Regeneration problems. Reconciling human settlement with the planet.

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Abstract
The human activities of the last two hundred years have upset the natural balance of the planet, to the point that the Anthropocene has defined the current geological era in which the Earth's environment has been so conditioned by human action that its effects are comparable to those produced by the geophysical forces that shaped the Earth over millions of years ago.

Such a scenario led to the current disorientation towards any intervention to implement the planetary utopia of a culturally, socially and economically developed world in integrated communities. The depletion of resources and the upheaval of the natural balance are the conditions and challenges with which humanity and architects must measure themselves, making an enormous effort to preserve the utopian qualities of the planet. These qualities can be pursued today through two main strategies: escaping from the Ecumene, retiring into a sort of hermitage, or aiming for its regeneration.

Keywords: Sustainability; Regeneration; Urban Renewal; Anthropocene; Gentrification; Constantinos Doxiadis; Jane Jacobs; Ernst Schumacher

1. Introduction: From οἰκουμένη (ecumene)[1] to ἔρημος (hermitage)[2]

The only question is: how do we handle nature after it ends?
Ulrich Beck, World Risk Society

Admittedly it has become common knowledge, within the world scientific community, that the intensely damaging human activities operated over the last two hundred years have inevitably upset the natural balance of our planet, to the point that in the early years of this century the Nobel Prize for Chemistry winner, Paul Crutzen, has revived the used of the word Anthropocene, a word coined in the early 1970s, to define the current geological epoch. According to Crutzen, Anthropocene should identify the geological era in which the earth's environment – in all of its physical, chemical and biological aspects – has been so affected by the actions of humankind on a global scale, that its effects on the planet have been compared to the ones produced by the massive geophysical forces that moulded Earth millions of years ago.

The environmental scenario just described tends to induce – or to lead outright – to the current sense of disorientation towards any kind of intervention aimed to achieve a global utopia of a globalized world (Mattelart 2000; Ferlenga-Biraghi-Albrecht 2012), completely supportive, harmonious and inclusive, culturally, socially and economically developed into communities complemented by one another. The *Ecumenopolis*[3] Utopia – the inevitable global city of the future, conceived by the architect Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis (1974) like a single global city, in which almost all the world population is tied into a seamlessly interconnected urban system, as a giant network with urban corridors, enclosed open areas and farmland, parkland and wilderness in between their axes, interconnected by ultra-rapid transportation and systems of communication, which in the past had been deemed impossible to realize, as it is today. Admittedly though, Doxiadis could have not envisaged, and fully understood, the complexity and diversity of local cultures and society, the complexity and frailty of the natural environment, the incumbent depletion of energy resources, pandemics, the climate changes generated by damaging human activities – all of that was not yet evident – In all likelihood, he was a

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[1] Ecumene: It is that part of the planet where man can find suitable condition to settle down its dwellings and conduct its activities in a permanent way. The word Ecumene (also oikoumene) from greek οἰκουμένη, from the verb οἰκέω "inhabit", used to indicating that portion of the planet Earth know to and inhabited by mankind, other words the "house in which we all live".

[2] Hermitage or Retreat: from ancient Greek ἔρημος (érēmos) a difficult place to have access to, where one individual, or more, called hermit (eremite) or anchorite (from greco ἀναχωρητής anachōrētēs, from ἀναχωρεῖν anachōrêin, to retreat), decide to choose a life of self-exclusion from society, to lead a life of worship and ascesis.

[3] Ecumenopolis: Term coined by C.A. Doxiadis from the Greek word "ecumene", the total inhabited area of the world. It means the coming city that will cover the entire earth as a continuous system forming a global settlement.

man that belongs to the post-WWII era, he thought that any form of ideological and socio-cultural barrier would have gradually disappeared giving way, sooner rather than later to a globalized society in which, convinced as he was, general development and science would have saved the world. However, scientific trustworthiness and linear development have not at all saved the world, instead, resources have been depleted, the natural balance of the planet's ecosystem has been shattered, we have witnessed several events of viral spillover and biodiversity all-over the planet has been drastically reduced, and these are just a few of the problems we are now facing.

The necessary changes to modify the relations between humanity and the inhabited physical world are so huge that only that sense of disorientation can feed real actions aimed at changing and scaling back the human desires that are wearing down the planet; the dream of a balanced and peaceful coexistence with the surrounding world is going to force all of us to seek out a form of escape into an idealized Nature, instead of facing up to the self-destructive land that we have created.

