Revisiting Urban Planning in Developed Countries

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AESOP	Association of European Planning Schools
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
ISoCaRP	International Society of City and Regional Planners
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States of America

1. Introduction: Why "North" and not "Developed Regions"

The purpose of this paper is to describe urban planning trends in the so-called "developed countries". And indeed, the countries under examination will be precisely those still falling under this category. Throughout this paper, however, the vast region to which they belong will be referred to as "The North". One reason for this is that, to this author as well as to many others, it is increasingly difficult to define to what kind of end state the terms "developed" and its complementary one, "Developing", should represent, or aspire to. When the term was coined, it was universally believed that development referred largely to the improvement of economic performance. Then, in 1989, came UNDP's historic definition of "human development", which expanded the concept of development to include such factors as educational attainment, health, and gender parity. After that, we began to see that "development" was a moveable object whose contours depended on the bundle of indicators chosen to define and measure it.

The dilemma, seen from an observatory located in the "developed world", is simply the following: if we represent "development", do we want everybody else to look like us in the future (and therefore, *plan* accordingly)? Some of the evidence collected for this report would suggest otherwise. And who is "us", anyway? Do countries sharing the same level of GDP per capita or located on nearby rungs of the human development index ladder have everything in common, apart from similar macroeconomic outcomes and agendas?

One thing we certainly have in common: despite great differences, we all consume, individually, a disproportionate amount of the earth's non-renewable resources; we all imperil, to a disproportionate degree, the survival of this planet; and we all aspire, explicitly or implicitly, to retain the geo-political advantages that allowed us to acquire world dominance. But if this is so, we can hardly describe this state of things as "developed", nor subscribe to the advisability or feasibility of extending such outcomes to the rest of the world. Hence the preference for the term "North", which better describes the "developed-developing" divide without conferring qualitative judgments that, as a whole, countries, and particularly people, do not fully deserve on either side of the divide.

Attentive observers will also point out at an exquisite peculiarity of contemporary international language. In urban terms, the acting equivalent of the development goal is, indeed, the developer. It is the developer who takes a piece of idle, unproductive land, and turns it into something much more useful and capable of producing, in turn, far superior amounts of wealth. At the opposite end, we have the nay-Sayers: concerned citizens, environmentalists, old-fashioned planners, and landscape and heritage associations. As a rule, they seek to protect, to spare — in a word, to conserve. They are the conservatives, and by inference the anti-development actors on the scene. Some attempt shall be made to demonstrate that developments are not always developmental, and that conservation can be a powerful instrument for — lacking a better word — urban sustainability.

Another reason that militates against the developed-developing classification is its equivocally encompassing nature. In reality, and as we all painfully know, there is a bit of North in every South, and a bit of South in every North.

Ironically, one contradictory element in this line of reasoning is the very subject of this paper in the "region" under investigation: urban planning. One can reasonably contend that if cities are the most mature determinants and expressions of civilization, and that if urban planning is simply one essential means to guarantee to all urban residents the enjoyment of good housing, essential services, open spaces, good health care and education and a rewarding occupation, then good and effective urban planning is a vital instrument of "development"

intended in its fullest sense. From this point of view, it is generally true that urban planning was devised, tested and practiced in the North with unparalleled determination and consistency. Accordingly, the rather timid and non-committed postulate of Global Report on Human Settlements 2009 ("revisiting the role of urban planning") could be turned into a much more robust statement: the most successful countries are the ones with the highest urbanization levels, and at the same time those who took urbanization seriously by planning their cities' future in a humane and sustainable way. Given this evidence, countries and cities forego spatial and urban planning at their own risk. *What kind* of urban planning this actually is, and *for whom,* is an entirely different matter, and indeed the main focus of this brief investigation.

1.1. Main challenges of urban areas: challenge is in the eye of the beholder

This first chapter is based on the premise that there is no universally shared listing of "urban challenges", and that their definition and prioritization depend on the perceptions and values of different social groups and actors in the urban setting. It will be argued that, largely as a result of globalization, this fragmentation is much more significant than cultural, environmenttal and geographic differences within the North.

The North is a very diverse meta-region: although relatively small in size and population compared to the rest of the world, it spans far and wide on the world's map from east to west (Japan to Alaska) and, as it were, north to south (Northern Canada to Oceania). It embraces different languages, different cultures, different histories, and different institutional settings. Its countries range from very large to minuscule. Its settlements date from two thousand to less than four hundred years ago. The North does, however, offer a number of common characteristics besides its defining feature of a high GDP per capita. Accordingly, it could be referred to as a "meta-region": an entity composed of distinct elements whose many and substantive common features transcend the conventional meaning of the term "region" based on physical contiguity and easy delimitation.

Figure 1. The advanced economies of the world
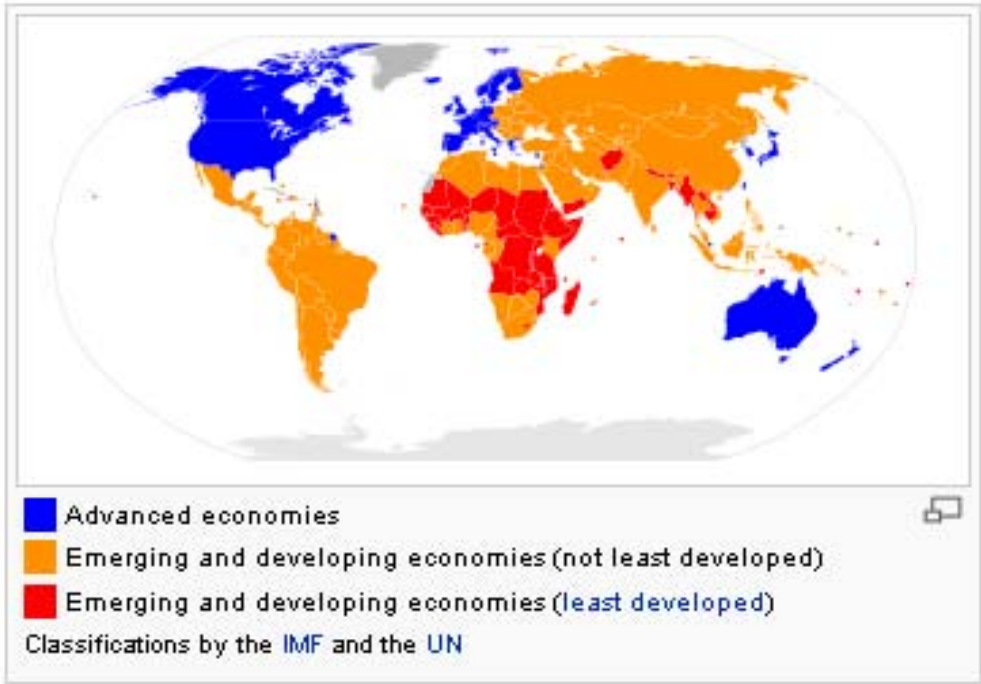
Source: Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developed_country

First of all, the North lists the oldest parliamentary regimes in the world, and all of its nations are elective democracies. All of its mayors are elected, as well. Secondly, its countries went through industrialization and urbanization processes at roughly the same time, and much before the rest of the world's other nations. Most importantly, the North produced the major revolutions that affect everybody's life and thinking to this day, from the age of enlightenment (the assertion of human dignity and the freedom of scientific thought) to the French revolution (freedom from absolutist regimes) to the American revolution (which planted the seed of national independence from colonization) to the industrial revolution (the birth of capitalism) to Marxism and the Russian revolution (which led to an antagonist system to capitalism), to the environmental revolution (the "limits to growth" and the sustainability paradigm), to globalization. The North also gave way to more violent forms of globalization, such as two world wars in the last century alone, and was the scene for massacres unprecedented and unparalleled since for their scale and cold-mindedness. At the same time, the North is the meta-region where science and technology gave way to such different inventions as penicillin and DDT, saving millions of lives and almost eradicating for good the scourge of malaria, and nuclear devices capable of wiping our very own civilization from the face of the earth. In the institutional realm, it also supported the creation of global and regional organizations devoted to peaceful co-operation and development, such as the United Nations and the EU. It seems, therefore, that a great deal of good and bad originated in this meta-region.

No wonder, then, that urban planning originated in the North as well. But there is more to that. The contortions and apparent deaths of urban planning,[1] which persist to this day, are largely North-based. The good and bad fortunes of the planning traditions planted in today's transition countries and in the South around the turn of the 19th century were very much influenced by the evolution of a broader debate emerged in the 1980s and centred on the role of government and the new credo of structural adjustment. With regard to the South, urban planning was first introduced in all colonies as an instrument to mark the social order and to guarantee the efficiency of commercial exploitation; then, left as a legacy to newly independent and institutionally fragile countries; and subsequently, substituted *de facto* by different tools purporting to be more effective in removing obstacles and accelerating economic growth and development. Suffice it to compare two epochal policy agendas across a two-decade divide: the Vancouver Plan of Action of 1976 and the Habitat Agenda of 1996.

If the North had such an influence on the birth, development, spread, and subsequent apparent death of urban planning at home and in the rest of the world, of equal importance was, and is, its role in identifying the elements that constituted its *raison d'être*: the urban challenges which are the object of this first chapter.

The chapter contends that no objectively definable priority list of "urban challenges" exists, neither globally nor regionally or nationally, and that their definition and prioritization depend on the perceptions and values of different social groups and actors in the urban setting. It will be argued that, largely as a result of globalization, this fragmentation is much more significant than cultural, environmental and geographic differences within the North.

Like beauty, challenge is in the eye of the beholder. Since almost every urban resident in the North can be very vocal about what she or he considers the most important challenge to the full enjoyment of city life, our thesis will be better defended by trying to identify different categories of "challenge perceivers".

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1. Hall, 2002.

The first one, and by no means in order of merit, includes locally elected officials and the political apparatuses that surround them. Given the fact that the average mayor has a tendency to serve for as many terms as possible, his, or her, challenges include a) getting elected, and given the first objective is reached, b) getting re-elected. As a rule, good mayoral candidates tend to present a political platform that includes a vision for the city, often inspired by a high degree of "local patriotism". This may include "putting Xville on the map", either nationally or internationally or both, and significantly leads to some form of urban planning, preferably of a strategic nature. The related challenges are, of course, irrelevance, decay, and the risk of being surpassed by other cities competing for a more significant role on whatever scene pertains to the size and economic strength of the city in question.

Other mayoral candidates may be less lofty in their political platforms. Apart from the useful technique of highlighting the previous mayor's shortcomings, failed promises and generally inadequate performance (or worse), a very rewarding argument is to blow up challenges to which the public is likely to react instinctively rather than rationally. Inevitably, this argument is fear. Of late, fear for one's safety and fear of migrants from other nationalities and of a different religion has been used very effectively, particularly in Europe, as a tool for local election. This is a typical example of a challenge in the eye of the beholder. To what extent are safety and security a *real* and *documentable* priority challenge, and not simply an irresistible propaganda weapon likely to be minimized or on the contrary blown out of proportion for political purposes?

The media are an often-ignored but incredibly powerful urban actor — in the sense that they are metaspatial, but very much present where they can attract the most attention. They are also immensely powerful challenge perceivers, and even more so, "challenge manufacturers". Crime is, of course, a consistent best-seller, and this relates closely to what just said above. Since the media passionately cover criminal occurrences, and since politicians crave publicity, a *de facto* alliance on such topics becomes all but irresistible. But the media have been immensely powerful in at least another respect. Even a passing look at any sitcom or reality show will reveal how cities, and particularly inner cities, have come to symbolize fear and violence, while suburban settings portray images of idyllic family life and bucolic happiness. The resulting message is that the city is the challenge, and life in the country the solution. The results of such message, particularly in regions of the North where suburban life was more the exception than the rule, are extraordinary, and constitute one of the greatest contemporary urban challenges. It is a particular kind of urban challenge, in that it is not a challenge "in" the city or "of" the city, but a challenge "to" the city, whose effect can be a sort of *urbanization without cities.*

The private sector has surfaced vigorously, particularly in the US but in the North more generally and in the rest of the world as well, as a prominent actor on the urban scene. Public-private partnerships[2] has emerged as the mantra of urban recovery, renewal, and revitalization. All mayors and municipal administrations are "challenged" to "leverage" on public-private partnerships to take advantage of the immense potential of private investment. Here too, challenge definition can be usefully explained as the outer sleeve of hidden motive. The private sector is in the business of making a profit. There is much profit to be made in cities, and much still in the North, where ample resources are coupled with ageing infrastructure and giant inner-city revitalization agendas in the wake of globalization and city competition for business and investment. In order to maximize profit, it is helpful on one hand to obtain as high a public subsidy as possible, and on the other, to remove or minimize all regulatory

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2. UN-Habitat, 2004.

constraints that may limit or preclude the maximization of the investment. Since the latter is one of the prerogatives and essential features of urban planning, it follows that planning itself can be presented as a "challenge". In fact, there is an ample normative literature that identifies planning as a perverse mechanism that, for example, limits the supply of land and mortifies development, to the extent of punishing the poor, by imposing "unrealistic standards".[3]

Of course, the best way to eliminate rules is to discredit the rules' enforcer. It is no surprise, therefore, that the "private sector" tends to characterize its public-private partnership partner, the "public sector", as inherently and congenitally profligate, wasteful, corrupt and vastly inefficient. So, the challenge to urban development acquires a double nature. Rules and regulations are by definition stifling; and exceptionally so when the institution in charge of applying them actually performs this task in a capricious and unfair manner. Planning is far too rigid to allow for the flexibility required in rapidly changing settings, where opportunities need to be seized rapidly and efficiently.

Within the private sector, Hayden[4] points us to –

"growth machines....a political alliance of boosters that include owners of land, developers, realtors, bankers and insurance companies, construction companies, energy and utility interests, automobile and truck manufacturers, technical firms and subcontractors in engineering and design fields, and the political figures who receive campaign contributions to facilitate projects...Elected officials who object to sprawl are often compelled to work with growth machines because in the United States local government rely heavily on real estate taxes to fund essential services such as schools".

This is an important notation, because it reminds us that one needs not be a corrupt official to give in to ugly, wasteful and often unnecessary development as long as one of the essential responsibilities of local governments, service delivery, is tied to development-linked public revenue.

The "regular citizen" category of challenge perceiver understandably defines challenges as the ones that affect quality of life in the city. Unlike urban planners, citizens are more concerned with the here and now, rather than the medium and long term; and as a rule, they could not care less about which actor, or group of actors, delivers the goods, provided they are reliable and at the right price. Although opinions may vary by gender, nationality, age, income and level of education, recurring perceived challenges are pollution, congestion, noise, quality of municipal services including kindergartens, public lighting, public transport, state and décor of public spaces, and police protection. These are the items that normally citizens feel are the direct responsibility of municipal administrations, and that administrations are more likely to be pressed on. They are down-to-earth preoccupations, most of which correspond to the very concerns that gave rise to urban planning some 150 years ago.

So, in theory, citizens should welcome sound and responsive urban planning. And indeed, they generally do. While nobody has a habit of waking up in the morning extolling the merits of city planning, and while master plans are mysterious objects that very few have the time or inclination to see or even less examine — save, of course, affected property owners —

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3. The author of this paper can speak with authority on this topic, having espoused elements of this reasoning in the past in his normative work for the United Nations leading to globally endorsed agendas and declarations. One example of this is the introduction of the "enabling" concept, seen as an alternative to the top-down regulatory style of local governance. In hindsight, more judgment and investigation could have been used, and if this had been the case, conclusions may have been different.

