

professional responsible for solving problems was the “town planner,” whose task was to coordinate with other specialists—sociologists, economists, hygienists, teachers, agriculturalists, and others—in the preparation of regional plans and to “head the team” of specialists in the preparation of master plans in which they would be responsible for “determining the location of those ‘organs’ which are the basic elements of urban life and of establishing their layouts.”⁵ However, the term *town planner*, as Sert uses it, refers more to a state of mind than a professional distinction, because those that referred to themselves as “town planners” were for the most part architects. And indeed many of the attributes associated with the “town planner” in *Can Our Cities Survive?* closely resemble those deemed necessary for the urban designer as they were developed in the 1950s at Harvard in the emerging urban design program.

Sert explained that a “town planner” would need a “complete knowledge of the means of procedure, widened by a constantly evolving world of technics.”⁶ This certainly suggests that the town planner required a broader and different kind of knowledge than that of the architect. Sert was not advocating an increased professional role for the architect. He was not arguing for the creation of a *super* professional, a kind of genius architect able to deal with all of the complexities of the city. Rather he advocated a new attitude in which the town planner would be a coordinator, a facilitator for others’ actions. This remained a consistent aspect of Sert’s conception of urban design. The urban designer would be the facilitator of others’ disciplinary agendas, not the person vested with developing singular solutions.

Sert’s town planner would require new knowledge and skills but should not be empowered to be the ultimate urban authority. “It should not be left to the town planner alone to determine what human needs consist of and what conditions will satisfy those needs. The complexity of the human organism and of its material and spiritual aspirations requires the assistance of . . . [others] . . . to rehabilitate existing cities or shape new ones. . . . The town planner should therefore join with these specialists in a labor of collaboration. . . .”⁷

In a later essay, “Centres of Community Life” (1952), written as the introduction to *The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life*, a book Sert coauthored with Jaqueline Tyrwhitt and Ernesto Rogers, Sert reinforced and expanded on many of the issues developed in *Can Our Cities Survive?*⁸ He writes that it became increasingly apparent, especially after the CIAM Frankfurt Congress