It is from those and with those premises that humanity and all of the people that have been put in charge of governing and shaping the human cultural landscape and the built environment – the architects? - that have to measure themselves against; producing an enormous effort to develop the utopian qualities (of a good place) of the ecumene left. On one end the general orientation is towards the idea of fleeing the Ecumene, to look for ways and places in which individuals can lead a protected and withdrawn life: the retreat; on the other, there is the attempt to reconcile human activities with the Ecumene, restricting and scaling back the effects that have compromised the "natural" balance of the planet: the regeneration.
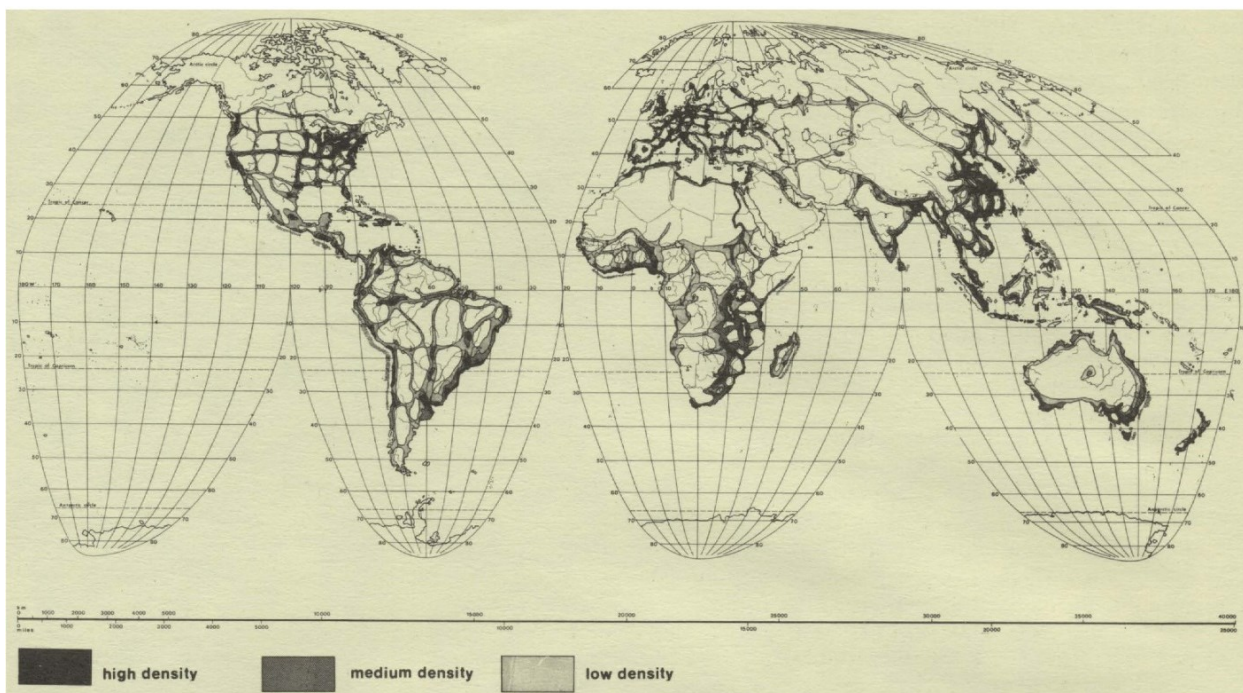

Figure 1. Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis. Ecumenopolis, AD 2100, Ekistik 238, September 1975, page 156.

2. The hermitage, or the escape from the Ecumene

If we are to consider the ἔρημος (hermitage) much like all the things that are as far away as possible from the concept of Polis (πόλις)[4] as, according to Aristotle, the place of society and the community in his *Politics* (Aristotle 1885), nowadays, that place is way more extensive than we are led to believe. Since the time of the first Industrial Revolution, in the eighteenth century, the conditions of the city – the place of moral corruption, epidemics, and physical abasement caused by the unhealthy conditions of working and living – sparked the impulse for the elaboration of proposals that shed light on the possibility of building a different kind of city (Park-Burgess-McKenzie 1925, Choay 1965). They were proposals for the new city, like *The Garden City of Tomorrow* (Howard 1902) or *The Radiant City* (Le Corbusier 1946) and the *Athens* Charter (Le Corbusier 1943;

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[4] Polis: in ancient Greek Πόλις, City.