4. Hayden, 2004.

citizens generally acknowledge and understand the need of public decisions on "what goes where", with the goal of guaranteeing the maximum level of safety and comfort to all urban residents. The same applies to building rules and regulations. While in less law-abiding cultures in the "South of the North" many are tempted to violate existing building codes for personal gains, there is general disapproval when *others* do the same. Somehow, the perception of the "city as a miracle" (of coexistence, civility, opportunity) is associated to the knowledge that cities have rules, and that games without rules are not much fun to play. Also, citizens generally demonstrate a very healthy propensity to participate in virtuous campaigns, particularly those related to improving the environment, such as no-car days, water saving, or separating solid waste at the source. In addition, they also show a propensity to accept radical measures limiting, for example, automobile use, provided such measures are perceived as fair.

One well known characteristic of the urban North, of course, is the virtual absence (or very low percentage, as the case may be) of destitute or very poor urban residents compared to the urban South. But this does not mean that they do not exist, or that their views on the urban challenges that affect them should not be taken into account.[5] The most numerous and recent universe of "urban poor" in the North is constituted by recent foreign migrants. Of course, not all foreign migrants are poor: but today, as ever, they tend to suffer, in varying degrees, from implicit, and sometimes clearly expressed, forms of discrimination and hostility. What is ironic, of course, is that those who dispense such hostility today are often the descendants and close relatives of migrants who suffered similar kinds of treatment in earlier times. In many countries of the North, many migrants are illegal residents. This means that the cheap labour they offer is welcomed by their occasional or semi-permanent employers, but their presence less so — a case, if you will, of "social externality" where specific economic gains determine costs for the entire community, starting from the migrants themselves.

Migrants come from diverse backgrounds and nationalities, and their treatment differs also on the basis of pure ethnic or national attribution: somebody from one particularly group or one country is likely to be more discriminated than others, regardless of his or her occupation and behaviour. Generally, however, the "urban challenges" they face are quite different from those of the average citizen. Social acceptance is one of them, one that is exacerbated by the fact that migrants' lives are more "public" than those of average urban citizens: they tend to rely heavily on public transport and to congregate in public spaces (squares, parks), where they are often the subject of hostility. Of course, the permanent risk of informality, both with regard to shelter and livelihood, is a paramount challenge to the poorest urban migrants. Vendors of fake signature goods, for example, lead a life on the run from morning to night, while those squatting in makeshift shelters in residual urban spaces near highways or in secluded river banks live exactly the same fear of their squatting counterparts in the South: fear of eviction.

Since the early sixties, the North has witnessed a steady and important presence: the environmental movement. The impact and power of environmentalists varies from country to country and from city to city, but there is no doubt that environmental concerns have become deeply embedded in the minds, if not in the behaviour, of urban dwellers in the North. For environmentalists, one might argue, cities pose two kinds of challenges. The first one is the adoption of environmentally sound behaviour in a diverse, dense, and generally difficult

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5.   Italy, a country with a reputation for warmth, kindness and hospitality, has witnessed in recent years one of the largest influxes of low-income foreign migrants in Europe. Recently, acts of xenophobic violence have been multiplying, including beatings of Rom migrants and setting fire to their squatter settlements.

setting. This is, more or less, the concept of "environment-friendly citizenship", where citizens are encouraged to adopt virtuous habits such as using automobiles sparingly, recycling their garbage, avoiding waste of water and electric power, adopting environmentally sensible consumption lifestyles, keeping their city clean, and generally behaving in responsible and respectful ways versus others and their living environment. Environment-friendly citizenship is shared by large numbers of urban dwellers, particularly those of middle and upper income and with good education levels. It should have inspired planners more deeply than it seems to have done, and this is a great pity (we shall return to the issue of the cordial relationship but failed marriage between urban planners and environmentalists).

However, one cannot avoid the impression that many environmentalists, at the same time, tend to see the *city itself* as a challenge. We are now embarking in the wide and treacherous terrain of the sustainable city, or sustainable urbanization; therefore, we shall limit ourselves to the favoured topic of the city's ecological footprint.[6] This is perhaps one argument that may have impeded the marriage between environmentalists and urbanists. Here, the misunderstanding may simply derive from the fact that the absolute consumption of cities in terms of, say, energy per hectare, is certainly greater than that produced by a hectare of rural territory; while the efficiency of, say, energy and space consumption in your average city is definitely greater than that of any comparable non-urban acreage. In other words: granted that humans require some form of settlement, urban settlement is the most environmentally sound form of performing the function of survival on this planet. As one can see, marriage may not be entirely out of the picture.

The final passage of this cursory investigation is the exploration of the most preposterous hypothesis of them all: could it be that the most threatening challenge to the city are the planners themselves? Boxes 1 and 2 below are addressed at a couple of the best known critiques still being addressed to urban planning.

Box 1. Biases and myths

#1: The ineffectiveness of traditional planning is due to much emphasis on plan-making rather than implementation

Ineffectiveness is taken to mean as the disconnect between planning provisions and actual implementation. In this respect, traditional planning in all countries was singularly effective. Industrial areas, residential areas, commercial areas, trunk infrastructure, were more or less developed according to plan. And the areas neglected by plans (e.g. established informal settlements) responded admirably to planning provisions: they continued being neglected, and thus slums were (thankfully) allowed to exist and to expand.

Traditional planning was "ineffective" whenever it was undertaken from the start as a ceremonial exercise in the virtuous practice of planning, because "having a master plan" was "the right thing to do" — or worse still, a statutory obligation. Assuming planning provisions happened to be virtuous, this is the case of the patient calling for a doctor and then deciding not to buy and take the prescribed medicine.

#2: Inappropriate regulations impose unnecessary costs and reduce available land for urban development, thereby fuelling the growth of informal land markets

Whatever is meant by "unnecessary costs" (presumably standards unaffordable to the urban poor), this is a classical case of attributing to urban planning the fault of reducing supply and consequently causing rising prices (of land and housing). The reasoning is that since land use planning reduces land available for development, presumably by zoning land for development (housing, industrial,

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6. The concept is due to William Rees, an eminent scholar who operates in one of the better-scoring and most light-footed cities in the world — Vancouver, Canada.

commercial, trunk infrastructure, parks, markets etc) and restricting development on other land (parks, services, agricultural use) the poor are left with nowhere to go and therefore have to resort to informal land markets. Nobody seems to consider that it is precisely the identification of "legally developable land" that creates, by default, "illegally developable land", i.e. cheap land where cheap housing can be built with the city authorities looking the other way. In other words, informal land markets are the only option open for creating truly affordable shelter, regardless of the sizes of plots and building regulations imposed in zoned land. Such options are made possible precisely by the existence of more expensive, "legal" land markets.

Box 2. Planning challenges seen from a prosperous country of the North

Blake Hudema, president of the 89-year-old Canadian Institute of Planners, described how he is leading nearly 7,000 members in the development of Canadian planning in a global context. The Institute's theme is "Shaping our Communities: Sustaining Canada's Future" and this theme has been taken abroad to guide planning activities in the Caribbean, Africa and China. Yet, while lending capacity abroad in developing areas that need guidance and support, the Canadian Institute of Planners retains strong focus on communities within Canada.

The second largest country in the world in terms of land area, Canada's 33 million residents are primarily concentrated in urban areas (80 percent). Municipal planning issues mirror those in US cities: urbanization and sprawl, public health concerns, affordable housing, environmental preservation, climate change, infrastructure, and water quality. In particular, securing affordable housing remains a concern in the one of the wealthiest nations in the world where 5 percent of the population does not enjoy safe, quality, affordable housing.

Source: MacDonald, 2008.

One of the most respected urban critics of all time, Jane Jacobs, seemed to be of this opinion, at least at the beginning of her distinguished career, and at least with regard to the planners operating *on*, as it were, rather than *in*, the American cities she studied assiduously throughout her life. But today, things have changed considerably. Quite simply, most planning identifies with the mood of the times, and in this sense, it proved to be quite adaptable. If this point of view is correct, "revisiting urban planning" may be a pleonastic exercise, since planning has long since revisited itself. Peter Abercrombie, for one, famously affirmed[7] that planning consisted of "making a plan" and of "the planning itself", i.e. turning the plan into action. And it seems that most of the "planning" going on today in the North has to do, rather than with grandiose schemes, with the design of very efficient projects, very efficiently funded, and very efficiently executed. If we are happy with this state of things, then we should go along with the famous adage: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it". Hence, when it comes to absorbing the spirit of the time, contemporary urban planners don't seem to be a challenge at all.

The intention of this first chapter was to show that the urban challenges planners are also called to task to face and resolve are not monolithic, as they correspond to different categories of "challenge perceivers". Tensions and contradictions are evident, and one important example is the issue of informal livelihood and settlement strategies on the part of low-income foreign migrants. For many others, they are a challenge in itself; for them, the challenge is the city. If you will, the main challenge is to recompose this, and the many other issues of the urban kaleidoscope, in a coherent policy agenda.

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7.   Hall, 2002.

Box 3. A beholder that counts: OECD and its perception of urban challenges

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is the international organization that serves all of the countries whose urban planning processes are addressed in this report. It has a long an outstanding record in the analytical and policy fields, and its Governance and Territorial Development Department has given constant attention to urban development issues in member countries.

At a conference held in July 2008 on the topic "Challenges in an Urban Age: Rethinking Metropolitan Regions in the OECD and Beyond", the OECD Secretary-General, Angel Gurria, outlined his organization's perception of the main challenges facing the cities of OECD member countries.

He started out by offering examples of why cities are important to an organization dealing with economic development**:** Almost one-half of the Danish and Irish GDP and more than 40 % of the Finnish and Belgian GDP are produced in Copenhagen, Dublin, Helsinki and Brussels, respectively. One-third or more of Norwegian, New Zealand and Czech GDP are based in their national capitals — Oslo, Auckland and Prague. And Paris, London and Tokyo also account 30 per cent of their national output". So, urban areas are important because they are extremely efficient in producing wealth (one important notation is that the subject of this special attention is not cities *per se,* but *metro-regions.*

Having established that, it follows that it is very important to identify and implement strategies that a) will enhance the wealth-creating vocation of metro-regions, and b) will not imperil it by creating counterproductive side-effects. Three challenges are perceived:

1. Remaining economically competitive in light of *global competition;*
2. Dealing effectively with *poverty and new forms of social exclusion;*
3. Adapting and responding to *climate change.*

Planning is indeed mentioned under the first point. The importance is mentioned for *metro-regions* of a strategic vision to foster a metropolitan infrastructure and competitiveness plan. And OECD's work suggests that such vision should be formed through the participation of a large number of actors — especially citizens. Overcoming the rivalry between contiguous administrative entities is, of course, crucial for successful *metro-regions* strategies either by interposing an additional layer of government, as done in London, Stuttgart, Portland, or by expanding the boundaries of existing cities. Appropriate synergies can be pursued at the international level, as in the case of the Öresund region (Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark) and Helsinki/Tallinn (Finland and Estonia), Detroit/Windsor (US and Canada), and Metropolitan Bratislava (which overlaps Slovakia, Hungary and Austria). Now, metropolitan co-ordination and planning, as all our textbooks and scores of sensible policy recommendations all suggest, carries both the evidence of virtue and very strong good common sense — although examples of how it really ever worked are fairly rare. The interesting point here is that metropolitan co-ordination is evoked to improve the *competitiveness* of urban regions. Apart from the problem of calling for a truce among contiguous urban centres that are presumably already in competition with one another, what is interesting here is that the competitiveness challenge is literally lifted from the world of business, where mergers are the order of the day precisely to better fight the rest of the competition.

Poverty and social exclusion, the social challenge, is described as inclusive of a litany of ills: poverty, social segregation, congestion, crime, pollution, and urban sprawl (although the connection between urban sprawl and poverty seems tenuous, at least at first sight). What is important, however, is to know that "*one-third of all OECD metro-regions have above national average unemployment rates*", and that "*Between 1999 and 2002, about one-third of 38 metro-regions also registered lower performance in employment growth than their country's average, including cities such as Paris, Milan, Barcelona, Tokyo and Vienna. Large cities also tend to contain disproportionate numbers of people who are inactive (or who work in the informal economy)*". And here's the connection: "*Poverty and social exclusion may lead to significant costs including high levels of criminality which tends to be 30 per cent higher in urban areas than national averages*". So, poverty leads to crime, and since we do not like crime, we have to do something about poverty.

The answer, the head of OECD pointed out, lies in *integration strategies*, aiming at placing immigrants, jobless youths and other "excluded" in the mainstream of metropolitan growth. In

addition, "*public sector investment in urban revitalization* [in distressed urban neighbourhoods] *can provide the 'enabling conditions' which reduce risks for private investors and also provide the framework for job creation*". But with a warning: "*Rather than encourage governments to cosmetically beautify blighted areas, we encourage them to tackle the underlying economic challenges, namely joblessness. That means connecting people living in deprived areas to jobs, which often lay outside social networks in areas with high unemployment*". Presumably, this means that jobs are more important than one's living environment, and that if we could only find a way for people to get a decent job somewhere, they could happily return each evening to their un-beautified blighted areas. But if we were to engage in employment creation in the very same distressed neighbourhoods, this is a job for government. As always, government is left dealing with the most engaging challenges.

The third challenge, adapting and responding to climate change, has an answer: sustainability and green urbanism — a clever combination of Europe's sustainability fixation and North America's new urbanism. This answer is seen as the *third contour shaping urban policy's new topography.*

So, what is to be done? The recipe is eminently sensible: "*improvements in urban design, housing stock, traffic congestion and accessibility, disaster prevention and waste management, are crucial components of a strategy to combat climate change and improve the physical health of urban dwellers*". But again, these are obvious tasks for the richest areas of the richest mega-region in the world. However, there are promising initiatives. Among them, "*the installation of offshore windmills to generate renewable energy for 150,000 homes around Copenhagen, the development of green areas in Seoul, transit-oriented real estate development in Melbourne, congestion pricing in London, tree planting programs in New York, the development of green building guidelines worldwide, and Paris' public bicycle 'velib' program*".

Lest this reportage appear tainted with a sardonic vein, important examples are also mentioned — among them, the "*commitment of 700 US mayors to meet or beat the Kyoto Protocol targets in their own communities*".

Source: http://www.oecd.org/document/43/0,3343,en_2649_37429_41018539_1

2. The Context of Urban Planning in the Post-Industrial Era

This chapter describes some of the main spatial and socio-economic features and trends concerning the Northern City. Here too, it will be argued that contrasts are less pronounced than they would appear to be at first sight. Despite the obvious differences between the sprawled nature of urban conurbations in North America and the somewhat more compact configuration of European cities, the perceivable and irresistible trend is towards the North American suburban model: one house, one lawn, one (or more) outlet. Interestingly, North America, through new urbanism and the recent anti-suburb trend, is pointing the way to a rethinking. This section will also argue that unfortunately, future trends will depend on mass media and their images much more than on planners and "decision makers".

The first observation that comes to mind under this heading is that urban transformation in the North, as we make our way into the second Millennium, no longer catches the world's limelight. Definitely, the attention has now moved eastward — or if you will, looking at Figure 1, to the vast region lying between the western and eastern territories of the North meta-region. From Dubai through Mumbai to Shanghai, Asia glitters with the most magnificent exploits of "Prada architecture".[1] If the tallest skyscraper can be taken as an indicator of this momentous shift, number one is Burj Dubai in Dubai; number two, Taipei 101, Taiwan; number three, the Shanghai World Financial Center; number four, the almost venerable Petronas Towers in Kula Lumpur, Malaysia; while the ancient Sears Tower building in Chicago is now relegated in fifth place.

