutional body governing the study of human settlements. On that ground he founded the World Society of Ekistics, a non-political body with limited membership, formed to study human patterns of living and their physical expression in the past, present and future. The Society was intended to act as a catalyst of “all the important action to be taken in the field of Ekistics around the world”.26 Its primary aims and objectives were declared to be the development of knowledge and ideas concerning human settlements through research; the development and expansion of education in ekistics; the education of public opinion concerning ekistics, thus stimulating world-wide interest and cooperation; and the recognition of the benefits and the

26 Ibid., p.210
necessity of an interdisciplinary approach to the needs of human settlements. The plan was also for the Symposia to continue on an annual basis at the same place, allowing the “Group of Delos” to update the implementation methods of their principles – while at the same time bonding as a society and institutionalizing the group spirit. There was no doubt that the influence of the CIAM modus operandi was strong; Doxiadis believed that a continuation of the spirit that had produced the “Charter of Athens” at CIAM IV was possible. To that end, he had even invited Giedion to deliver the closing address at the first Symposion, invoking the Congress of modernists thirty years earlier. The attempt of the Group of Delos to correlate with the CIAM IV and the issuing of the Athens Charter is evidence to the failure of the final CIAMs to present the Charter of Habitat as an official replacement. Doxiadis wished to succeed where the Team 10 had failed, and turn the Declaration of Delos into a call to action, capable to be heard again in a world-wide scale. This new Society had also a noteworthy advantage; whereas both the modernists who produced the Athens Charter and those who tried the same with Habitat were young idealistic architects, the Delians were “mature leaders” aware of the pending global crisis that required deeds and not words. More important, they understood the need for any statement of general principles to take into account the unevenly developing world and the effects this had on the expanding urban areas. The impetus to face these problems in a responsible and reliable way had also convinced Tyrwhitt that the Delos Symposia should aim to bring the United Nations into action – as she was well aware that the existing UN committees were unable to handle either the excessive urbanization or the environmental issues. Her conviction in global urgency was firm; during the most of the 1960s decade she would be a propagator of the WSE principles, from her Harvard teaching position to several consulting assignments that took her to Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Japan. These trips bolstered the status of the Ekistics Journal, now informed with plans and implementation methods from previously cut off nations. Finally, a partial fruition of these attempts would come in 1972; the United Nations resolved to convene a Conference on Problems of the Human Environment in Stockholm, heeding to the WSE’s call for action. The Conference would address these issues through an ecological lens, dealing with the relations of human environment and

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27 In [http://www.ekistics.org/](http://www.ekistics.org/)
28 Ibid., p.210
natural resources. The grid of these relations would be termed *ecosystem*, which would become a staple of environmentalist studies. That same year, Doxiadis decided the discontinuation of the Delos Symposia, making the 10th Symposion also the last. Jaqueline Tyrwhitt would moreover retire from her position in the Journal, but not before aligning her final editorials with the theme of Ecosystems. As the *Delians* gathered for the last time, the course for the international institutionalization of their discipline had been taken.
The first UN Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver, in 1976
Without the CIAM Congresses, it is very doubtful if the more humane approaches to urban planning would have been developed so early... Without the Delos Symposia, it is doubtful that the UN would have got support for its conferences on the environment and human settlements...

Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, 1978
Towards a metropolitan scope

The actual materialization of nearly a decade of concern for the need to universally address the rapid urbanization issues came four years after the Conference on the Environment. In early June of 1976, the United Nations followed with the first *Conference on Human Settlements* in Vancouver, Canada. The UN initiative ensured that national governments, which up to this point had depended on urbanists and planners to inform them on developing schemes, would directly discuss the consequences of implementing (or not) various planning policies. The pressure was on the governments of developing nations, where the problems of balancing the uncontrolled sprawl of urban centers and the precipitation of natural resources were urgent. For that matter, the Congress made sure to acknowledge that Third World nations had also to share the unjust burden of the international failing economic relations that can strongly affect the development of human settlements. One of the most important outcomes though would be the framing of a dilemma that the increased urbanization presented. The world population growth meant that even more people would concentrate in rural areas at the lowest standards of living, as these areas inhibit the provision of infrastructure and services. These conditions pull the people towards metropolitan regions, where they are met with already congested facilities and contested spaces. This in turn undermines the quality of life of urban dwellers and spirals the spreading of urban networks out of control, ultimately affecting the rural settlements themselves. This vicious cycle of urbanization was unveiled among others as a “formidable challenge to human understanding, imagination, ingenuity and resolve”29 which required both a political commitment to find a solution and an initiative to warrant its international implementation.