1948; 1959), or proposals for ideal cities, like Etienne Cabet's *Icaria* (1848) at Nauvoo in Illinois, or Robert Owen's *New Harmony* (1820) in Indiana (USA*)*, or the ones for elitist village-neighbourhoods, like *Miramar* (1955), *Seaside* (1985*)* and *Celebration* (1996) in Florida (USA), or even the ones in reply to the utopian needs for millenarian rebirths (Kruft, 1989), seeking for places in which to start from ground zero and build the ideal society and city for the future to come, living far away from any kind of hardship and unease, in a healthy and socially protected environment; well, today, all of those instances are the more pressing and widespread, in an Ecumene more and more compromised. Furthermore, in a world of computers, Information and Communications Technology, with Artificial Intelligence and cyborg-empowered bodies, the very idea of a city is naturally challenged and must be reconceived. Much of the economic, social, political, and cultural actions are today in cyberspace. As a result, cities and urban spaces must be reformulated, as William Mitchell pointed out (Mitchell 1996). In William Gibson's novel – *Neuromancer* (1984) – cybernetic and hyper-technological humanity will suffice to "inhabit" a nowhere place, a place undefined, in a coffin, three meters long, where there is nothing inside, only a standard pocket computer and small white styrofoam cooler chest and a brown temper foam slab that is both floor and bed; "living" in the "matrix," the place in which the suppression/removal of the body becomes the central element for the well-being of the person (Amen & Nia, 2020). In fact, as our bodies are remodelled into cyborgs, the cities, and the houses we inhabit are also transforming. With the help of digital information, traditional building types are to decay completely, as all the familiar forms of our old architectural system are to vanish (Mitchell 1996). Information technologies allow for the creation and development of airtight, exclusive environments, protected by outer dangers and completely self-sustainable in economic, social and energy terms. Environments in which every sort of activity can be performed despite the complete absence of a "place" (Augé 1992), are technologically advanced and highly equipped for the individual's life and work, where almost anything is at hand once connected to the web/network.

Such a scenario can induce anyone to falsely believe in a desirable (dystopian), possible future, that involves, nonetheless, only that share of human society belonging to the richest countries in the world, USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, China, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, or to the developing ones like India[5].

If we consider the models for the planning, building and managing of the human environment, the difference between the planning according to the protocols used in the past, the *Athens' Charter* ones for instance, and the more current ones – *Smart City ones* – the main distinguishing feature is the technology that is applied for the purpose; both of them lead to prescriptive planning; both of them lead to the construction of closed, atopic and isolated environments.

As stated by Jane Jacobs (1955; 1958; 1961) and more recently also by Richard Sennett (2018), the anxiety caused by the aspiration of orderliness has led to a total freezing of the inventiveness of a city that lives and alters as a consequence; it appears most evidently in Paris' *Plan Voisin* by Le Corbusier, in which the outdoor, public living at street level is obliterated. In the *Plan Voisin*, Le Corbusier erases the social features of the city, the ones that produce changes over time, invalidating, like that, any form of life that is not regulated; also in the *Plan Voisin* people live and operate in isolation on the higher floors of the skyscrapers (Jacobs 1955), and what was then a kind of dystopia, has turned into a reality still reiterated nowadays.

Jacobs also stated (1955; 1958; 1961), that the removal of the vibrant – chaotic – street life was achieved because of the anxiety caused by order and control issues, suburban middle-class growth, by the shopping malls that took the place of streets, gardens and squares, by isolated skyscrapers and by the scattering of schools and hospitals in vast green areas. That is why if the planning of eco-friendly, emission-free cities, self-sustainable in terms of power sources, with extremely high standards of services, green public areas and public transport is operated according to the same rule and strategies – when it comes to controlling and the definition of a prescriptive plan – the result will not at all different (Sennett 2018, Amen, 2021, Aziz Amen, 2022, Amen et al., 2023). The hypothesis of control of the development of a city – regimented by strict prescriptive legislation – as well as the one of a house, is already, in its way, the construction of an isolated place, shut in terms of time and space, a complete place, with a closed process: a retreat; also, these eco-friendly, emission-free cities, self-sustainable in terms of power sources, with extremely high standards of services, green public area and public transport can not be exported all over the planet precisely because of the excessive costs and

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[5] I did not include Europe because the transformation processes regarding society and the human landscape, for cultural and physical causes – and possibly technological too – are not, and they could not be anyway, so radically changed in a brief period of time or at least not at the same pace as the countries mentioned.

the highly advanced technologies needed to operate them; their intrinsic quality of privilege – for a few – condemns them to a necessary marginalization and isolation.

3. Regenerate the οἶκος (òikos)[6] to regenerate the Ecumene

We know that environmental renaturalization would be a "natural" process. If we were only to allow it, "natural" processes would regain their course according to the laws of nature, which, in turn, would be able to "self-repair" to regain those vital structures and functions that have been altered or suppressed by the interferences caused by the actions of mankind. Those disturbances, not only have altered the natural balance, but they are also hindering the detoxing processes needed because of the excessive accumulation of waste, the emissions of toxic substances in the air and water, land exploration, and the wasteful use of mineral resources and the depletion of the non-renewable energy sources of the planet. Ernst Schumacher stated, «Modern man does not experience himself as a part of nature but as an outside force destined to dominate and conquer it. He even talks of a battle with nature, forgetting that, if he won the battle, he would find himself on the losing side» (Schumacher 1973: 13). However though, if mankind wants to survive on this planet, it will have to operate a drastic reduction of its impact on natural processes, providing a sound renaturalization and, instead of anthropize nature, it should try to make more b natural its built environment (together with several other cautionary actions for economic and environmental sustainability).