More generally, the urban transformations that once caught attention (be they waterfront redevelopment in the US, floating urban platforms in Japan, riverfront regeneration in London, or a new central business district in Paris) pale today in comparison to what is going on in China alone.

One phenomenon, however, stands out in Northopolis: the rapid and diffuse de-industrialization process that has taken place over the next twenty years or so. This caused a dual phenomenon: the loss of millions of manufacturing jobs, with many of them reconverted into service jobs; and the sudden availability of large tracts of prime urban land previously occupied by manufacturing activities (see Table 1).

Table 1. Paid-employment in manufacturing, selected developed countries (thousands)

Country/Year	2000	2001	2003	2004	2007	2008
Canada	2,183					1,944
US	19,910					15,966
Japan	13,290					11,410
France			4,096		3,928	
Ireland	295					268
Italy	4,855					4,806
Spain	2,670					3,085
UK		4,477		3,827		

Sources: ILO, Laborsta

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1.   Garau, 2008.

Figure 2. Percentage urban population, developed countries, estimates and projections (1980–2030)
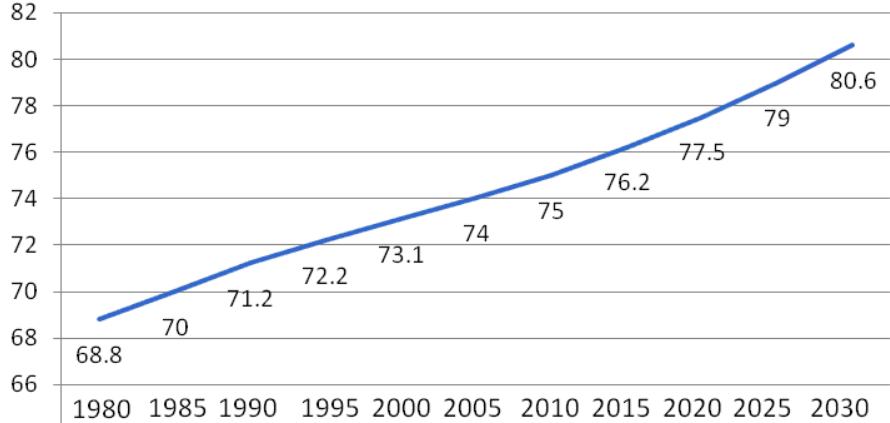
Source: United Nations, 2008.

Figure 3. Annual growth rate, urban population, developed countries (1980–2030)
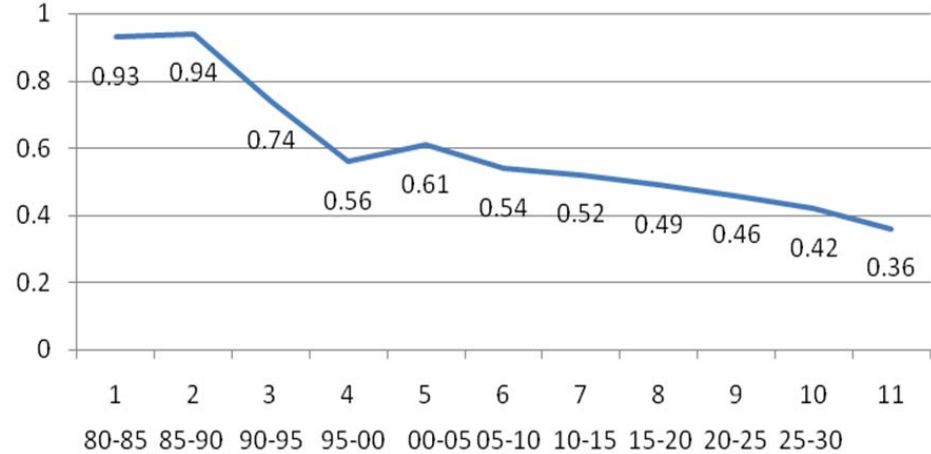
Source: United Nations, 2008.

The parallel phenomenon is the increase in urbanization rates, accompanied by a decrease in urban population growth rates (see Figures 2 and 3).

Despite this evidence, the physical expansion of cities continues unabated. The North meta-region, therefore, is unique in coupling low *urban* population growth with inordinate land consumption. This is a given in North America, where automobile-oriented development fuelled, as it were, by the cheap gasoline of the 1990s[2] has led to an enormous consumption of greenfield land.

Sprawl has become a very popular term with urban geographers and urban historians to denote a mode of agricultural land consumption in peri-urban areas that is particularly wasteful, unsightly and irrational, also because of its very low density, and causing in turn additional waste in terms of infrastructure and energy. Others who took upon the task of

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2.   Hayden, 2004.

measuring it, like the US Bureau of Statistics (see Box 4 below), do not give any qualitative meaning to sprawl, and simply define it as "*the spreading out of a city and its suburbs over more and more rural land at the periphery of an urban area*".

A study by the same bureau measuring sprawl in the 100 largest urbanized areas of the US between 1970 and 1990 concluded that the consumption of new land over that period grew by 50 per cent. Interestingly, only half of that was directly connected to population growth. This was taken to indicate a strong element of waste in greenfield development.

Box 4. A definition of urban sprawl by the US Bureau of Statistics

Although there are many definitions of sprawl, a central component of most definitions and of most people's understanding of sprawl is this: Sprawl is the spreading out of a city and its suburbs over more and more rural land at the periphery of an urban area. This involves the conversion of open space (rural land) into built-up, developed land over time.

*From the standpoint of urban planning institutions, the **style** of that conversion can sometimes be more important than the **amount** of the conversion. Organizations whose chief concerns involve urban planning goals may tend to emphasize **qualitative** attributes of sprawl — such as attractiveness, pedestrian-friendliness and compactness.*

But for those who are most concerned about the effect of sprawl on the natural environment and agricultural resources, the more important overall measure of sprawl is the actual amount of land that has been urbanized. Knowing the actual square miles of urban expansion (sprawl) provides a key indicator of the threat to the natural environment, to the nation's agricultural productivity and to the quality of life of people who live in cities and in the small towns and farms that are near cities.

Both the urban planning and environmentalist approaches to sprawl are valid ones for achieving sometimes differing — although not necessarily competing — goals.

Sprawl City adopts the environmentalist emphasis. It uses the term "sprawl" to refer to the reduction of rural land due to the increase of the total size of the land area of a city and its suburbs over a particular period of time.

*That definition of sprawl is certainly not the only one. But it is unequalled as a standard **quantitative** measure of rural urbanization in cities in all regions of the country. Sprawl City uses this definition because it is based on the unrivalled measurements of Urbanized Areas by the U.S. Bureau of Census. No other source so methodically and with such standardization measures the loss of rural land to urbanization.*

This measurement by amount closely resembles the most common American understanding of sprawl. For example, if an Urbanized Area covered 10 square miles in 1980 and covered 12 square miles in 1990, it would be common to say that the city and its suburbs over that period of time "sprawled 2 square miles."

If 25 square miles of open spaces around a city are urbanized, most Americans would consider that to be 25 square miles of sprawl, regardless of whether it was developed tastefully or not. They might be more offended by the sprawl if it included ugly development than if it was 25 square miles of well-planned sprawl, but the amount of sprawl — and the number of rural acres lost — would be the same. Thus, using this measure, it is possible to have well-planned sprawl or chaotic sprawl, to have high-density or low-density sprawl, to have auto-dependent or mass-transit-oriented sprawl. But regardless of the quality of the sprawl, the amount of sprawl is measured by the square miles of rural land eliminated by urban development.

None of that is to say that the quality of sprawl doesn't affect the amount of sprawl. Generally, well-planned sprawl will result in fewer square miles of rural land being covered by urban development. And environmentalists are interested in the urban planning aspects of anti-sprawl work because they can reduce the amount of energy used by and pollution produced by residents. And better planned sprawl is likely to keep its residents happier and less likely to decide later to move even farther beyond the urban center.

An equally important and connected trend and context situation in the Northern City is the rapid transformation of its core as a post-industrial centre, and the rebirth of the central city as the locus of economic and financial transactions, business, tourism, services, art and culture, high-income residential uses — and of course, realty appreciation.[3]

This process has been on the march for quite a while now, and it has led to an entirely new agenda for urban planning and urban planners. The main task no longer was to regulate urban growth and promote greenfield development for housing, infrastructure, and manufacturing, but to invent new functions for a significant portion of the existing city.

While this challenge was particularly acute in industrial cities, the same challenge surfaced in all kinds of urban centres. The activities set in motion to redevelop disused industrial sites inspired similar projects concerned with the relocation of non-industrial functions that could be conveniently positioned in more peripheral locations: wholesale markets, railway stations, bus depots, and the like.

The future is not what it was, Sam van Embden admonishes us wisely in the quote featuring as the masthead of this report. Yes: we cannot escape the realization that there is nothing comforting, familiar or predictable about developments in the near or distant future, nor can we expect future generations to think or behave the same way as ours. Yet, the opposite of that clever quip is also true: the future *is* what it was. Recent urban experience in the North suggests that the future prosperity of our cities could very well rest in the recuperation, protection, enhancement and valorization of their *cultural identity*, i.e. the urban culture sedimented over years and centuries. Culture is defined here as an encompassing term. It includes buildings as well as people; art and heritage as well as curiosity, diversity, behaviour, customs, style, idiosyncrasies, cuisine, landscape, tradition. Urban tourism has become a very important resource for the North's cities, as well as a considerable source of wealth. Not surprisingly, cities have invested a great deal of in cultivating this resource.

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3.   The "shrinking city" notion may well have been a challenge a few years ago. With globalization, city centres, and particularly those of larger urban agglomerations, are now thriving, bustling, appetizing, irresistible.

3. The Emergence and Evolution of "Modern Urban Planning" in the North

D.J. Waldie, speaking of Los Angeles, reminds us of Charles III, King of Spain, whose ordinances for the Indies prescribed for city grids to have "*a 45-degree orientation from true north and south to give, it was said, equal light to every room in every house throughout the day*".[1] Rumour has it that it was the urban grid of Buenos Aires to inspire the mythical progenitor of the modern city, the Catalan engineer Ildefonso Cerda'. Cerda's work, and impact, was of monumental proportions.[2] With his *Teoria general de la urbanización* he produced the earliest and most grandiose design (alas, the third and most important volume was never produced) of a general theory on urban planning and development. He also was Barcelona's Engels, with his *Statistical Monograph on the Working Class of Barcelona in 1856*; in 1860, he was the winner of a competition for the new plan for the long-awaited urban expansion of Barcelona with a project of astonishing novelty and daring for the times; and his plan was, indeed, implemented — although the purity of its urban grid, designed to bring the countryside to the city with generous green inner spaces, was soon spoiled by over-densification.

In Madrid, Arturo Soria y Mata[3] was equally poliedric: engineer, philosopher, reformer, and inventor. Between 1882 and 1892, he produced a series of pioneering articles based on his vision of a "linear city". The idea was to give life to the slogan "*ruralize urban life, urbanize the countryside*". Like Ebenezer Howard and before him, he set up a company to implement the linear city vision in Madrid. Like Ildefonso Cerdà, he produced studies, a vision, a plan, and saw to it that the plan was implemented. In Soria y Mata's case, the project is killed by its own success — the land needed for its extension becomes too valuable.[4] These two examples alone would lead to a revisitation of the Anglo-Saxon-centric scholarship on the early steps of modern urban planning. UK, for example, may have been its locus of irradiation, but not necessarily its place of birth.

Naturally, this is not the place for a thorough recapitulation of the highlights of the emergence and evolution of modern planning in the North. A vast and fascinating literature exists on this subject, both in English and in other languages. However, the glimpses offered above point to one observation. Planning was born during the second half of the 19th century as a result of an unprecedented, and perhaps unsurpassed, mobilization of human optimism and ingenuity. There was a strong belief that the city, thanks to the evolution of science and technology, could become the place for the liberation of humankind and for a healthy, creative and productive life for all. Thus, the early fathers of city planning, and particularly the ones cited above, had a unique, and perhaps unrepeated, characteristic: they were visionaries, scholars, designers and doers all at the same time. Those were the years of planners without planning, intended as a combination of established discipline, formal training, literature, professional associations. Our age seems to be the opposite: an abundance of theory, research, formal training, professional associations, without planners — intended as people with a vision, in addition to a profession.

Retracing some other early steps, one cannot but marvel at the boldness of urban planning activity. Otto Wagner's Vienna, at the beginning, engaged in buying land for future

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1. Waldie, 2006.
2. Colegio de Ingeneros de Caminos, Canales Y Puertos, 1976.
3. Calabi, 2000, p48.
4. Calabi, 2000, p49.

urban expansion[5] — an initiative beyond the optical cone of today's cities in these dire times. The Vienna of 1817 also engaged in massive public housing programmes. We know that public housing originated from the denunciations and demands of reformers. But in Vienna's case, a very convincing argument was that the provision of public housing would allow to keep wages low, and therefore contribute to the competitiveness of the economy. In addition, exchanges across the Atlantic were as busy as those of today's: witness the American voyages of Howard, Berlage, and Geddes.

Brevity will then be our convenient excuse for jumping to a recapitulation, in the context of the contemporary evolution of urban planning, of the features that can be considered common to most, if not all, countries of the North. These features include:

- **Convergence**: planning systems tend to look more and more similar across country boundaries.

- **Decentralization**: states delegate planning authority to lower levels of government, particularly at the municipal level.

- **Autonomy**: local authorities take on more functions than before, including the approval of urban plans and the increase of statutory fiscal capacity.

- **Agility**: comprehensive, long-term master plans detailing land use are now replaced by strategic/structure plans containing the essentials of future development strategy, leaving details and land-use decisions to detailed development plans.

- **Developmental**: urban planning is becoming an instrument for urban development rather than a mechanism for regulating urban growth.

- "**Implementational**": more and more, the central features become feasibility and implementation of whatever measures are contemplated in urban plans.

- **Project-based**: planning is increasingly conceived in terms of distinct and self-contained urban projects, whether or not inserted in a comprehensive strategic planning framework.

- **Strategic**: many cities find the elaboration of a strategic plan an important occasion to achieve consensus and mobilize partnerships, and also to place projects in a coherent picture.

- **Governance-based**: planning is becoming an opportunity to experiment new forms of governance, rather than the expression of a statutory function of government.

In his fundamental book on urban planning in the advanced capitalist world Stephen Ward[6] describes some of the most notable urban planning experiences in the North during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Examples are offered below, primarily drawn from his research.

3.1. United Kingdom

With Margaret Thatcher's ascent to power in 1979, in parallel with Ronald Reagan's election in 1980, a new "anglo-american era" opened, bent on "rolling back the frontiers of the state" to create a new enterprise culture. This advocated the privatization, deregulation and

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5.   Calabi, 2000.
6.   Ward, 2002, pp307–394.

marketization of activities which had become to be seen as the prerogative of governments.[7] Because urban planning was closely associated with state intervention and regulation, it soon became a target of Thatcherism.

Thatcherite influences on urban planning in the UK were strongest in the inner areas of metropolitan cities. The ills at the time were massive de-industrialization and urban decline; the cure, establishing a planning regime encouraging large-scale private development by employing public funds to attract — or to use a fashionable term of the time, "leverage" — private capital. Thirteen "Urban Development Corporations" were created in as many inner city areas, including the famous London Docklands, virtually superseding the elected local authorities.

No other than the planning historian Peter Hall was the one to devise a second planning instrument of the Thatcher era, something approaching a "non-plan", devised for planning-free zones where unbridled development could take place. Patterned after the Hong Kong experience, the new "enterprise zones" found their standard in 22 km^2 London Docklands project. Docklands and its central business district core, Canary Wharf, came to epitomize both the strength of this brand of large scale development as well as the problems caused by the lack of integrated planning. Public transport, for example, followed only many years later.

