

## From Exegesis of the City. Lausanne Occasional Paper no. 37. Towards The Transformation of our City-Region

### The Twenty Steps

These twenty steps can be divided into two sections. The first ten steps allow a congregation to understand its own context. They are helpful to start different types of ministries with the community. Steps 11-20 are more useful for those preparing to plant a new congregation.

1. Compile a list of significant historical events that inform the city's identity. These could be specific, historic conflicts that took place such as a war or dispute, specific unifying events such as the city coming together to fight a massive fire, specific decisions that leaders made such as the building of a community centre, or something that happened that gave people hope, such as a person doing something heroic or selfless, etc. These will provide clues to the best way for the church to focus its energy.

Study the growth patterns of the city. One can find this information in libraries, city councils, museums, bookstores, local newspapers and on local Web sites.

- Why is the city growing (or why did it grow)?
- Who are (were) the immigrants to the city?
- Where did they come from and where are they settled?
- Where are they employed?

2. Understand clearly the sections or zones that make up the city:

- Downtown
- Blue collar neighbourhoods
- Ghettos
- Ethnic neighbourhoods
- Industrial zones
- Commercial areas

Examine census maps if they are available. Find out from city planners and real estate offices where city populations are expected to move, where commercial and industrial zones will develop, and which areas are slated to undergo major changes.

Isolate the sectors of your larger community using the representation of the city set out in the introduction to this Paper. This represents the functions of a city.

3. Study the neighbourhoods: their ethnic, social and economic composition, religious affiliations, occupational patterns, younger and older populations, concentrations of the elderly, young professionals, singles, problem groups, to understand a neighbourhood you must walk the streets, talk to people, insiders and outsiders.

Census data is important but onsite observation is best. People groups criss-cross in the city. Probe to discover the dominant influence in a neighbourhood: ethnic identity? social class? Undertake a participant-observer approach.

What is the extent of social contact between the people groups? Is social contact increasing? Take time to chat with residents and pedestrians in the area. Ask them what are the most significant changes they see or experience in the neighbourhood.

When examining the data, notice the criteria used. When walking the streets, watch for the impact of these population shifts on the neighbourhood. Many congregations use prayerwalks as a way to learn more about their city-region.

4. Determine and analyze the power centres in the city - the political figures, the police department, business leaders and the Chamber of Commerce, religious leaders.

- Who controls the media? (TV, radio, newspapers)
- Who controls commerce, finance? The schools and the arts?
- What are the religious\moral commitments of the power people?

5. Analyze the felt needs of specific people groups within the city. You are looking for indications of receptivity and "keys" which may unlock doors to homes and hearts. Felt needs vary from group to group. In some communities, such things as personal illness, loneliness, physical hardships, insecurity in terms of housing, property rights, and the threat of losing one's dwelling are very real. In other neighbourhoods the felt needs may be entirely different. Addressing felt needs is essential to holistic strategy. From the felt needs, the practitioner moves to peoples' ultimate needs and shows how Christ meets both.

6. Examine the traffic flow of the city. Just as successful advertisers know where to place their signs, practitioners need to know where to begin their ministries, where they can readily be seen and reached.

Find out where each of the following is located:

- Community services centres
- Library
- police stations
- fire stations
- city hall
- shopping centres
- sports facilities.

7. Seek to discover how news and opinion spread in the city, and in particular groups. Mainly through conversation? By radio, TV? Who are the idea-people, the opinionmakers?

Subscribe to the weekly publication in the area. Read it faithfully.

8. Examine the relationship between city-dwellers and the rural, small-town communities outside the city. Do certain segments of the urban population maintain strong ties with their rural cousins? Is there a lot of travel and visiting between city and village? What are the present immigration patterns from the countryside? How might the urban-rural interaction be used for the spread of the gospel and multiplication of churches? Most of this information is available in the census data that your country keeps in census files.

9. Ministries and churches in the city - locate them on a map; identify them by denomination, size and age. What transformational ministries and social services are already taking place through these ministries and churches? Reflect on what the church map shows.

10. Analyze the various types of existing churches. Common types as found in many cities are:

- "Old First"
- Cathedral church
- "City-centre" churches
- Peoples' churches (large auditoriums, drawing numbers from all over the

metropolitan area)

- University church
- Storefront churches
- Ethnic language churches
- Suburban churches
- Special purpose churches (use the wheel in the introduction for ideas)
- "Renewal" churches, the fastest growing in many countries; they are usually newer, independent
- Cell churches.

11. Find out the growth patterns of the various churches - attendance, membership, and rate of growth. Try to determine the nature of the growth is it by transfer, conversion, or by births? One can often locate this information by chatting with congregational leaders.

12. Inquire about church planting and church closures in the past several years. Which churches have closed? Why? Who has planted churches, and why and where did they succeed? Learn all you can from them.

13. Who is planning to start new churches? Where and among which people groups? Find out all you can from church and mission sources as to what is being planned for the city.

14. Strategies - what has been tried in the past, what has failed, and what was effective in starting churches and stimulating growth? Analyze the information you receive. In the light of recent church growth studies, what has been done right in this city, and where ought things be done differently?

15. Christians and non-Christians - where are the Christians located (which may not be where they attend church)? Identify areas of the city where relatively few Christians live.

16. Identify Christians in positions of influence in the city - in business, politics, the media, education, entertainment, and sports. Analyze their potential for wider spread of the gospel and assistance in planting churches.

17. List and analyze the parachurch ministries operating in and to the city. How might each contribute something to the overall strategy? Are there some you may want to avoid because they might have a negative influence on church multiplication?

18. Make an inventory of all possible personnel resources that might be tapped for the carrying out of your church planting strategy. For example, are there Bible school or seminary students available to help with door-to-door calling? Could workers be borrowed from existing churches to help plant new congregations?

19. Evaluate all known methods for planting churches in light of what you know about this city, its history, people, existing churches, and particular characteristics. What methods have proven effective elsewhere, appear appropriate for this city or at least some of its communities, and are within the capabilities of your resources.

20. List and evaluate the community agencies (private, religious and civic) that are

designed to meet particular needs (literacy, overnight shelter, emergency food and clothing, etc.) and consider how their help can be incorporated into your overall strategy.