Admittedly the anthropization process on a large scale has been caused by the effects of the first Industrial Revolution, with the consequent production and release of greenhouse gas – caused by the use of fossil fuels – the intensive livestock and agricultural farming, demographic explosion and out of control conurbation, that led cities like London to an increase in the population by 1000% in one hundred and fifty years (from 550,000 inhabitants in early 1700 to 5,572,012 in 1850). An unstoppable phenomenon still constantly increasing today, especially in developing countries, where the rural population is forced to live their homes in the countryside to pour into the cities looking for work, like in Lima, Perù, where from 175,000 inhabitants in 1920, has now reached the figure of 9,822,514, with an increase of almost 5700% in one century; or like Shanghai, from 6,036,490 inhabitants, in 1970, to the current figure of 30,812,711, an increase by around 5000% in fifty years! The major problem since then has been the demographic increment, which has made intensive farming indispensable. More food, more houses, and more goods implied the exploration of natural resources and the production of more and more massive quantities of toxic emissions, more than what the planet can actually take on.

The renaturalization process points, more and more, in the direction of a regeneration process, today more than ever. If in biological terms the process of regeneration implies a replacement of the damaged parts of the body with healthy identical ones, today, in the attempt to regenerate the man-made landscape and activities – now seriously compromised in natural, social and economic terms – such a process does not replicate but rather convert or modify those unhealthy parts with more adequate ones; the obvious intent is that of building a sustainable social, economic and environmental fabric, something unprecedented until a few decades ago.

4. Urban Regeneration, a social or environmental phenomenon?

Urban regeneration (back in the day it was *Urban Renovation* or *Urban Renewal*) began ever since the nineteenth century – although a common practice already in ancient times – as a further extension of recovery programmes, or simple, outright clearance, of slums and public housing projects, aiming (at the very most!) at some sort of structural renewal of the degraded areas program. Historically, as well as today, urban regeneration policies' objectives have aimed at the recovery of the suburban areas of the city, rather than rebuilding degraded areas within them, and in many past cases such a regeneration was realized by local authorities through demolition and the replacement of edifices according to the most basic laws of biology (McKenzie 1925), whereby the old, deteriorated buildings were replaced by "new", "sound" ones, at least according to the planners' point of view. Normally, such an action would have taken place, in the city's most degraded areas, after serious epidemics or because of the threat that those areas might have posed to the community; but as Jane Jacobs stated many a time, before operating a structural recovery of a run-down urban area, an extra effort should have been made with the recovery of the communities, creating the condition for a decent living within them (Jacobs 1961). According to Jacob, urban renewal was attainable in a "natural" way. In any human settlement, village or city, anybody could have rebuilt their own home, once their useful life has

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[6] From the Greek words oikos: settle down.

passed. If the purpose of urban regeneration was the community's urban redevelopment, it should have not been limited to the structural aspect of it, instead the urban space needed to be observed as an expression of the life of the community; and Jacobs was the first one to suggest that «A good way to see the problem of the city is to take a bus or streetcar ride, a long ride, through a city you do not know [...]. Hundreds of thousands of people with hundreds of thousands of plans and purposes built the city and only they will rebuild the city. All else can only be an oasis in the desert» (Jacobs 1955).