Apart from similar initiatives in urban regeneration, notably among them Glasgow in Scotland, and the general failure of a wider strategy for "private new towns" in less urbanized regions, British planning would also be influenced at the end of the 1980s by a surge of public interest in the environment, which translated itself in a strong interest in sustainable urban planning. Not surprisingly, a more favourable economic outlook encouraged a revival of concern for the quality of urban life. The EU soon showed strong interest and support for the sustainability agenda. But somehow, British planning did not quite latch on to the sustainability agenda with the same level of commitment shown by other European countries, starting from the Nordic countries but also including others such as Italy. Another lasting problem of British urban planning appears to be its over-reliance on private investment, inherited from the Thatcher years, and its reluctance in public-sector investment, particularly in the field of urban transport. The 1999 Rogers report *Towards an Urban Renaissance*[8] was an important attempt at recapturing a "European tradition" in planning immersed in the new sustainability paradigm: compact housing design, pedestrian-friendly home zones, social-class mix, community policing, public transport provision, pedestrian and cycling provision, among others. But these suggestions have hardly gone beyond a few pilot projects, and least of all redefined the grain of British planning. As a result, it is quite possible that British town planning lost a good deal of the authority it had won during much of the twentieth century. After the US-inspired urban development models employed on a vast scale in the Docklands and later in the Thames Gateway had lost much of their attraction, preciously little had been produced to keep abreast of new agendas, first among them sustainable urban development.

3.2. Germany

Prior to German reunification in October 1990, West Berlin had been developed as a showcase of the accomplishments of market-led western development. After 1990, the German government was presented with the responsibility and the opportunity to help former East Germany "catch up" and to turn Berlin into a new showcase, this time not of western

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7.   See also Hall, 2002.
8.   The Urban Task Force, 1999.

superiority over the communist system, but of the "new Germany". This very challenge, together with reunified Germany's enhanced prominence on the European scene, facilitated the endorsement of the more recent paradigms championed by of the EU, particularly in terms of sustainability and cohesion, intended basically as balanced and shared growth and development. This was especially evident in the planners' vision of the new Berlin, promoting compactness, mixed land and building uses and public transport, while discouraging the US models of large mono-functional zones, high-rise towers and residential decentralization. Ninety per cent of all new housing would be developed on previously urbanized land. Accordingly, Berlin re-invented itself by re-interpreting the European urban tradition, and in this sense it was more successful — or at the very least, much more "authentic" than London. Other German cities were less successful in doing so. Frankfurt am Main, for example, decided to follow explicitly an American developed model, and indeed Frankfurt planners named it "Mainhattan". But the sterile results that ensued prompted the same planners to create a "cultural quarter" recreating a medieval streetscape: a questionable undertaking that, however, was wildly successful. Another strain, on the other hand, is the flourishing of sustainability agendas, policies, plans and projects in smaller German cities, such as Heidelberg, Freiburg and Munster.

3.3. France

The French experience is also there to remind us that urban planning, like most other social activities, is driven by the encounter between economic forces and political agendas, The socialist Francois Mitterrand was president from 1981 to 1995, and this period was marked by impressive urban projects in Paris (La Defense, the New Library, the Louvre Pyramid) whose planning and realization co-existed with an imperious style of government and a strong role of the State. But as it often happens, it was Lionel Jospin's leftist government inaugurated in 1997 that "*showed the greatest interest in adopting the Anglo-American model of privatization*".[9] While following a trend that had been marching slowly since the 1980s with the establishment of elected regional bodies, the Jospin period saw the rise in power and independence of large-city mayors to the detriment of the influence of the *préfets*. This was followed by a flurry of urban marketing, with French cities rivalling each other in merchandising their image to attract investment — with the main marketing tool being flashy urban projects. However, well-known and strongly advertised strategies such as public-private partnerships took on a different twist in the French urban planning context. Unlike what happened in UK and in the US, where the role of the private sector was as a rule preponderant, in France the *societe' d'economie mixte* saw the public sector, often represented by the mayor himself, holding on to the majority of the shares and of the decision-making power.

With middle-sized and large French cities engaged in initiatives for attracting local and international investment, it was central government that had to take the initiative of dealing with the issue of the four-and-a half million citizens living in the so-called "critical urban areas". This task took a turn of special urgency after the Paris *banlieue* riots of November 2005.[10] In fact, "national urban policy" in today's France means "*the policy for disadvantaged neighbourhoods with difficulties in the areas of housing and urban environment and in the socio-economic fields of employment, academic success, health, public order and security and urban services*".[11] However, ongoing initiatives bear an uncanny resemblance to the urban

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9. Ward, 2002.
10. European Knowledge Network, 2008.
11. European Knowledge Network, 2008.

renewal policies enacted in the US more than half a century ago. In the wake of the "Grand Projects Urbaines" of the 1990s, the Law for the City and Urban Renovation of August 1st 2003 set up a five-year programme of urban renovation aimed at 'destroying urban ghettos'. The objective is to restructure these neighbourhoods by reorganising public spaces and services, and overall through major work on housing: the demolition and reconstruction of 200,000 dwellings and the rehabilitation of another 200,000. More than 150 neighbourhoods are currently involved. This can be considered the "urban planning component" of the national urban policy. Whether a "physical improvement approach" is going to work, given the profound sense of social exclusion felt by the inhabitants of the critical areas earmarked for "restructuring", remains to be seen.

3.4. United States of America

Starting from the 1980s, the US became *de facto* the world's leading force in the new global orthodoxy, which included, privatization, liberalization and a reduced role of the State.[12] But it also took a leading role in urban planning innovation. It stood to reason: Americans are renowned for their marketing genius, and city marketing was an obvious step in promoting a merchandise that was finding an increasingly difficult sell. The "Baltimore model" is a case in point: worldwide interest and many imitations arose from the initiative of a city in decline and its engagement in an ambitious waterfront renovation project to bring about economic regeneration (among them, Barcelona, Oslo and Sydney). As Ward notes, however, the project was a huge success in terms of notoriety and visitors, as it became an important tourist attraction, but it did nothing to regenerate the blighted areas around the project site — a sobering thought about the trickle-down and reverberation effects of urban plans aimed exclusively at commercial success. Baltimore presented the advantage of a waterfront area very close to the central business district, unlike other American cities that nevertheless, followed the lead of waterfront redevelopment for urban revitalization (Boston and New York among them). In addition to area redevelopment, such as old piers and decrepit industrial and warehouse sites, thematic strategies and related new developments were identified in the pursuit of urban revitalization, such as central-city commerce (downtown malls), business gatherings (convention centres), Olympic Games (sports arenas), urban tourism (cultural and historical districts, museums, galleries). Other approaches, like enterprise zones, were borrowed from UK.[13] In all this flurry of activities, the word *planning* rarely surfaced.[14] And in fact, all of the developments mentioned above were projects, not plans. All of them were characterized by public incentives and preliminary public investment, followed by private investment, development and management.

In a political climate hostile to public control, regulation and investment, such disbursements were justified in the 1980s and 1990s by the economic difficulties faced by central cities and metropolitan areas, and the resulting loss of revenue both for municipal administrations and the private sector. These difficulties were, of course, determined by the comparative advantages of suburban areas: lower taxes, more space and cheaper land. In the era of cheap gasoline and in presence of a rapidly expanding highway network, suburban areas started hosting more than homes and industrial plants: they became the *loci* of the "edge city".

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12. Ward, 2002.
13. Hall, 2002, p400
14. To this day, the word "planning" does not appear in the home page of the US Department for Housing and Urban Development, now re-branded as "Home and Communities". See http://www.hud.gov/.

The recent and only partially abated surge in oil prices and the dramatic rise in the price of gasoline is likely to have the most important consequences by far on the future directions of planning, or rather physical development, in the US. Suddenly, clever substitutes for sustainable planning like "growth management", "smart growth", "new urbanism", "green urbanism"[15] that had been considered up to now cute new fashions, risk acquiring much greater currency. It is sad, of course, that they should not do so on their own merit, but largely as a result of developments imposed by the vagaries of global energy markets.

3.5. Canada

The 1970s and 1980s were marked by a fair share of malls and Baltimore-inspired waterfront redevelopment schemes, and the trend to pursue buoyant urban redevelopment projects in Canada went on unabated. However, comparisons between Canada and its Southern neighbour usually end up in Canada's favour, particularly when the comparison is about health coverage or urban quality of life. Analysts generally concur in the opinion that Canada, despite following the same macro-economic development model as the US, has always managed to follow more socially considerate and environmentally conscious urban planning and development paths. These paths were a greater reliance on urban public transport, innovative environmental, landscape and regional planning, deliberate efforts in facilitating ethnic integration. Canadian contributions to the international urban agenda were always considerable. It was Canada that hosted, in 1976, the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, and thirty years later, the third World Urban Forum. In 1986, the World Health Organization developed an idea brought forward by the Canadian Institute of Planners, Healthy Cities, into a successful global programme. And the wildly popular ecological footprint concept was developed by a Vancouver-based academic, William Rees. In 1996, the adoption of the Liveable Region Strategic Plan for the Greater Vancouver was firmly based on the protection of predominantly unbuilt areas, a compact-city strategy, more complete communities focused on town centres, and a widening of transport choices, the promotion of car sharing as well as public transit.[16] Vancouver also led the way in a sustained urban strategy based on densification, the provision of housing for different income groups in the downtown area, with special attention to extremely vulnerable groups.[17]

3.6. The Netherlands

As it is well known, the Netherlands is one of the cradles of urban planning. It is no accident that this country hosted the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) throughout the 20th century, and that it is still the home of the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISoCaRP). However, the neo-liberal swing started at the beginning of the 1980s was particularly pronounced in the Netherlands. The result was the shift from centre-left to centre-right governments, the reduction of public budgets and contraction of the welfare state, and a much greater reliance on the private sector and on wealth-creation policies. The Dutch have always been very active internationally, and have been at the forefront both of the promotion of their own good practices and technical expertise and the development of virtuous policies in the settlements development and urban arena. Not surprisingly, they have been among the most active advocates of sustainability. During the past decade, they have

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15. Ward, 2002.
16. Ward, 2002.
17. Edelson, 2008.

Figure 4. Zuidas: an aerial view

Source: http://www.zuidas.nl/smartsite.dws?id=1070#.

tried to practice the same virtuous policies at home by promoting compact cities, brownfield development, environmentally-friendly settlement technology, and public transport.

Ironically, the virtuous practice of "urban re-use" can create conflict when re-use means identifying centrally located areas and regenerating them by substituting residential uses with other more commercially palatable functions. This is the case of the "South Axis" (Zuidas) new business district in Amsterdam. In the flashy *I AM sterdam* web page, the project is presented attractively: **"***An urban extension project ideally located between Amsterdam and Schiphol is rising skyward at the Zuidas ('South Axis'), a mixed commercial, residential and recreational urban centre for the 21st century***"**.[18] In a few words, all the ingredients of the competitive city are there: an ideal location between the whole centre and the busy Schiphol airport; mixed uses, such as to avoid the anonymity of failed business districts; and an unequivocal assurance of modernity ("*an urban centre for the 21st century*").

But are there any costs associated with this ambitious urban planning showcase? Oudenampsen[19] tells us that the new business district is being developed in an area full of post-war working class neighbourhoods, where record numbers of social flats are being demolished to make way for more expensive owner-occupied property. These urban redevelopment projects are part of the city's economic strategy to attract a higher educated and more economically potent population (the so-called "creative class"[20]), and to displace parts of Amsterdam's lower income population towards the periphery. The statute of Zuidas Inc., the public-private partnership company set up to plan and implement the giant project, states that if the project were to go wrong, the private partners can step out and government will be forced to buy out their shares with the accompanying losses. The new metro line, which will collect the South Axis to an earlier redevelopment project, the IJ-Banks, is a massive public investment that will increase land values and therefore very likely to drive out of the market existing small businesses.

3.7. Italy

The notable feature of Italian urban planning is the degree institutional decentralization shifted planning powers from central to sub-national and local authorities. One proof of this is the fact that the only comprehensive national planning law dates back to 1942, and that its

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18.   http://www.iamsterdam.com/introducing/economy/recent_developments/zuidas.
19.   Oudenampsen, 2007.
20.   Florida, 2002.

substitution with an updated nation-wide framework is not on the agenda of the present government, nor was ever seriously considered by previous ones. Regional governments issue framework legislation dictating general guidelines, regulating the nature of plans to be formulated at the provincial and municipal level and the procedures to be followed, while provincial and municipal authorities are responsible for actual plan formulation and implementation for their respective administrative boundaries. Regional prescriptions vary: however, most of them reveal a clear trend to move urban planning away from the long-term and detailed master plans prescribed in the 1942 law to a two tier-system envisaging a framework "structural plan" and a time-bound "operational plan". Difficulties in providing land for public infrastructure and community services due to the financial and bureaucratic difficulties of land expropriation have been circumvented by the widespread practice of compensatory policies, whereby part of urban land designated for development is conceded to municipalities.[21] A great deal of experimentation is taking place in the area of strategic planning linked to redevelopment and regeneration (see Box 10). While urban renewal following urban de-industrialization has been general attentive to social issues, it also generated, similarly to what happened elsewhere in the North, rapidly rising land and housing prices. The strong suit of Italian city planning remains the remarkable results achieved in safeguarding the historic and architectural heritage of virtually all cities, large and small.

3.8. Sweden

Sweden, a country that had represented the most state-led system of any western capitalist country, veered abruptly towards the free market in the 1980s.[22] This change was accentuated in the 1990s with the application of the familiar neo-liberal macroeconomic recipes of tighter public budgets, welfare reform and deregulation. Similarly to the abovementioned case of Italy, planning authorities in Sweden now rely more heavily on the practice of securing public infrastructure and community services by negotiating with developers, rather than through direct provision. Swedish planning excellence, expressed in the celebrated greenfield new-town developments of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, found new areas of application in central-city brownfield redevelopment schemes and in the application of the new principle of sustainable planning and design. An interesting example of the competitive climate prevailing in the 1990s to this day is provided by the competition between Stockholm and Göteborg/ Malmö.[23] These three cities are competing for attention and resources, with the latter two favoured by their links to continental Europe through the opening of the Öresund bridge between Malmö and Copenhagen.

3.9. Denmark

Not surprisingly, the Öresund bridge was the object of an intense debate between environmentalists and advocates of economic growth. The construction of the bridge in 2000 triggered the futuristic plan for Ørestad. Ørestad is a 600-metre, five-kilometre long linear city with all the attractions mandated by contemporary city marketing. Its author is a world-famous archistar,[24] Daniel Libeskind. It provides an appropriate mix of residential, business and commercial space. It is served by an environmentally-friendly monorail, and is adjacent to Copenhagen's largest natural reserve. It is strategically located along the Malmo motorway and between the old centre and the airport. It will be served by state-of-the art educational and

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21.   Campos Venuti, 2007.
22.   Ward, 2002; Newman and Thornley, 1996; Hall, 2002.
23.   Ward, 2002.
24.   For an example of archistar use as a marketing tool, see http://www.orestaddowntown.dk/.

Figure 5. Ørestad

Source: http://www.daniel-libeskind.com/projects/show-all/orestad-downtown-mas.

cultural facilities. It exhibits an abundance of public spaces, including the inevitable *piazzas*. The only problem, perhaps, is that it could be *anywhere.* Except, of course, for the architect-tural brochure's reassurances about the project's distinctive two towers that "*...like the spires of the historical city of Copenhagen ... are an indication, from a distance, of an important public gathering place*". Nevertheless, two important aspects of the project are that it did not destroy any residential functions since it was developed on a reclaimed military installation site, and that it is owned an controlled by an entirely public (city/state) development company.[25] In other words, there is a chance the city may profit from the success of the project, instead of simply providing the initial capital for private ventures as it happened in many other situations.