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29 Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements, p.3
The Vancouver Congress along with the Declaration that marked its conclusion was termed Habitat I – in the first globally identifiable association of the concept with the human settlement studies. The Vancouver Declaration, known consequently as the Habitat Agenda introduced the UN’s goals and objectives regarding the regulation of urban centers and the formulation of respective policies. It also presented the challenge of human settlements strategies:

“Human settlements of today embody the outcome of generations of ideas, decisions and physical investments; it is not possible, therefore, to achieve radical modifications overnight. But population growth and rapid changes in the location of human activities proceed at such a pace that, by the end of the century we shall have to build ‘another world on top of the present one’. If properly directed, this formidable task could mobilize untapped resources and be turned into a unique opportunity for changing our man-made environment.”

The Agenda would make sure that the term of human settlements is wide enough to cover urban and rural areas alike, dwellings and public spaces, in traditional or modernized settings. Echoing the principles of living culture, it would also distinguish into their social, environmental, cultural and psychological aspects, each having to be treated inclusively. Thus it would declare the UN’s intention to promote integrated national policies dealing with the problem of urbanization prohibiting the human settlements development. These policies would be formulated through a truly interdisciplinary approach and at a highest political level; they would be consistent with the preservation of all environment, both built and natural; and they would be directed “at all settlements, rural and urban, dispersed and concentrated, old and new.” The inclusive approach would undoubtedly bear the signs of influence of both the ekistics principles and the newly formed environmentalism movement.

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31 Ibid., p.2
Sustain and develop

In the two decades that followed the *Habitat I* Declaration, the world’s population growth had retained urbanization an imminent threat to the living environment. In 1996, a UN global report on the prospects of human habitation, disclosed the Organization’s conviction that by the 21st century, “the overwhelming majority of men, women, and children in every country will, for the first time in history, be living in urban surroundings.”32 The rapid shifts would still affect unevenly the developing countries, making them a priority challenge for the international community. As the globalized economy hindered the management of partial financial crises, the UN resolved to protect the cities as individual entities of economic and social development. Still, the adversities that had to be overcome were evident; Boutros-Boutros Ghali, then the Secretary-General of the Organization stated in the 1996 Report:

“...in the coming decades urban settlements will become the primary places for the struggle for development and social and economic progress. The mass exodus to the cities has already led to sharpened urban poverty, especially among women and dependent children; scarcity of housing and basic services; unemployment and underemployment; ethnic tensions and violence; substance abuse, crime and social disintegration. The emergence of giant mega-cities has brought with it land degradation, traffic congestion, and air, water and land pollution.”33

The Report would thus pave the way for the second UN Conference on Human Settlements, to be held in Istanbul in June of the same year – a conference that would be accordingly termed as *Habitat II*. Apart from this, it would stress the need to enhance the implementation policies that the *Habitat I* had produced. Commenting on the noteworthy insufficiency of governments, it called for the inclusion of “partnerships” and multiple approaches in order to deal with these problems. Ultimately, the Report referenced the policy focus in the concept of “sustainable development”,34 a term that would soon become ubiquitous on its own right. Yet the UN administrations would use the concept to defend the cities from being blamed for the ills or

33 Ibid., p.v
34 Ibid., p.417
urbanization. Specifically, the Report over-asserted the UN’s confidence in the positive role and advantages of the cities; from providing a safe and healthy environment and reducing living costs, to moderating climate change and promoting the “social economy”.  

The Istanbul Conference, following suit with the Report, (it would also be dubbed the “City Summit”) attributed the malaise of urbanization to factors external from the urban environment itself. Thus the concept of “sustainable development” expressed the need for continuing development of the urban centers while sustaining the elements pressing towards their implosion. The development goals included economic, social, political and cultural needs. The “sustainable” component, namely the ensuring that this need would be met “without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, involved the protection of environmental assets and natural resources threatened by their interaction with the built environment. Eventually the sustainable development of human settlements could be measured by a set of criteria concerning the quality of the inhabitants’ life, the renewable resources use, and the generated wastes. In order to implement these measures, Habitat II would allow for more actors to partake in the planning of urban space; these included local and decentralized authorities, commercial enterprises of the private sector, non-governmental organizations and ultimately citizen groups. This would aim to the facilitation of good governance, in the sense that all parts should equally affect and develop their common living environment. This attempted formalization of inclusive urban planning had been described by the 1996 UN Report as “cities built from the bottom up”.