Planning, development and the 1950s and 1960s *Urban Renewal* projects, as witnessed by Jacobs (1955, 1958), referred to as the *Athens Charter* (Le Corbusier 1943), and *L'urbanisme des trois établissements humains* (Le Corbusier 1959); they epitomized the complexities of human living in three different man-made landscapes: the rural one, the industrial one and the urban one; all of them interconnected by a street system and high-speed transportation.
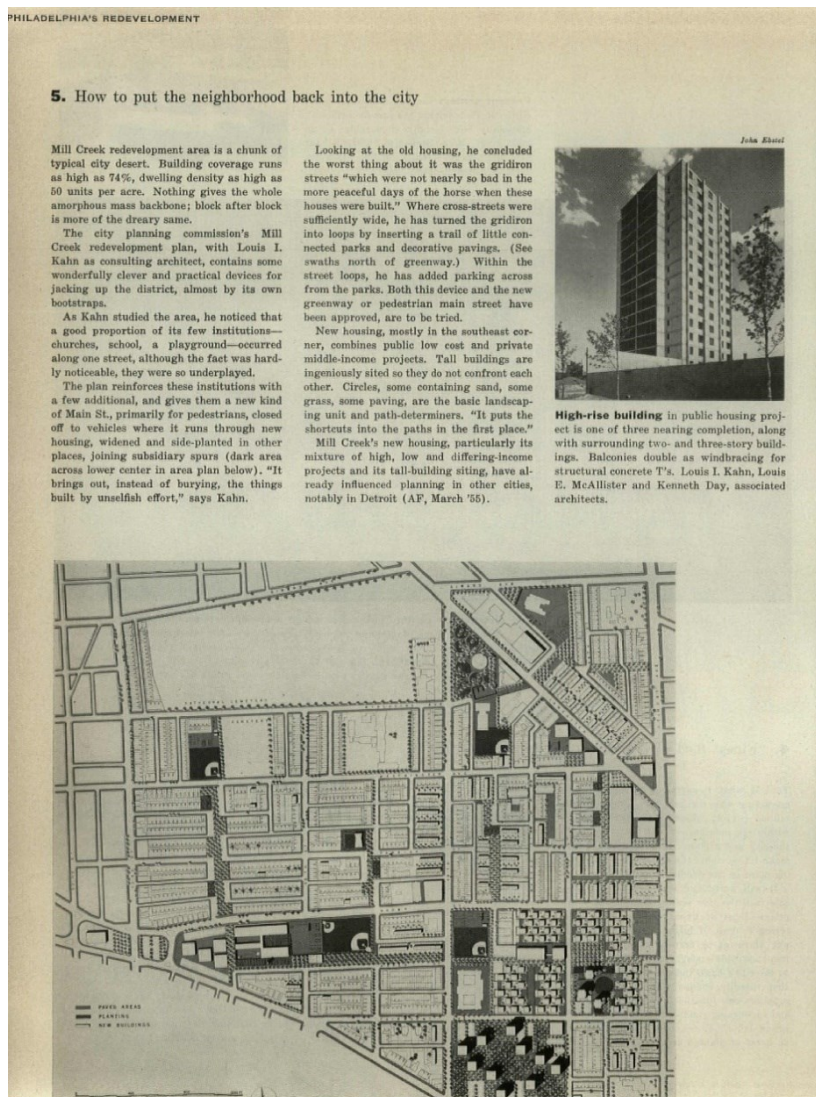

Figure 2. Jane Jacobs. Philadelphia's Redevelopment: A Progress Report.
How to put the neighborhood back into the city. The Architectural Forum, June 1955, page 126.

A different sort of planning of the world was the one envisaged by Doxiadis, which had the assumption that it would come true after the inevitable economic and scientific development had spread throughout the planet. The Dynapolis[7] that Doxiadis was going to plan (Doxiadis 1960, 1963; Bromley 2002, 2003), despite being associated with a biological organism, was nonetheless a system unable to evolve. (Ferlenga 2020, De

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[7] Term coined by C.A. Doxiadis and used since the early fifties in his teaching and writing; meaning dynamic city or dynamic "polis."

Dominicis 2020). Dynapolis was a city constantly expanding, reiterating itself in the same way, perpetrating the same logic and, by constantly evolving, obstructing any possible change; paradoxically it built the conditions so that the system could consolidate itself for lack of variations and adjustments.

In relation to the problems regarding the issue of *Urban Renewal*, Constantinos Doxiadis wrote that «I think it is true to say that most of the people concerned with urban renewal did not interpret it as an opportunity for creating a better way of life, but mainly as the necessity for creating a better urban environment» (Doxiadis 2005: 85), and if in Jacobs' opinion before making a hypothetical intervention of urban renewal it was necessary to attain a better quality in terms of community living through a larger development of the community itself, according to Doxiadis instead, all that would have been an inevitably positive consequence of the world economic development.