But there is more to contemporary Denmark that meets the eye. One less known aspect of a serious and responsible approach to sustainable planning in Denmark is the Aalborg charters, developed at the initiative of the small Danish city of Aalborg to implement the local Agenda 21 initiative promoted by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Aalborg was the catalyst for a voluntary network of local authorities from all over Europe committed to implementing participatory plans and projects for sustainable development. With a little help from central governments, the movement has grown, perhaps in direct proportion to the non-mandatory nature of its agenda.

3.10. Finland

If its remarkable economic success is relatively recent, Finland has a well-known and consolidated reputation but also in the field of architecture, planning and design. The Saarinens and Aalto were the icons of a 100-year old tradition, while Tapiola new town established an unsurpassed standard in the distant 1960s. Finland's capital, Helsinki, is a remarkable display of balance between tradition and modernization. With the advantage of a large proportion of the city's land under municipal ownership and control and a strong tradition in urban planning, Helsinki could secure the satisfaction of its population's needs,

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25.   http://www.metrotram.it/orestad_ita.pdf.

including adequate and affordable housing and efficient transport systems, while experimenting in sustainable energy solutions such as, for example, district heating. Moreover, Finland has become is a leader in sustainable urban planning, as shown by the example of Viikki, begun in 1995. The project, aimed at 13,000 people, provides a stark contrast to the Danish experience at Ørestad. Rather than celebrating a city's bright new future into the new millennium, or the prowess of a famous architect-planner, it is simply meant to provide a sober demonstration of sustainable urban development at work. The plan[26] is not particularly imaginative, and it could come from an old urban planning textbook. What is remarkable is its dogged seriousness in pursuing quantifiable and measurable sustainability criteria. Each "Eco neighbourhood block" project has been commissioned as a result of a competition, on the basis of "eco-criteria" regrouped under five different aspects: pollution, natural resources, health, bio-diversity and food production.

3.11. Norway

Of course, the very notion of sustainability is linked to the 1987 report "Our Common Future" produced by the United Nations-mandated commission chaired by the then Minister for the Environment of Norway Gro Harlem Brundtland. Since then, Norway has made no mystery of its commitment to this agenda. But even before, things happened in Norway's urban planning horizon that may not be widely known. One of them[27] was the urban road pricing scheme introduced by the city of Bergen, the first in Europe to do so, and later imitated with more sophisticated electronic technology in Oslo and in Trondheim. Later, the city of Oslo itself gained the EU's Sustainable City prize. Interesting experiments are being made in sustainable urban technology: for example, "nature based sewerage systems" are being tested in the county of Akershus near Oslo to demonstrate the superiority of these localized, small-scale solutions over centralized conventional wastewater treatment systems.

One interesting footnote is that unlike many other countries of the North, Norwegian urban planning does not appear to be obsessed by large-scale show case urban projects, despite the fact that urban transformation is high on this country's planning agenda as well.

3.12. Spain

Over the last twenty-five years, no other European country has probably witnessed a flourishing of urban activity comparable to that of Spain's. Although many factors brought about this, it is certain that the impulse provided by Barcelona and its mythical mayor, Pasqual Maragall, was decisive. A citation[28] is appropriate to convey the importance of Maragall's role:

> "…With remarkable speed, Spain's second city (almost equal in size to Madrid) became one of the most potent international models of urban planning of the late 20th century. Influenced by the ideas of the radical sociologist Manuel Castells and the sociologist/geographer Jordi Borja (amongst others), Maragall articulated Barcelona European socialism's most convincing response to globalization and the right-wing pro-market philosophy that was otherwise dominating western European policy discourse. His was essentially a middle way, accepting the competitive rigours of global capitalism but also nurturing the locality as a distinctive physical space that provided a setting for a specific social and cultural cohesion. Finally,

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26. http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/archi/programmes/cost8/case/holistic/viikki.html.
27. Ward, 2002.
28. Ward, 2002, p71.

and not least for our purposes, Barcelona was a city where good design was pursued as a matter of consistent policy".

Under Maragall, and to a lesser extent during the administrations that followed, Barcelona attracted the envy of a myriad of other cities by employing to a maximum effect all the means of urban development and promotion: public-private partnerships, political patronage, arm-twisting with central government, alluring investment opportunities, competition with Madrid, local patriotism and international alliances, a strong international presence, sports games, global cultural and urban events — and most effectively of all, city marketing. All of this was, however, governed by a strong internal discipline and sureness of intent that saw, in a way, the apotheosis of strategic planning. Today, Barcelona is firmly positioned on the world map and has become a serious proposition for global business, as well as a favourite location for the global urban tourism industry.

Madrid has gone through a similarly impressive development process and a phase of accelerated urban growth. More recently, however, the negative effects of this effervescent model of urban planning have started to show. The completion of Barcelona's "diagonal" with the new Expo was probably less of an urban design splash than anticipated, and strangely, the top step of the ladder for design-led visibility has been taken by Bilbao, with its Guggenheim Museum. Despite a phenomenal surge in new housing construction, urban housing prices have skyrocketed: Madrid and Barcelona have joined the ranks of other cities where average-income citizens can only find new housing at the periphery of the metropolitan area. And recently, the national government has launched the hypothesis of bringing down to size the massive developments that have taken place around Spain's coastal cities to accommodate tourism, as well as waves of early pensioners from other countries of Europe looking for Mediterranean charm and milder climates.

3.13. Australia

Australia is no exception when it came to absorbing the liberalization wave started by the US and UK in the 1980s, and in adopting what virtually became in those times its urban planning exemplification, the Baltimore waterfront redevelopment model (Sydney Darling Harbour, started in 1984). This was followed by a less imitative generation of urban projects, in Sydney (City West renewal) and in Melbourne's docklands. Notable was also a Japanese-funded "science city" for 100,000 people, conceived in 1987 to set a utopian prototype of urban life but never realized according to its ambitious plans.

More recently,[29] Australia engaged in metropolitan strategies for Melbourne (2002) and Sydney (2005). Their general themes are, in a way, a compact of sustainable neo-liberalism — planning for a more sustainable future; developing advanced and innovative businesses which will be competitive and significant in the world economy; providing certainty for the property market; and having a more compact city form. Both strategies are the product of their respective state governments, since local government authorities generally have fewer functions, powers and resources than in the UK and in most parts of Europe. In a way, this should be seen as a blessing, since many lament (see Box 3, for example) the general lack of the institutional authority required to bring about metropolitan planning. Be as it may, both strategies — particularly to provide clear indications to the real estate market — are more detailed and prescriptive than their counterparts in other parts of the world, and particularly in Europe.

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29.   Bunker and Searle, 2007.

4. The Nature of the Institutional and Regulatory Framework for Planning in the North

In their *Urban Planning in Europe,* Newman and Thornley[1] offer an interesting classification of urban planning frameworks in that region. In describing the legal and administrative systems in western Europe, they distinguish four different "families": the British family; the Napoleonic family; the Germanic family; and the Scandinavian family. Other scholars,[2] contend that all continental legal systems (Roman, Germanic and Nordic) share a similar legal style: they seek to create a harmonious set of rules and principles in advance of decision making. This is taken to correspond to a particular continental mentality, given to making plans, regulating things in advance, and drawing up rules and systematizing them. The paradise of planning, one would argue at first sight.

In contrast, the English common-law system offers far fewer rules. Government does not provide a complete set of legal rules in advance: rather, the law has been built up case by case, as decisions by the courts are recorded. Thus, there is much more emphasis on case law than on enacted law, which provides for more administrative discretion.

The literature also makes clear that the process of "Europeanization" that followed the Single European Act of 1992 has also had its effect on urban planning. This has brought forth a detectable process of convergence among Europe's national planning systems. Taking at the extremes the British system (an indicative one, based on common law) and the "continental" one, based on a normative, top-down approach, one can say that the two have been coming closer together.

EU member countries also show a peculiar common trait: a "hollowing out" of central-government powers with the devolution of certain functions at a "higher level", i.e. the EU's bodies, and of others to the local government level. For example, certain important functions like the enforcement of common environmental directives are discharged by Brussels, while city planning has become the sole responsibility of local/municipal governments.

Of course, peculiarities and contradictions are as striking as similarities. Given the British tradition for pragmatism and localism, one would argue that the British planning system should be the most decentralized on earth. This is not necessarily so. The British system is still characterized to this day by a very strong role of central government. By contrast, in Italy, a country with a reputation for a top-heavy central bureaucracy, central government relinquished all of its regulatory and guiding functions on matters of urban planning, with broad and non-binding planning principles and guidelines delegated to the next sub-national tier of regional governments.

Nadin and Stead[3] offer a very recent account of the evolution of spatial planning systems in two European countries with a grand planning tradition, the UK and the Netherlands. They argue that in UK, the rise of neo-liberalism in the 1980s and 1990s, with its antagonism toward the welfare state and its adherence to individualism, presented a fundamental challenge for planning. As a result, planning experienced a shift from a "welfare profession" serving the public interest to a skills-based profession selling a service.

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1.   Newman and Thornley, 1996.
2.   e.g. Zweigert and Kötz (1998) as quoted in Nadin and Stead, 2008.
3.   Nadin and Stead, 2008.

The same authors note that others described this transition as one from post-war-inspired grand designs and social and economic goals to a sort of "bureaucratic proceduralism" based on managing the day-to-day chores of statutory planning. One may read a strong US influence in this evolution. At the same time, however, the increased frequency of exchanges with the rest of the EU had the result of tempering this approach. These combined impulses led to the most significant reform of the planning system since the late sixties, with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of 2004. Here, it is best to use the same source's own words to describe this important development:

"The essential features of the system as described above remain the same. The accent has been on reworking the tools of planning to offer planning authorities more opportunities to take the initiative in development, to provide a strategic framework, and to engage stakeholders more effectively. This is summed up in the government's guidance in the notion of "the spatial planning approach" …. It seeks to meet a desire for more plan-led development and coordination of private investment and sector public policies within the market-driven and fragmented policy environment that arises in a liberal model of society. In some ways, the liberal model is stronger than ever, but at the same time, there are demands for more and more effective public intervention. The solution offered sees planning as a coordinative and collaborative activity injecting a spatial or territorial dimension into sectoral strategies and policy; and creating new policy communities that reflect the realities of spatial development and its drivers. Planning is being promoted as a learning process. Planning tools have been amended considerably with the objectives of strengthening regional strategic planning capacity and enabling local planning authorities to positively promote appropriate development."

In the Netherlands, a much smaller country with a proverbial concern for land use development and controls, coherence among all planning levels is a primary preoccupation, resting with central government. However, central government plans are of an indicative nature only, while statutory plans are the sole responsibility of provinces and municipalities, with the latter being the only ones empowered to concede or refuse a planning permit. There, the national government's point of entry is the power of the purse, through which coherence is sought between national and local exigencies.

The National Spatial Strategy adopted in 2006 makes a radical break with the past in that the national government, for the first time, relinquishes its habit to determine the details of physical development. Its slogan "*centralize if necessary, decentralize if possible*", literally reverses previous ones. The Dutch experience is also interesting if compared with planning reform in UK. In both countries there is an explicit move from development-control planning to development-led planning. In both examples there is more scope for the participation of the private sector and civil society actors. Finally, reform does not mean a weakening of planning or public powers. The new Dutch legislation, for example, confers stronger powers to provincial governments for environmental controls and landscape protection.

Japan is a country that, like the Netherlands, is characterized by high population density. There, too, the national government has strong powers in land use governance, and still retains authority over the approval of local plans through prefectural governors.[4] One interesting feature is that local plans do not correspond necessarily to municipal administrations; the statutory "city planning areas" envisaged by the 1968 City Planning Act can cover one or more cities, respond to functional and/or strategic objectives and are usually the

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4. ISoCaRP, 1998.

responsibility of a prefecture. Mechanisms for land assembly and redevelopment, such as the well-known land readjustment, are practiced in the case of special large-scale, public-sector led initiative named Urban Development Projects.

New Zealand is another interesting example of a country where, similarly to the UK and the Netherlands, urban planning functions are seen to belong to the environmental realm.

Unlike Europe, the US and Canada lack a national body of legislation regulating local and urban planning. In both countries, such responsibilities rest with states and provinces respectively. Possibly, the vastness and abundance of resources of their national territories and the low density of population were such that a pressing need never presented itself for a tight central control of development, as was the case, for example, in Japan and in the Netherlands. Moreover, the New World's distaste for bureaucracy and centralism, coupled with a special sense of pride in local self rule, determined a high level of autonomy for municipalities and local governments — a subsidiarity *ante litteram,* as it were. This explains, for example, the total lack of a unifying pattern in the urban landscape of the US, a continent-country that displays such contrasting urban creations as New York, Las Vegas, San Francisco and Los Angeles. There too, however, the central (federal) state plays its role with the power of the purse. Inevitably, large urban projects require a partnership with the pro-verbial higher levels, or other spheres in local-authority parlance, of government.

5. Planning Processes and Inclusiveness

Thirty-odd years ago, *Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements,*[1] adopted public participation as one of the cornerstones of human settlements policy and planning. Considering that this first world conference of United Nations member states on housing, building and planning was taking place near the apogee of the post-war golden age of authority-led physical planning, this decision was indeed a remarkable event. Moreover, participation was not on the top agenda of governments: at the time, many central and local governments were subject to autocratic rule, and the energy of the generation that had been so politically active in the late 1960s was largely spent or worse, derailed into violent end streets. Participation entered the picture, as always, because of the influence and civic activism of a few pioneers — and of course, as it was often the case in those times, as a political message exchanged across the two large political blocks the world was still divided into. The first one thought of participation as a convenient wedge into the Eastern monolith; whereas the latter assumed there was no need for "participation" where "the State" and "the People" were one and the same thing.

Arnstein, in her seminal article on citizen participation,[2] had described vividly and clearly the various steps that citizen participation could take, from the most manipulative to the most incisive: manipulation; therapy; informing; consultation; placation; partnership; delegated power; and finally, citizen control. The article was referring to African-American minorities in the urban America of the War on Poverty and the Model Cities Program, but it could very well apply to the various forms taken to this day by citizen participation, as well as participation in urban planning processes. One wonders how she would react today to the term "inclusiveness", an expression that has won considerable popularity in recent times. But "to include" is a transitive form, one that involves a subject (the "includer") and an object (the included). The insolent question that arises, therefore, is who includes, and who gets included. All in all, this strategy, assuming strategy is the right term, is regressive: at the very least, participation can also be won, and not simply granted.

With regard to the institutionalization of participation in urban planning, comparatively greater progress seems to have taken place in the South, and particularly in Latin America, with such pioneering and broadly adopted innovations as participatory budgeting — one innovation that, despite its shortcomings, would rank high on Arnstein's ladder. This may be due to the fact that formal procedures for participation, or at least for allowing the public at least to review, and object to, planning in the making, is a long established procedure in many countries of the North (see Box 5 below).