At the same time, the pursuit for sustaining the urban environment has again put the focus on the issue of scale. The huge metropolitan agglomerations may have drained the population out of rural areas or pushed them into suburban territories. Still, the prospect of an independent and moderate-sized urban formation presents an opportunity in creating a viable environment. As the Habitat II reasoning seemed to oscillate between glorifying metropolises and fear for

35 Ibid., p.419  
36 Ibid., p.422  
37 Ibid., p.424
their demise, the smaller urban centers have been omitted from the UN Reports on Human Settlements. Also ignored by the majority of regulatory acts, they have emerged as models for balancing economic and environmental sustainability. Specifically, small towns of no more than 50000 inhabitants have been considered as a potential basis for a movement of counter-urbanization. This can be perceived as an alternative to suburban habitation, which contributes to the sprawl of major urban centers without alleviating much of their population overload. Small towns can provide a more humane and affordable living environment; at the same time, their dependence on small-scale but viable economies makes them resilient to globalization-induced financial turbulences. Yet their greatest advantage can be seen in the social cohesion that is required for the city to withstand the adverse effects of urbanization. As the next larger formation from the neighborhood, small towns can prove to be capable of combining the “sustainability” of the community with the qualitative characteristics of urban environments.

38 Paul Knox, Small Town Sustainability, Birkhäuser GmbH, 2009, p.12
Man is both creature and moulder of his environment, which gives him physical sustenance and affords him the opportunity for intellectual, moral, social and spiritual growth...

CONCLUSION

Throughout the years, the discipline of urbanism has been marked by incessant attempts to restructure the urban environment, regulate its manifestations, and mitigate its inherent shortcomings. But when the process of planning comes into account, we can observe a major shift in the inclusion of several contributors; ranging from social theorists and scientific consultants to administrative committees and the addressees of the planning themselves – the ordinary citizens. The urban planners of early modernism were the city-builders; they were responsible for coming up with a plan and implementing it. But a century of population overgrowth, excessive urbanization and deteriorating natural resources has put their role under scrutiny. The first reaction of urbanists had been to adopt a socially oriented approach, young planners who tried to inform their methods with humanistic and ecological elements. The advent of globalization presented the need for these methods to be universally available; and take into consideration sociopolitical and geographical disparities. Thus came the institutionalization of principles, and often enough planning consisted of scientific surveys and normative procedures. By the end of the 20th century, city-building had spread to an unprecedented extent; this can be credited to both the pressing demand for a bigger urban environment, and the regulating of its construction. Nevertheless, the staggering amount of urban dwellers would present the city-builders with an even greater challenge. This would be the realization that the urban environment has been more and more popular despite its various problems, because it conveys a sense of safety and protection from physical harm. City populations seek the prospect of a liberated, fulfilling life, albeit without having to conform to regimented, “secure” conditions.39 Thus the planning of the urban environment ultimately falls upon those who inhabit it – and in that sense, the function of dwelling has proven to be the most determinant in the evolution of cities. City-building is essentially an act of constructing

39 John Friedmann, The Prospect of Cities, University of Minnesota Press, 2002, p.113
one’s living space; and the concept of habitat culture has undoubtedly affected planning in this direction.

Over the past six decades, Habitat has represented either a theory of habitation or an attempt to formalize its manifestations. But above all, it has denoted the need for context, for a link between man and his living space, regardless of scale – be it a single house or the 21st century megalopolises. While the interpretations and the uses of the term have differed, it has affected the way this space is planned by stressing the social conditions of habitation. The culture of living in any kind of built environment – this is what the human habitat reflects. Along with that lies man’s inherent need for his surroundings; the specific elements that would allow him to “live inside”. Urban formations have yet proven to be capable of providing these conditions. Still, if we had to highlight the one persistent characteristic of the concept of habitat, it would lead us back to its original meaning – life in the natural environment. Since its inception, habitat implies collectivity, as living organisms inhabit their environment en masse, forming strong relating patterns in the process. The human habitats are collective as well, as all human settlements consist not only of single buildings, but also of social links, in built or immaterial form, which denote the presence of coexisting individuals. As man develops and enhances those links, by technological or other means, his habitat will continue to evolve. The urban environment – the city – is the most adaptive of these habitats so far; the attempts to reconcile it with nature are indicative of this characteristic. But drawing on the original context of habitat should provide us with another hint; as with all other beings, different humans have different habitats. Thus sustainability of the man-made environment depends not only on external factors, but on the inhabiting forces as well. Urban environments would produce more urban dwellers – and surely enough more urban planners. As stated in the declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment that convened in 1972, man is both creature and moulder of his environment – therefore the human habitat is found where the conditions allow for people to pursue its construction.

40 Amos Rapoport, House Form and Culture, Prentice Hall, 1969, p.20
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