Doxiadis also believed that the new science would manage that course of events, Ekistics[8] (Doxiadis 1968, Pyla 2009); which conceived the human settlement as a living organism, having its laws and, through the study of the evolution of human settlements, from their most primitive phase to the megalopolis and *Ecumenopolis*, developing the interdisciplinary approach needed to solve its problems. For Doxiadis, they are five elements, which compose the human settlements: Nature, Anthropos (Man), Society, Shells[9] and Networks.
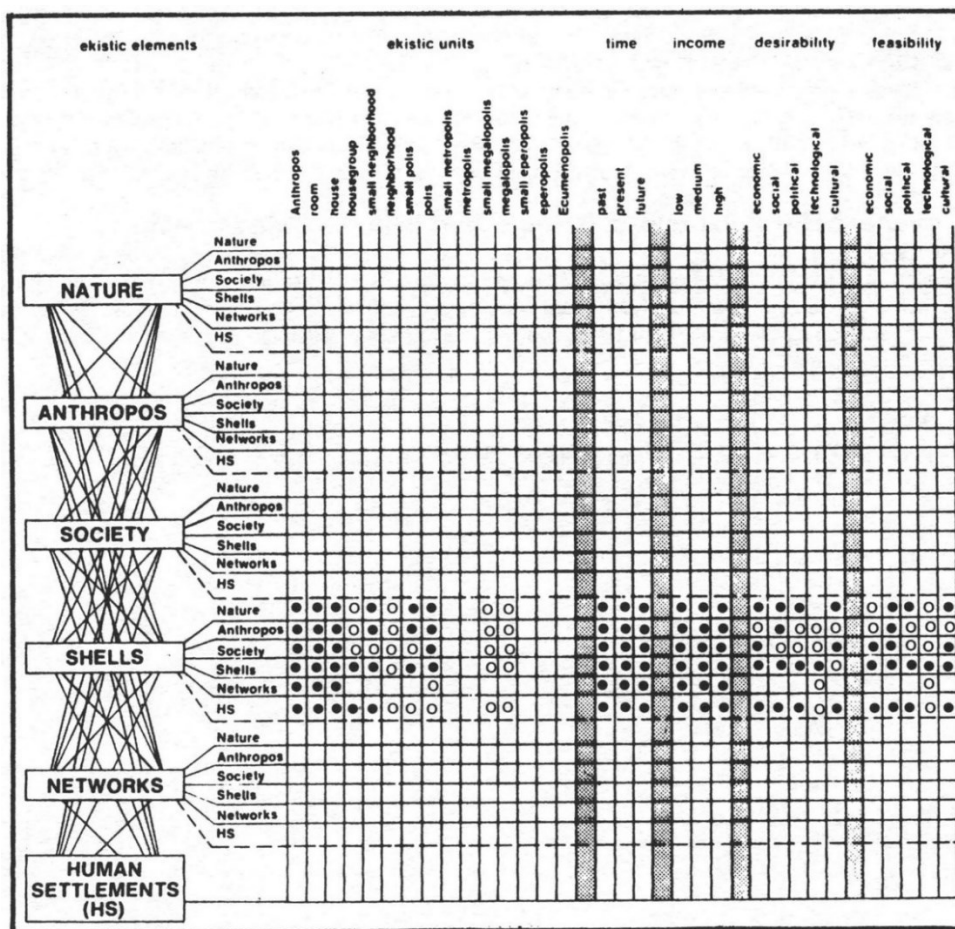

Figure 3. Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis. The anthropocosmos model. *Ekistics* 391/392/393. 1998 page 180.

With *Ecumenopolis* though, Doxiadis' efforts focused on the construction of a scenario establishing the criteria that would have shaped the city of the future, conceived as the result of a world united under the banners of progress and free trade. *Ecumenopolis* would have come to life only after the technological advancement that in the one hundred and fifty years to come would have spread all over the world. In such a scenario, the

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[8] Ekistics is a term coined by Doxiadis from the Greek words oikos, and oiko, "settle down", to mean the science of human settlements.

[9] Shells are all kinds of structures within which men live and carry out their various functions.

Ecumenopolis configuration would have been the one of a continuous linear city, in which isolation was not an option; an uninterrupted structure shaping a completely anthropised space, indifferent to political and economic divisions, tightly connected by a capillary, all-connecting infrastructure. However, until the city keeps on dynamically changing in all of its parts, and that kind of change allows for a mutable structure, it will not be possible to solve the consequent problems throughout the application of static projects (Sennett 2018).

If we consider the registration process as a method easily applicable to a variety of situations, it implies open planning without any of the prescribed processes characterizing the closed planning practice and, most of all, it implies a methodology completely immune from the standards and norms traditionally applied.

The processes of urban redevelopment ascribed to the *Urban Renewal* had – and often they still do – the task of redeveloping a built environment; once attained, what was expected was a social renewal, which more often than not, was pure and simple *Gentrification*: in essence the eradication process to the detriment of the more marginalized segments of the urban population in favour of a smaller one made of richer citizens, able to afford the higher rents for the refurbished and redeveloped buildings or the selling prices for the properties put on the market by the less affluent owners that decide to abandon the neighbourhood (Sennett 2018).

5. Partial or global regeneration?

Urban regeneration today has a far nobler task than the simple structural redevelopment of buildings and the processes that it tries to involve co-exist with the redevelopment of the social, economic and cultural environment in terms of ecological sustainability. All this though refers mainly to the suburbs – especially those particularly run-down areas featuring historical edifices – parts of the city in need of minor refurbishment, enough to attain energy efficiency to be considered sustainable. The final objective of the regeneration is to turn the more degraded areas into *Smart Cities*.

Once again, the ultimate aim is to intervene with sophisticated devices – that need to be constantly updated and intrinsically subjected to a speedy process of obsolescence – for the efficiency and the monitoring of the areas to regenerate, showing yet again the limitations of sustainability, especially in economic terms.

Certainly, the urban regeneration processes will result more easily attainable for the richer nations – each one according to their possibilities and regulations – while the suburbs of the less developed and poorer countries, which are enormously more numerous, will not participate, or rather, they will not be able to – at least not with the parameters of the richest nations – to the indispensable regeneration of the ecumene. Currently, only the richest countries can aspire to an urban regeneration involving free emissions, and sustainable and energy-efficient buildings.