Box 5. Established procedures for the transparency of the planning process

If not for full-fledged participation, formal procedures have long existed in the North at least for allowing the public to review, and object to, local planning in the making. In Norway, for example, decisions regarding a local plan or a building development plan can be appealed against by a party or another person having a legal interest in the case, and the public are also entitled to object to a plan proposal during the planning procedure. In the case of a local plan, the public is invited to comment on the proposal after the Building Council has made its first reading of the plan. In Greece, everyone who has a legal interest can appeal within a given period against provisions contained in a detailed local development plan. In Canada, some form of public consultation is required before adoption of local

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1.   United Nations, 1976.
2.   Arnstein, 1969. Sadly, Arnstein was not an urban planner. Her professional fields of interest were medical education and health care.

plans by municipal councils or other bodies delegated by provincial authorities. In the US, the general public can oppose or request modification of proposed federal and state legislation, while at the local government level, public hearings must be held to adopt general plans, zoning, and any other planning regulations. Members of the public can attend the hearings and express their opinions on the proposed planning documents and/or regulations. In Spain, national legislation empowers competent planning levels to promote the participation of private parties in public actions on land use, regardless of their ownership title. In Portugal, citizens can make objections both during the preparatory phase and after the completion of local plans, but this falls short of achieving full public participation in the planning process. Japan is one country where participation is limited to some degree of transparency in the planning process. In Japan, the preparation of local plans that may produce meaningful changes is preceded by a public hearing to collect the thoughts of residents. Subsequently, a draft plan is "*prepared and explained to the public*". Finally, the "proposed plan" is again mad public and "opinions" from the public are invited.

Source: ISoCaRP, 1995, 1998, 2001.

Possible reasons for this lack of tangible progress certainly reside in the technocratic shell urban planning still finds it difficult to strive free of. In addition, urban planning and urban plans have been attacked on the grounds of being slow and cumbersome, and therefore, all procedures threatening to make them even more so, such as effective and statutory citizen participation, become very difficult to take hold. This is not to say that techniques related to the bottom rungs of Arnstein's ladder, such as information, consultation and placation, have not improved and been applied on a much larger scale than before. "Urban centres", i.e. public information offices devoted to display urban projects and disseminate information material, are springing up in many cities. Particularly during the preparation of strategic and structure plans, presentations and discussions at the neighbourhood level are fairly common practice. Their normal agenda, however, is to explain and take questions. Instances of how impromptu objections and proposals have actually influenced the thinking and decision making processes are rather rare. Thus, even in the most "advanced" and "progressive" countries and political contexts of the North, participation in urban planning rarely goes beyond the organization of consensus.

The rhetoric about "stakeholders" is penetrating. The term, in fact, can be used in opposition to a negative, such as "shareholder".[3] Somehow, the often-conveyed impression is that stakeholders form an orderly universe of actors, diligently identified by the local authority in question, and all neatly convened around a table with the purpose of reaching a fair and civilized solution that will inevitably, in the end, satisfy the interest of each. But we all know this is not so. While it is evidently vitally important to make decision making processes as transparent as possible, we all know that some "stakeholders" are more important and influential than others. Hence the need for someone in the public realm to create a truly level field of actors. If we accept this, then we have to take into consideration the ethical role of the planner[4] — someone who somehow positions his or her work in the sphere of the public interest on one hand, and places "listening" at the top notch of his or her agenda.

Participation, despite the lack of popularity it enjoys with most urban planners,[5] is also eminently practical. A few years ago, the World Bank, an organization that relies on the

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3. Spaans, 2006, p132.
4. On this issue, see Box 15.
5. In its Millennium Publication, ISoCaRP (2000) deploys its vision of negotiation and participation as follows:
   • Each country is exploring ways of opening up the control of development to negotiation in order to make it more flexible and responsive.
   • There is dissatisfaction with participation in itself with a search for more effective ways of involving relevant sectors of the community via partnership and joint initiatives.

economic returns of its lending activity and is not given to sentimentalism, issued a manual on participation[6] that should be required reading for all urban planners.

Another important issue, of course, is sustainability, intended in the sense of adopting decision processes that will allow to sustain the soundness of these very decisions over time. Experience shows that in the North's media-intensive societies, top-down, technocratic decisions have less probabilities than ever to resist organized protest. The time and resources wasted as a result of such occurrences are enormous compared to the investment required to effect participatory planning.

• There is also a recognition that participation takes too long, slows up decision making and adds to the cost of planning; by the time plans are approved they are out of date.
6.   World Bank, 1996.

6. Urban Planning and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is one of the most popular neologisms of the last twenty years. This is so not just because everyone, or virtually everyone, instinctively agrees with its intuitive meaning; but also because those who have not invented the term, who are clearly a vast majority, either refute it and thus give even more visibility to it, or invent their own definition and vehemently defend it, thus achieving the same result.[1]

Nevertheless, the prevailing framework definition is the one introduced by the famed Brundtland report: development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Despite this remarkable and officially endorsed compromise to reconcile the developmental and environmental paradigms and marry the social and ecological agendas, sustainability has been *de facto* reduced to concern and action for environmental protection. Planners, and urban planners in particular, have much to blame themselves for this outcome. Sustainability had all the potential for a virtuous combination of all the factors that inspired the very essence of urban (and regional) planning: a healthy environment for all; a wise and intelligent use of space to promote wellbeing and local development; a harmonious integration between the natural and the built environment. Virtually no major policy document dealing with development planning since the early 1990s, in Europe, Canada and Oceania at least, neglected to put sustainable development at the very top of the agenda. Instead, most planners decided to act against the very principle of ecology (everything relates to everything else) and the professed integrative goal of the Brundtland postulate, by immediately creating the concept of "environmental planning". The absurdity of this invention should be evident to all — what is indeed *all* planning about, if not "the environment?" Thus, the urban development landscape came out more fractured than before, and the planning community deprived itself of a great unifying instrument to think and act for the long term and for the common good.

This fracture is exemplified by the success of local Agendas 21, particularly in Europe. Rarely have these highly participatory and non-statutory documents been inserted in the main stream of action planning. Urban planners continue to see them as interesting, but peripheral.

ISoCaRP, born and based in the Hague, Netherlands, is the best known world organization of professional planners. The theme of its 2008 congress could not be more timely or politically correct: "Urban Growth without Sprawl — A Way Towards Sustainable Urbanization" (see Box 6 below).

Box 6. Urban Growth Without Sprawl: A Way Towards Sustainable Urbanization. 44th ISoCaRP Congress, Dalian, China, 19–23 September 2008

The theme of the congress refers to one of those grand goals of city planning that — as so many other city planning promises — is in striking contrast with the reality of rapid urban development all over the world. For most city planners (and other critical minds as well), sprawl clearly has a negative connotation, conjuring up images of uncontrolled residential subdivisions and ribbon development, square miles of unused and derelict land, wasteful and unplanned conversion of valuable agricultural soil, clogged-up roads and expensive but under-used utility lines.

Other terms come to mind, such as the more factual "peri-urban development", or the joking analogy of scrambled eggs (or Mexican omelette) as a graphical image of a contemporary city region. It is

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1. An MIT scholar (Staley, 2006, p. 102) counted no less than 57 such definitions of "sustainable development".

now almost impossible to draw a line between town and country — unlike in ancient times when the urban form used to resemble a boiled egg (the walled city) and later (when industrialisation had begun), a fried egg. (Cedric Price and then William Mitchell invented and used the delightful egg morphology to make their point). Not everyone finds sprawl harmful and unwanted though. Some economists have even discovered certain advantages in unlimited urban growth, and political scientists would disagree whether such large sprawling cities are necessarily un-governable or not.

Much of the now common unrestrained physical form of urban development, and with it, the economic and social implications of a sprawling urban continuum, appears to be the inevitable consequence of increasing automobile ownership and use, and even more so, of the global market forces that are at work in our urbanizing world, along with rampant rural-urban migration, and an increasingly unregulated private sector. The global fifty per cent line in urbanisation has already been crossed, and in Asia, it will very soon be reached.

China, as the largest country with a very rapidly growing urbanisation rate, has reached enormous proportions of challenges, but also of opportunities, in its mega-urban regions where an overwhelmingly large proportion of national wealth is generated. In contrast with an earlier era in the People's Republic of China when everything, including urban growth, was claimed to be firmly under control, the Chinese government now finds it close to impossible to "control" urban growth. So in China, as much as in India or any other fast developing country, "cities without sprawl" would seem to amount to wishful thinking or un-attainable goals, or — to invoke another image that is hard to pin down — an important dimension of the idealistic goal of "sustainable city development". At any rate, growth and proportions of mega-cities in the so-called developing countries are unprecedented; they are much greater than those in industrialized countries in history or at present; and the global environmental and social effects of urban sprawl are beyond imagination.

Is it possible at all to plan and govern such developments? Do we not have the right kind of strategic concepts that would lend themselves as powerful instruments for achieving those "cities without sprawl"? Some of them are, in random order — the sustainable city, or perhaps the liveable city (which is even more difficult to define), the compact city (straightforward as a physical concept but hard to do in practice), national urban development strategies for better regional distribution of urban growth, regional networking, public transport (including the new miracle of bus transit, or perhaps retro-fitting of public transport systems), brown field development as well as urban conservation and regeneration, and several other concepts. Are they effective in practice, or do they just reflect utopian thinking, as much as the imperative of "cities without sprawl" would seem to do?

Source: http://www.isocarp.org/index.php?id=308.

What is extraordinary about this otherwise pleasant introductory piece is its timidity. Notice, for example, the reference to bus transit as a "miracle".

In what ways have planners in different countries in the North declined the urban sustainability paradigm? In essence, we can distinguish three broad categories here — in word and deed; in deed; and in word.

The category of excellence — in word and in deed — definitely includes the Nordic countries. "Brundtland" and "Aalborg" are two milestones of the conceptual and local implementation foundations of sustainable development, and they come from Norway and Denmark respectively. But this fact is not a coincidence: it reflects a "culture of sustainability" that long precedes the institutionalization and globalization of the sustainability paradigm. There, an almost religious sense of love and respect for nature has always guided conscious actions in settlement development.[2] This has been translated in the definition and implementation of sustainable urban development practices.

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2. One could add that the quality of the built environment and the sense of collective care and social equality that has always characterized the Nordic countries are not unrelated to this tradition of love and respect for the natural environment.

Box 7. What the city of Oslo means by sustainable development

Oslo has a vision that Oslo shall be a capital city in sustainable development, characterised by economic, social and cultural growth according to nature's ability to sustain that growth ecologically. We shall pass on the city to the next generation in a better environmental condition than we ourselves inherited it. Oslo shall be one of the world's most environmentally friendly and sustainable capital cities.

Source: http://www.byradsavdeling-for-miljo-og-samferdsel.oslo.kommune.no/miljo/english/

If you consult the official web page of the city of Portland, Oregon,[3] the banner headings you will find will be very different from those of Oslo, and none of them will bear any reference to "sustainability". Yet, Portland is celebrated in the US for its successful pro-environment policies — among them, public transport, waste management, pollution control, storm water management, ecoroofs. Possibly, sustainability is not mentioned because this expression is not popular in the US — probably because it is connected in the general public's mind to ecological pressure groups and hostility to "development". So, Portland maybe a good example of the "sustainability in deed if not in word" category.

The final category, and sadly the most consistent one, is that of countries and cities of the North characterized by a disconnect between profession of sustainable development and its actual practice. Spain and Italy in Southern Europe may be two cases in point. In Italy, there is no regional planning legislation or city plan mission statement underlining sustainability as the main goal of planning and related development actions. Yet practice rarely follows declared intentions. Restrictions on greenfield development are not given the priority they should have, and the generally poor quality of urban public transport is the main alibi for resorting to private cars for an inordinate percentage of commuting and in-city trips.[4] Spain, on the other hand, as mentioned elsewhere in this report, now has to deal with the consequence of an unprecedented level of urban development, particularly in large tracts of its southern coastline.

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3.   http://www.portlandonline.com/.
4.   In Rome alone, the private car per resident ratio is 0.7.

7. Urban Planning, Informality and New Urban Forms

As said before, there is a North in every South, and a South in every North. Voluntary migration was always a strategy to get rid of excess population and the result of a desire to improve one's condition, and the same is true today. One of the effects of globalization is to accelerate desires and dreams that were nearly impossible before. The increasing differentials between incomes, lifestyles and circumstances between the South's poor and the North's affluent determine two opposite fluxes: jobs migrate North-South, and people South-North. These phenomena, of course, also happen within the "geographic" South. The recent violence recently occurred in Johannesburg and spreading to Cape Town appears to be the result of a sinister micro-model of globalization: low-skill jobs being outsourced to destitute foreign migrants *in situ* and excluding the local *lumpenproletariat*, in a setting where the locals can interact directly and violently with the immediately available culprits of their marginalization.

In North America, immigration is a long-standing tradition, and both the US and Canada are young enough to recall that immigration was indeed the basis of their economic rise and present prosperity. This is not so in Europe, a region where outmigration is generally a fairly distant memory, and immigration is much more recent. Different countries adopted different policies to absorb migration. The case of France stood out until recently because of the sheer number of its overseas immigrants[1] and the naturalization policy adopted by the French government. To assist this assimilation process, France built a high number of public housing units. But the incidents that occurred recently, particularly in the *banlieues* north-east of Paris, show that urban policy and urban planning as practiced thus far may not be the adequate mechanisms to provide the right answers to assimilation policies. Inevitably, the concentration of ethnicity in peripheral neighbourhoods reinforces the feeling of exclusion which finds, at any rate, its deepest roots in ethnic and economic discrimination. The residential circumstances in the French *banlieues* could not be more *formal:* in fact, the average conditions of public housing are fairly good, and much effort is being spent in retrofitting and radical improvement projects. But interestingly, residents, notably the young and unemployed, react to their ghettoization by going global and adopting lifestyles that make them no different from their counterparts in the Bronx or in outer London. Occasionally, this virtual informality is accompanied by extraordinary inventions. Among them is the *Parkour,[2]* a sequence of extreme evolutions which is, in a way, a non-violent mockery of the architectural structures of their own confinement in the *banlieue*.

The enlargement of the EU has opened the doors to poor migrants from poorer EU member countries: if you will, the South of the South of the North. Almost all of them, of course, perform needed functions — humble jobs refused by natives. Some of them are Rom populations from Eastern Europe, largely Romania, a EU member state. Their main destination is Southern Europe. Normally they build illegal squatter settlements in interstitial areas — under bridges, along river banks. Acts of theft and, more rarely, of violence and assault have put a stigma on the Rom, which astute politicians exploit by fuelling the citizens' fears and often rising to power by pledging repressive policies such as mass expulsions. Mayors find it hard to resist the appeal of zero-tolerance policies, and the eviction of Rom squatters accompanied by the razing of their settlements is a familiar item on the urban news log. Illegality, just like in the South's cities, favours insecurity of tenure: illegal residents are

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1. As of 2006, the French national institute of statistics INSEE estimated that 4.9 million foreign-born immigrants live in France (8 per cent of the country's population).
2. Anonymous Video, 2008.

also the victims of "black-rent" quasi-slum landlordism, i.e. exploitative arrangements imposed by avaricious landlords in crowded and dilapidated conditions that can be imposed precisely because of their illegal status. Thus, we are confronted by a peculiar contradiction: internationally, we expose and support slum regularization and upgrading plans and programmes; at home, we practice ruthless policies that we would hardly condone in our partner countries in the South.

"Informal" experiences can be found within the realm of legality. Due to rising housing prices, low-income urban residents are now attracted by assisted self-help housing created with the assistance of municipalities and thanks to legislation favouring housing co-operatives.. Ironically, these arrangements often offer the opportunity for a real integration between the local population and legal migrants wishing to settle and to put to good use their hard-earned savings.

Cases of urban "squatting" by students or low-income migrants exist in a number of industrialized countries, such as Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, England, Wales, Scotland, and the US.