Suburbs are perhaps the larger parts of the cities and they certainly stand more chances to be regenerated according to the current policies and methodologies. However, they involve only a minute part of the construction and buildings of the planet. It is obvious that many other parts of the cities should be counted in, the production and trading areas for example, as well as the abandoned ones. Furthermore, the suburbs taken into consideration are primarily located in the richest and more developed countries, but the operational cost makes them more often than not economically unsustainable. So, when we talk about suburbs, which ones do we actually refer to? The built environment is very much diversified from country to country, including not only cities, suburbs, roads, trading and production areas, but also deserts, oases, or even the Indonesian and Amazonian stilt house cities; there are millions of dwellers living in tents like the nomadic populations that settle down in the suburban areas of Ulan Bator or Kathmandu, Rio de Janeiro's favelas or slums' cities like Lima, Mogadishu, Maputo, Luanda, and so on.

The mere fact of intervening in relation to cities' suburban contexts to turn that area into a *Smart City*, brings us back to the problem of exclusivity and marginalization, and not to the regeneration of the οἶκος (òikos) – the built environment that we inhabit – in order to regenerate the entire ecumene.

The problem of urban regeneration, as it stands today, discriminates against a vast segment of the built social environment; it excludes the less advanced countries, the developing ones and the poorest ones altogether but also the poorer social groups of the richest nations unless massive government policies in their support are going to be applied.

The matter then revolves around whether or not the concept of regeneration should be considered as a form of intervention exclusively dealing with the built environment or with the entire Ecumene; involving only buildings and cities with their suburbs, or the whole human landscape; exclusively directed to the more affluent countries or the whole of the planet. Regenerating the ecumene should most definitely be the objective, but

maybe we should ponder on the fact that what has been elaborated so far to achieve it is the most efficient solution.

6. Different speed development – Regional approach and intermediate technology

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War and the "end of ideology" (Bell 1960), the world community, was no longer supported by ideological divisions but instead unified by the freedom of markets and the movement of goods and people – deluded itself that thanks to the scientific and industrial progress a peaceful, constant and unstoppable global union of the entire planet would have been set in motion.

The awareness that the political confrontation between the former allies – USA and URSS – could not be fought anymore with conventional weapons by the two opposing sides, a situation that George Orwell called the "Cold War'' (Orwell, 1945).

After the rhetorical speeches on "peace" and "goodwill", pronounced in 1945 at the San Francisco Conference, on the occasion of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations Organisation (UNO)[10], which was meant to preserve future generations from the plague of war, the two Superpowers - USA-USSR - came face to face, with the weapons of propaganda, demonizing one another and practising two opposite ideological forms of politics.

Henry Truman's opening speech on 20 January 1949, clearly expressed the intention to eradicate poverty and the world's underdevelopment, and from those premises, the Greek architect Constantinos Doxiadis could work, from his office in Athens, to conceive a worldwide project focusing on the economic development and the eradication of post-colonial political and economic conflicts in third world countries (Pyla, 2007; Albrecht 2020; De Dominicis 2020; Ferlenga 2020). That idea/delusion would have led Doxiadis to the conception of his so-called *Ecumenopolis*; the authentic emanation of the run towards the planetary utopia (Mattelart 2000) – appeased by the wide spreading of progress – without conflicts, pandemics, political differences and disagreements, without the problems caused by the depletion of land and soil and of energetic and food resources and above all without social and economic disparities.

However, both projects, the worldwide, ambitious one expressed by Truman's doctrine (1949), but also Doxiadis' one – *Ecumenopolis* – shipwrecked on the same points: the delusion that science and technology have produced economic growth and general development, wealth for everybody, the defusing of social and ideological conflicts, the resolution of all the other problems of the world, on these very same premises many other world wide projects and proposals have failed.

Against the failure of the post-colonial strategies of development, in 1980, Jean-Jaques Servan-Schreiber put forward the idea of resorting to micro informatics to allow third-world countries to skip all of the industrialization phases and to reach the level of the industrialized countries more quickly. As Servan wrote, «Our renewed fraternal endeavour, directed toward the birth of a new, united world, was devoted to a single subject: The application of the advances in micro-computers to the development of human resources in the Third World […] to enable them to master the new "computer culture" for their own needs and growth» (Servan 1980: 6), however, as already expressed by Ernst Schumacher in 1973, «There can be a process of stretching, never a process of jumping» (Schumacher 1973). If aid is given to introduce certain new economic activities, these will be beneficial only if they can be sustained by the existing educational level of people, and they will be valuable only if they promote and spread advances in education, organization, and knowledge. If new economic activities need special knowledge, special organization, and special education, such as are in no way comprehensible to that society, the activity will not promote development but will be an obstacle, «It will

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[10] Held in San Francisco from April 25 to June 26, 1945, the 50 participant Nations will write the *United Nation Charter,* whose objectives are listed in the first article: the Purposes of the United Nations are: «To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace; To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace; To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends».

remain a foreign body that cannot be integrated and will further exacerbate the problems of the dual economy» (Schumacher 1973). To help the poor country, the production methods employed must be relatively simple, so that the demands for high education and skills are minimized, not only in the production process itself but also in matters of organization, material supply, financing, marketing, and so on; that production should be mainly from local materials and mainly for local use.