While episodic Rom squatter settlements obviously have no influence on urban morphology, things are different in the case of unauthorized organized settlement. In some countries of Southern Europe, for example, where rigidly prescriptive urban plans are often accompanied by lax building controls, you find frequent cases of unauthorized housing developments, particularly at the fringe of metropolitan areas. In Italy, for example,[3] more than 1 million unauthorized housing units are estimated to have been built between 1982 and 2002. They are immediately recognizable because of their rough finishings and disorderly settlement texture, and therefore constitute a not necessarily pleasant "urban form".

Apart from these phenomena, the main question is what kind of urban forms ongoing city planning and development trends are determining in the current urban landscape. Possibly, new attitudes towards living, leisure, consumption and recreation are the main drivers of this change. Affluence has, first of all, created the "second home" phenomenon, which probably finds its strongest manifestation in Europe. The Spanish example of coastal tourism development is simply the height of a phenomenon that has occurred on large portions of the coast of the countries of the Mediterranean. But for good or for bad, there is no dispute about the fact that the new "urban forms" invented in the US are dictating the trend. Consumption models first introduced in that country (outlets, malls, shopping centres) have become enormously popular virtually everywhere else, although without the excesses one can find in US strip developments. And again, it is the US that used shopping as an element of attractiveness and commercial success in the waterfront and inner-city redevelopment schemes vastly imitated in the rest of the world.

As to living, and despite the concurrence of planners and environmentalists on the virtue of the "compact city", the trend is towards self-contained housing developments within metropolitan areas, easily reachable by car and provided with all the amenities city living cannot provide except for the lucky few, plus lower prices, more space, sports facilities, insulation from perceived dangers. This is inexorably blurring the once easily perceived break between city and country, with outer areas dotted with more and more self-contained settlements and the leisure, mobility and consumption infrastructure that they inevitably require.

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3.   Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica, 2006.

The 100th National Planning Conference ended on Thursday with a thought-provoking speech on the urban meaning of Las Vegas by Paul Goldberger, architectural critic for The New Yorker.

In comparing Las Vegas with other cities, Goldberger described the public realm as the most important defining part of a city. Private buildings defer to and fit within the public realm, making the whole more than the sum of its parts. The suburbs, he noted, are opposite of this, as private buildings take precedence.

Goldberger stated that he is still not sure how conventional urban theory fits Las Vegas. It is different from other places, and it has an essence and character that can never be confused with somewhere else. Yet the strip has a public realm in spite of itself. He drew additional connections to other cities. As technology makes it less and less necessary for people to gather and as cities are becoming less the places of manufacturing, choice has become the reason for people to go to the centres of cities. Cities are becoming more places of tourism and entertainment, Goldberger explained. "Other cities are becoming more like Las Vegas."

While Goldberger doesn't forgive Las Vegas's shortcomings, he said it does show us what people want out of cities. They want "grandeur, excitement, novelty, stimulation, visual splendor, surprise, and to see other people," Goldberger explained. "This is not a bad set of things to want," and other cities should think about providing these but with "the nurturing things this city lacks."

"We can, even now, be learning from Las Vegas", he concluded.

Source: Rynne, 2008.

Apart from the work of the "Prada architects" dotting the world with their magnificent objects,[4] most of the new forms we see on the Northern urban landscape are outside central cities and in the vast urban/rural territories where the presence of plans and planners is less felt. And for a rich and dramatic variety of newly built landscapes, there's nowhere like the US.

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4. Garau, 2008.

8. Brave New City and the New Scale of Urban Planning

As aptly noted in the general outline for the Global Report on Human Settlements 2009:
"In both developed and developing countries there has been a trend towards urban redevelopment through the use of mega-projects. In some cases, these involve the recycling of urban brown-field sites, and in other cases new developments. In both cases there is a need for a closer connection between city-wide spatial planning and mega-projects, as the latter tend to be major factors shaping the structure of cities, but often follow a technical logic with little concern for broader impacts".

There is no doubt that in this globalized world's Brave New City, and particularly in the post-industrial and resource-rich North, specialization and competitiveness favour ultra-modern, attractive, *ad hoc*, state-of-the-art "urban projects" which offer, *inter alia*, the advantages of attracting investment, promote the city's marketing, and by-pass the boring chores of comprehensive planning . A parallel notation is the appearance of the "archistar" as the *griffe* of many of these interventions.[1]

The example in Box 9 below is on Rotterdam, in The Netherlands. In that case, Mega did not necessarily turn out to be best.

Box 9. The case of the Rotterdam mega project

During the mid 1990s, the Rotterdam Central Station project was identified as one of six "strategic" projects that would give heightened international profile to this major port city. A large area surrounding the central railway station would be given over to commercial developments aimed at revitalizing the city centre. The station would be converted into an inter-modal transport node. To get this project under way, a "partnership" was formed among the city of Rotterdam, the Dutch rail company, and two private property developers who had a long-term relationship with both the site and the city. A foreign firm was selected to redesign the area. The project's property development programme would cover an area of 650,000 square meters. After four years of work, a master plan was published in April 2001. And then the sky fell in. In March 2002, a new political party, *Leefbaar Rotterdam* (Liveable Rotterdam), polled 30 per cent the vote in municipal elections and fundamentally changed the coalition of forces that had supported the project. The Rotterdam Central Station project had been part of a strategy that was to turn Rotterdam into a "world city". The basic idea was to market the city to global capital, based on the argument that competitive economic growth was essential if the social needs of the city were to be met. But in 2002, the newly formed city council could not be convinced of this logic. A document published in September of that year shows a change in the privileged position of strategic projects and in the position of city marketing within the political domain. With more than half of the new budget devoted to it, the new emphasis was to be on safety in the streets. The exuberant "champagne glass" design had to be scrapped. The old railway station was declared a heritage building, and a "home-grown" architect would be enlisted for the project, replacing the "foreign" firm. The project budget was downsized from 8575 million to 410 million Euros.

Source: UN-Habitat, 2004, p.168.

Given the size, the ambition and the aura of inevitability of such projects, one cannot help thinking that it is there, if anywhere in the contemporary world, where the eerie society imagined by Huxley in *Brave New World* finds its incarnation, not necessarily in the formal and rigid societal relations and lifestyles imagined by Huxley, but in the glorification of scale

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1.   Garau (2008) describes the contrasts between the barefoot architecture of the poor and the stunning realizations of "signed" architecture in the relentless search for recognition and distinction practiced by the competing cities of today's globalized world, and the dilemmas this situation presents to built-environment research and academic institutions both in the North and in the South.

and technology which, in itself, is a monument to the sweeping changes and competition imposed by globalization. There is little that's local in these projects: in this sense, not so differently from Huxley's nightmare, they are the image of a transcending world order that imposes its rule on all. It is this feeling, perhaps, quite apart from the political expediency of piloting citizens' fears that precipitated the drastic downscaling of the Rotterdam project.

Turin's ambitious plans seem to have had a better outcome, perhaps because they were linked to the Olympics Winter Games challenge, or also because the city enjoyed a long and stable political stewardship. There, a myriad of projects were all rigorously framed in a comprehensive design, the city's new strategic plan. Box 10 outlines how a World Bank expert describes this experience.

Box 10. Strategic planning in Turin

In the early 1990s, the industrial city of Torino (Turin) in northern Italy was facing a major economic and identity crisis. As Italy's dominant center of auto industry, the city faced the challenge of the out-migration of auto manufacturing jobs that resulted in significant job losses; presence of vacant or unused industrial land, amounting to 5 to 6 million square meters in the centers of the urban area; and an outdated infrastructure system that divided the city. The city needed to find new ways to develop and to restructure Torino's role on the national and international level. In this context, the government of Torino initiated a strategic planning effort in May 1998, resulting in the Strategic Plan of Torino signed in February 2000. Torino became the first city in Italy to adopt a Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan presented the vision of Torino: (a) as a European metropolis, (b) an ingenious city which gets things done and does it right, and (c) which knows how to choose its development path: the intelligence of the future and the quality of life. The Plan structured the vision for the future into 6 Strategic Lines, 20 objectives and 84 actions. Flagship actions or groups of actions of the Plan include:

• development of the University and Polytechnic, with the international research and enterprise training centre, to attract European and international youth to learn, study, invent and apply;

• policies to consolidate the technology districts (auto-automation-design, robotics, machine tools, aerospace, information and communication technology);

• new business incubator to support a new model of economic and social development;

• enhancement and expansion of the museum system;

• promotion of Torino as a "prime destination" for urban tourism, based on the quality of the city, its cultural entertainment and commercial activities;

• Peripheries Project and the development of new "centres";

• implementation of Agenda 21 (sustainability program);

• new institutional structure of the metropolitan area of 1.5 million inhabitants;

• permanent round table of co-operation for internationalization;

• rail network renewal and airport upgrading to bring all European links below two hours.

While not all aspects of the plan have been fully implemented, judging by the economic, physical and social transformations the city undertook since the strategic plan, it has been a great success. Torino has been successfully transforming its economy into a service and knowledge based one; the vacant industrial land has been converted into a variety of commercial, residential, cultural and public use under joint efforts by the private and public sectors; and through the 2006 Winter Olympics and a number of other international cultural events, Torino is establishing itself as a modern, innovative European metropolis with rich cultural heritage.

What are the major factors that lead to the success of Torino's 2000 Strategic Plan?

(1) Strategic intention of the strategic plan. The Plan is not treated only as a technical matter, and was strategically positioned as serving three functions: (a) technical function, (b) function of public opinion mobilization, and (c) connection function between the political players. The plan was not intended as a statutory document with binding prescriptions, but rather as a consensus-based, action-

oriented roadmap for a new strategic direction. In the language of the Strategic Plan itself: "*In the first place, the strategic plan is an act of trust in ourselves and expresses the intention to build on the resources and innovative abilities of local society.*" "*A strategic plan is not a list of requests sent by a community to its administrations; nor is it a book of dreams;* it is rather a type of agreement between everyone responsible for a development path recognized as possible and shared, where everyone is held responsible for their own part."

(2) Balanced combination of broad public participation and expert inputs: The Strategic Plan involved almost 1,000 people, who were organized into various working groups. The planning process was supported by the Development Forum (representatives of private and public interests) and the Scientific Committee (Italian and foreign experts). Through the Scientific Committee, top Italian and foreign expertise was tapped to provide in-depth diagnosis, domestic and international experiences, and strategic thinking. At the early stage of planning process, the Scientific Committee published "Towards the Plan" (*Verso il Piano*) which contained fundamental data on the present and future situation of the city.

Through the Development Forum, which has strong representation by the private sector and civic organizations, not only were the expert inputs verified and revised, but more importantly, innovative and pragmatic ideas were proposed, and ownership for the proposed measures were ensured, as many of these actors were also later undertaking responsibilities for their implementation. The planning phase was carried out by working groups along the strategic lines, jointly between stakeholders and experts.

(3) Close integration of physical and urban renewal with economic and social transformation. The plan to reshape the outdated transportation infrastructure and to redevelop the vast unutilized industrial land under an urban renewal program was tied closely to the economic restructuring objective of transforming into a premier knowledge economy in Europe. Even the facilities constructed for the 2006 Winter Olympics were carefully planned to be utilized after the event for rental-housing, student dorms for expanding universities, and new city parks. One benefit of the integration is the physical **visibility** of the entire transformation process: from the construction of new buildings to the revitalisation of historical palaces and buildings, a new city is emerging, with major signs such as the new station of Porta Susa, the vast new civic library, the doubling of the Polytechnic, the rebirth of Palazzo del Lavoro (for the Science Centre), the re-use of the wholesale fruit and vegetable market (the media village for the Olympics) signifying a rich culture and civic pride.

(4) Careful consideration of implementation through joint public private efforts in the plan. The Plan indicated responsibilities in carrying the proposed actions. The thematic working groups, built on the base of the strategic lines or objectives, were strong champions of the respective actions. The various projects included in the Plan have been directly implemented through the work of agencies or dedicated associations, and temporary implementation structures too. In addition the Torino Internazionale was formulated at the signing of the strategic plan with the responsibility of promoting strategic planning methods, monitoring its actions, and communicating to the public the opportunities for development created by the plan and encouraging the public's participation. Through the association, comprising 138 private and public sector partners, the stakeholders continued to discuss the proposals of the Work Groups and furthered their common base of knowledge. To this end, Torino Internazionale commissions research, creates channels of information, documents the development of the actions, and follows the single projects as they are carried out.

Source: Ming Zhan, forthcoming.

9. Monitoring and Evaluating the Plan: What Plan, and for Whom?

Despite the obvious importance of robust techniques and effective practice to follow the implementation processes and measure the actual outcomes of plans, this aspect does not seem to be widely developed and applied in all countries in the region. This chapter will attempt to verify this.

One aspect that may merit attention is the importance for planning reform to devise planning processes capable of leading to results. But again, monitoring and evaluation will only tell part of the story. The main question, in fact, may not be "what kind of planning" or "planning effectiveness", but "planning: for whom?"

With regard to this last point, the concluding part of this chapter is devoted to the South-North interface in connection to the local implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to an experiment launched by the city of Rome with the establishment of a "Millennium Cities Prize" to reward cities engaged in MDG-based strategic and participatory planning focused on the needs of the poor.

With the collection of "Views from the City" that follows, an attempt has been made to offer a fresh perspective on evaluation processes.[1] Here, the question is not how to evaluate the effectiveness of a given plan, but to register the views of informed and active citizens on the direction urban planning is taking in their respective city.

Box 11. Views from the city: Tokyo

….Urban space in contemporary Tokyo can be read as a casual chain of responses to flux: urban planning is not based on a holistic vision of the city, but rather on determining the role for each individual building [intervention guidelines] without a clear notion of how the built ensemble should work. The role of master plans for Tokyo is limited; rather each project that responds to a given state of the city's flux modifies the flow and thus engenders the need for the next project.

Source: Kaijima and Tsukamoto, 2006.

Box 12. Views from the city: Barcelona

The relationship between "urban culture" — everything that happens in the city — and the "urbanistic culture" — that which politically plans and structures the urban territory — has been in bad shape for a long time now. It is precisely this mutual ignorance that occasions most social disruption in cities of a certain size and density.

Urbanistic processes today have become a kind of dictatorial fiat, the principals operators of which come from the private sector. The space of the global city is, first and foremost, a strictly economic space, with the city itself being transformed into a space on the scale of the international market….High-profile urbanistic operations and big pieces of architecture by international names are moved around the empty board, as if in a game of chess, without a second thought for what is local, tangible, unexpected and changing in Barcelona.

Source: Gali, 2006.

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1.   We would be foolish not to realize that most monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are there to justify what is going on, and not to insert a critical outlook on the motives and the results of any given plan.

Box 13. Views from the city: New York

The city's planning efforts have focused on stimulating economic expansion and residential construction. City-sponsored redevelopment projects feature sports venues (a new Yankee Stadium in the Bronx, a new Shea Stadium in Queens and a Frank Gehry-designed basketball arena in central Brooklyn. Despite a widely held consensus among public policy experts that such enterprises do not contribute to economic development or improvement in the surrounding areas, public subsidies to these private ventures are justified as promoting growth. The city has rezoned waterfront areas from manufacturing to residential uses. While this has resulted in much new, primarily high-end housing, it has also stimulated speculative purchases of land, adding to the issue of price inflation. Breaking with past administrations ' focus on Manhattan, the Bloomberg regime has large projects on the drawing board, in all five boroughs. Many of these will add important public amenities; however, since the policy is to capture private investment to pay for public uses, they typically involve height and density bonuses for developers and various tax subsidies as a quid pro quo....

Source: Fainstein, 2006.