These can be met only if there is a "regional" approach to development. If the purpose of development is to bring help to those who need it most, each "region" within the country needs its development. This is what is meant by a "regional" approach.
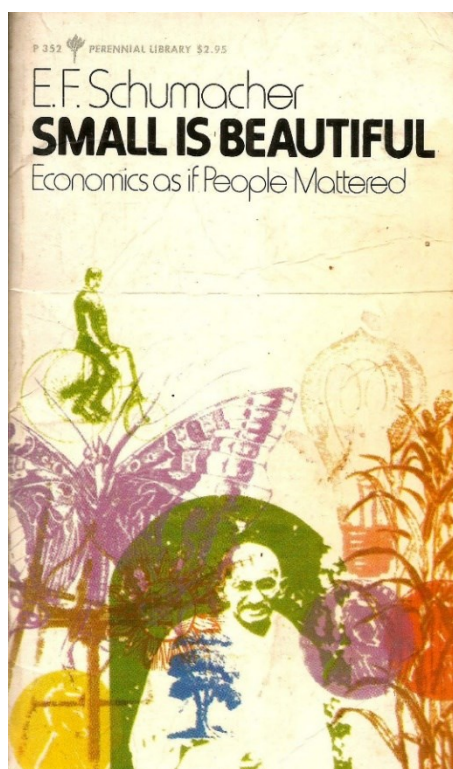

Figure 4. Ernst Schumacher. *Small is Beautiful. A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*. Cover.

This "regional" approach has no chance of success unless it is based on the employment of a suitable technology and if there is not a conscious effort to develop and apply what might be called an "intermediate" technology. The poor country can be helped to help themselves, but only by making available to them that "intermediate" technology that recognizes their economic needs and their limits of poverty. On the contrary, if the aid of the most developed countries is intended to hand out advanced techniques and technologies requiring high standards of specialization and training, besides it being economically unsustainable it would also be difficult to manage to create a state of almost total dependence for the poorer countries in question, leaving an unsolved situation that could only lead to the new phenomenon of *Post Colonization*.

7. Conclusion

The regeneration policies and strategies so far elaborated by the richest countries, do not take into consideration a large part of humanity which will not be able to participate in that very same regeneration of the planet. This aspect is not at all irrelevant if we remember that in 2030 an estimated 9,000,000,000 people will live on our planet of which, to be on the optimist side, a good 30% with an income sufficient enough to be involved in the regeneration process available, excluding by default the remaining 6,000,000,000.

If it is unthinkable the hypothesis of putting a stop to the processes of progress and development, of doing away with what once was deemed superfluous, a luxury, but that nowadays, in times of opulence, is regarded necessary; if we exclude Bernard Rudofsky's utopic proposals aimed to an actual attempt to coherently reforming the modern way of living without destroying any sense of creativity (Schumpeter 1943) producing and using wasteful and useless objects; if we also exclude a possible farewell to a world of opulence, to the so-

called consumer good and the promises of progress made by the architect Peter Harnden, nowadays we may primarily consider, if not uniquely so, the paths of recovery, urban renewal and regeneration as the most important and fundamental forms to use to preserve the planet in which we live. If on the one hand though, the best strategy for the regeneration of the planet (assuming that to be the case!) is what has been so far developed in the most technologically advanced countries, on the other, it could be useful to be able to develop, as put forward by Schumacher (Schumacher 1973), some intermediate technologies, that, although performing at a lower level, could however, because of the human beings involved, insure a commendable result. Currently, this kind of research focused on intermediate technologies might represent one of the very few possible ways to involve in the planet's regeneration of the populations at the moment left out.

What we can deduce from what Schumacher stated fifty years ago is that a little is better than nothing at all, and that to save the ecumene we must act quite promptly and in a capillary way. Also, the processing of intermediate technologies, to engage the poorer and less "developed" countries in the regeneration program would lead, most probably, to the improvement of the more sophisticated technologies in use at the moment, making them less costly and probably simpler. The effort in that direction could surprise us, in the attempt to produce intermediate technologies made of simple, mechanical and low-cost devices, gained by studying ancient practices, that nobody was considering anymore, we could most probably discover that what devised by the most sophisticated, advanced and expensive technology, could have been obtained by using rudimentary and stable instruments, but above all accessible to anyone.

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