Box 14. Views from the city: Berlin

Since 1994, population figures have been steadily declining, and today, an entire suburban belt is economically dependent on Berlin. Meanwhile, in the city itself, more than 100,000 apartments stand empty...The attempts at regenerating the city's urban infrastructure have largely been successful and, for the most part, the effects of war and partition have been overcome, but there is a painful lack of resources when it comes to maintaining the city's libraries, schools, theatres and universities. Berlin is a poor, economically weak city that is terrifically cheap to live in....

What Berlin teaches architects and urban planners is, above all, humility. The building and planning frenzy of the 1990s showed that architecture cannot be expected to counteract the provisional and temporary nature of this city, nor relieve its social frailty. What it can do, however, is to continue to create stages and project images. Good metropolitan architecture has much in common with good stage design — a fact more apparent in Berlin than anywhere else in the world....

Source: Binsky, 2006.

The question of "planning for whom" has been addressed recently by the city of Rome, in connection to its role as chair of the committee of the United Cities and Local Governments organization devoted to the local implementation of the MDGs. In partnership with UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) and with the United Nations' Millennium Campaign, the city established a Millennium Cities Prize with the aim of rewarding local efforts in the preparation and implementation of MDG-based strategic plans centre on the needs and participation of the urban poor.

10. Planning Education

Unquestionably, a strong and understandable tendency on the part of planning education institutions in the North, as well as worldwide, is to provide a market for their graduates. This tends to produce young professionals armed with good technical and practical skills but also with limited interdisciplinary training, high margins of employment flexibility, modest career expectations and a very low propensity to a critical analysis of the environment they are meant to work in, as well as the factors that produce it. Again, the question arises: planning for whom?

But let us give the floor to the experts. The Association of European Planning Schools (AESOP), recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary. Judging from David Massey's editorial in a recent issue of *Town Planning Review*,[1] it has been a good twenty years. Inspired by the annual conferences of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, AESOP's success can be measured by the fact that its congresses now attract planners from the rest of the world. AESOP's current president, Peter Ache, proudly notes that the 2007 Naples congress saw the attendance of nine presidents from its sister organizations.[2]

Massey identifies three "threads" that accompanied the European planning education community during this period: first, the "*growing strength of the social science intake of staff in planning schools over against those trained and practiced in the more traditional design professions*"; secondly, "*a desire for the recognition of the separate academic identity of "planning" and hence of the "planning school" over against the approach of offering a specialist planning option in a related discipline; and, thirdly, "a reaching out to engage with other national and academic planning cultures beyond interests of the long-established personal membership and more professionally identified associations*".

But beyond this, what is the nature of the discipline AESOP members teach? Here, paraphrasing would do a disservice to a neat chunk of text that AESOP provided to those willing to explore its web site (see Box 15). What is striking about this text is its clarity and simplicity. Perhaps, this is inspired by the early gestation years, when founding members from all over Europe,[3] after giving up on the dream of a multi-lingual environment, had a very hard time understanding each other's English — not to mention decoding national terminologies and planning cultures.

Box 15. AESOP on "what is planning"?

The question "What is planning?" is easier to raise than to answer. With a slight exaggeration it could be said that there are as many definitions as there are planners. Still the question is relevant, not least due to the fact that the word "planning" sometimes is used in a context which gives rise to negative associations.

The challenge for planning lies in the fact that various interests and expectations for the future often hold contradiction and conflict. A professional approach, combining sensitivity and analytical and strategic skills, is required to handle the political, social, environmental and economic issues at stake.

In view of these underlying conflicts of interest, AESOP recognises three aspects which must be given priority in planning and planning education: knowledge, analytical and interactive methods, and ethics.

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1. Massey, 2007.
2. Ache, 2007.
3. Healey, 2007.

Knowledge relates to the subjects that are dealt with in planning, i.e. urban and regional development, housing, social welfare, transportation and other types of infrastructure provision.

Analytical and interactive methods include the ability to make observations, define problems and apply suitable methods for analysing and solving the problems defined. The role of planning is ultimately to formulate plans that meet the economic, environmental, social and physical needs of society. The task is also to suggest strategies needed to implement these plans. This work must be carried out with recognition of conflicts in interest. Skills in conflict handling, negotiations and mediation are therefore of vital importance.

Ethics are an essential part of planning as suggested solutions should promote important values such as equity, social justice, efficiency and possibilities for the affected interest groups and the public to participate in the process preceding decision making.

Planning is an interdisciplinary activity. AESOP has members with different professional backgrounds, for example architecture, civil engineering, social sciences, land surveying and law. It also holds true that approaches to planning vary somewhat within Europe as well as in other parts of the world. These differences relate to culture, traditions, attitudes, political decisions and the economic situation in the countries. A key task for AESOP is to facilitate a dialogue among planners with different backgrounds and perspectives.

Challenges for the 21st century

Today we can see an increasing enthusiasm for planning. It is becoming more and more obvious that development within different fields of society are closely interrelated. In order to achieve efficient solutions, development of transportation systems, economic development and housing and services must be co-ordinated. Development through particular projects has proven to be problematic. A satisfying result can normally not be achieved without a more holistic approach and a strategy which recognises interrelations and total effects in a long term perspective. This in turn leads to the need for spatial co-ordination.

Yet another reason for the increased interest in planning lies in partial market failure. The 1980s proved that the market often cannot provide effective solutions to various needs of infrastructure and other common services. The shortcomings of the market are also reflected in demands for planning in order to establish a stable framework for decision making in urban and regional development.

Besides these arguments for planning we observe changes in society that require planning and the development of new approaches and methods. In the AESOP statement The State of Planning in Europe four key tendencies with respect to urban and regional change are identified. These changes call for rethinking and the development of planning. The challenge for planning and planners lies in the development of effective analytical tools and methods for addressing the issues in an effective way. The issues are:

the impact of both the globalising economy and the policies of the EU the search for ways of managing our economic and social activities which also can reach the objectives of: environmental sustainability the social consequences of high levels of unemployment, increasing social inequalities, and migration across Europe the search for ways of reducing public expenditure and developing less bureaucratic and more collaborative ways of undertaking the work of urban governance to promote continuous professional development

How is Planning intended in Europe and by AESOP?

In the former communist countries in East Europe the word "planning" was used by the regimes as a means for fulfilling politically decided goals for development in various sectors of society.

In many of the Western countries, "planning" previously was seen as an activity whereby the state, in a centralised and insensitive manner provided housing, infrastructure, work places, culture and social services to the citizens in the country.

To AESOP the word "planning" has a different meaning. To us planning is a tool to promote and manage change with a spatial approach. It is also a tool for the preservation of the environment and our cultural heritage. The core of this task is to conduct planning activities in such a way that society benefits and that economic, environmental, social and other goals are met.

There is a strong impression that planning in the countries of the North, with its focus on competition and localized wealth creation, has become, even more than even before, inward-looking. Indeed, the "global city" so celebrated in literature over the past few years has been interpreted as the supreme model of success that all — or at least those with a chance to do so — should aspire to. However, there is another "global city", which is simply the society of the three-billion or so urban dwellers that share very similar aspirations. The EU's concept of "cohesion" should also be applied to this entity, in the sense that if performance differentials between cities are allowed to grow too much apart, all are bound to suffer. Witness, for example, the outsourcing of jobs and production to cities that can offer the workforce of a semi-desperate citizenry, or the growing influx of unskilled migrants to the richer urban destinations in the North.

One wonders, therefore, whether urban planning education in the North[4] should grow out of its shell and develop a permanent and substantive interest in the problems and issues of cities and metropolitan regions, large and small, in the South. The demand is definitely there, as shown, for example, by the growing interest — and feeling of solidarity — shown by students of the built environment for the phenomenon of slum and squatter settlements. This demand, however, is not matched by a similar impulse from academics, most of whom see internationalization as a means to expand their range of knowledge, collect cultural memorabilia, or simply access interesting consultancies and professional jobs in more exotic environments.

There is another reason for globalizing the planners' attention. Even in the richest cities of the North we see today the explosion of enormous contradictions between the income and living conditions of a small number of people — who steadily become wealthier — and the rest of the citizenry, which finds it ever harder to improve their social condition. Access to affordable and conveniently located housing is becoming a severe problem; the reach for cheaper housing in increasingly remote locations creates longer and longer commuting distances; also as a result of privatization, services become more expensive; the amount of work hours needed to generate a decent income increases; inflation is rampant; unemployment generally on the rise. Therefore, the question is no more that of dispensing needed know-how, but to seek together for alternative strategies and solutions to a state of things that is spreading more and more across the South-North divide.

One opportunity, or occasion for doing so is the MDGs. So far, these[5] have been seen solely as a concern of the South — with the North, of course, involved in terms of providing the adequate financial and technical assistance required to attain them. And in fact, their very architecture has been conveniently split in two, with the poor countries to work on poverty, and the rich ones on trade and aid reform — at the condition, of course, that governance in the South improves.

But the considerations made above point in a different direction. We have concluded that planning challenges and trends are not terribly different if we compare the countries and cities that compose the rich urban North. But what if qualitative planning challenges and strategies happened to be basically the same in the Global City, save, of course, for the *distribution* of problems and challenges? If so, it may be very interesting to imagine an involvement of planning education for the achievement of the Global Millennium City — that

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4. Garau, 2008.
5. Garau et al, 2005.

is, a virtual city where all co-operate for the attainment of the goals subscribed to by the international community — reduction of poverty, hunger, access to basic services, decent housing, health and education, achievement of gender equality — with the initial impulse provided by those, like designers, planners, urbanists, who love the city for what it is, and even more for what it could be.

11. Conclusions

When I started this investigation, I obviously did not know what the tone of its conclusions, if any, would be. I did not know if I would espouse the meditative and guarded tone of the 2009 Global Report's provisional title, *revisiting the role of urban planning*, or if I would conclude with the inescapable demise of the object of our desires, or if I would, instead, wind up with a sense of confidence, if not in planning the future, in the future of planning.

It appears that this work led me towards the third choice. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that urban planning, far from fossilizing into a worldly version of the creationist deity that is rumored to have given itself the main purpose of remaining a perfect, inscrutable and all-powerful entity, has embraced evolutionism and accordingly decided to evolve in order to survive. In other words, it has not waited for this long-awaited Global Report to revisit itself. This happened despite the fact that in this process, and particularly during what many remember as the Dark Age Behind[1] of the 1980s and 1990s, planning has been recurrently and authoritatively left for dead.

As long as the land disputes and land uses of the future shall not be decided with the use of force and ingenious military means, or with stones and clubs. as some environmentalists fear, planning will have an indispensable role to play precisely as a civilized means of deciding what goes where. Recent events detected in a variety of countries of the North tell us that planning is now adding to these concerns two important elements: the 'who', and the 'when'. The evolution from regulatory planning to development-led planning is virtually complete. This is an important transition, and an ambitious one — and certainly, a move typical of one who is thinking about the future, rather than at an unrecoverable decline into death and oblivion. So, planning is dead — long live planning.

What kind of planning it will be in terms of whose interests it will serve, it will be for us all to decide. In particular, one open question is which sides it will end up taking, once immersed in the deceivingly amorphous stakeholders' jungle and confronted with choices. Some argue that "development", intended as an action that turns a piece of land into something more valuable and hopefully more useful, is in itself what makes cities what they are. Others view "development" as a process that makes us happier and more responsible presences on the scene of the urban miracle. Perhaps the choice between these views will tell us if, in addition to discussing the future of planning, we will be in a position to plan our future.

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1. This is not the title of a new book. It is simply a spontaneous pun after Jane Jacobs's *Dark Age Ahead.*

Epilogue

Warning: readers who are satisfied with the present state of things with regard to cities and city planning in the North are strongly advised not to read the pages that follow. They will find nothing of comfort, nor anything to confirm their presently held views.

Cities of Tomorrow's 73 pages of references is only one of the reasons for considering Hall's opus a "book of books",[1] i.e. the most erudite and perspicacious, if not the most comprehensive, piece of work to date on the history of modern urban planning in the developed countries. Therefore, it is proper to look for whatever final considerations may be traced in Hall on the purpose and challenges of urban planning today.

The book has no explicit concluding part. However, it can be assumed that there was a logic in naming *Cities of Tomorrow's* last chapter "The City of the Permanent Underclass". Here is where the author leaves us, most probably with an implicit exhortation to "take it from there", as it were.

The last section of this concluding chapter is titled "Fifteen years later: The Attack on Social Exclusion". Here is how this section, and the book itself, draws to an end in its 468th and final page:

> *".....The accumulated evidence* [of the 2001 UK Cabinet report on social mobility in UK]*, not just from Britain but across the world, suggested that social mobility had changed very little during the twentieth century: the unstated implication was that it might change very little in the twenty-first.*

> *"In this great debate, where was planning? In the century just passed, despite its numerous errors and aberrations, city planning helped millions of relatively poor and decent people to live far better and more dignified lives than they otherwise might; for this it should be much praised in retrospect, and supported for the future. In the process, society has changed shape: it is no longer a pyramid, with few at the top and many at the bottom, but it has become rather like an old-fashioned spinning-top, with a big bulge in the middle. The problem is no longer the first Fabians posed a hundred years ago* [sic]*, Why are the many Poor? But rather Why are the few Poor? Social progress — which is no myth — has left behind, as stubbornly evident as ever, a problem of what the Victorians and their American equivalents called the vicious and degenerate and semi-criminal classes, and which the more enlightened (or mealy-mouthed) late twentieth century calls the disadvantaged and the underprivileged. Planning, and the whole twentieth-century apparatus of the welfare state, has failed to dislodge it, or even satisfactorily to explain it; as then, so now, some blame the system, others original sin.*

> *"There is this small comfort: though it is beyond precise social measurement, the locus of the problem has shifted. It is, by definition, the problem of the bottom of the social heap. A hundred years ago, contemporaries located it amongst the most desperate of those who had been driven into the slums of the giant city, and who had been least successful there in finding a foothold on the socio-economic ladder. A century later, they find it among the same groups. Meanwhile, countless numbers of the great-grandchildren of that same group have climbed out of the underclass.*

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1.   Hall, 2002.

Doubtless, numberless progeny of the second will prove to do the same. The abiding problem is why, despite all the massive intervening economic and social improvement, the underclass should appear so steadily to recruit new members to replace those lost to it. To that question, research as yet provides no answer. Here this story ended in 1988; here it still ends."

Thus Hall. In a nutshell, this "problem" can be summarized as follows: despite everything, in our brave new cities *many continue to be left behind.*

But the problem has a problem: the way it is formulated. First, the very concept that "*many continue to be left behind*" is the reflection of an optimistic view, linked to what our forefathers used to call "progress": things are generally very good, despite everything; the world's capacity to create wealth has increased enormously and steadily; disparities of wealth are evident, but they are an inevitable aspect of growth; the irresistible march towards development is definitely going in the right direction — witness China and India, for example, but also Portugal and Ireland. Comforted by this view, the "*many continue to be left behind*" conundrum becomes no more than an oddity, admittedly of interest to the most perceptive thinkers and analysts, but of negligible importance in the general state of things. The very expression is indicative. Most people in cities *progress*, others stay behind — either because they walk more slowly, or because they refuse to join. So, there is no question as to the direction and pace of the march: unfortunate events and related episodes such as massive downsizing, dramatic layoffs, subprime mortgage crises, urban riots, racial discrimination, skyrocketing housing costs, are simply cyclical occurrences, timed red lights on the chosen itinerary. The itinerary is straight, it has no alternative routes and it points at a fixed destination.

Secondly, this kind of "problem formulation" assumes that neo-liberal development may leave occasional victims on its path — unintentionally, of course — but that it basically *harms no one.* And why should it, since it produces so much in terms of modernization and wealth creation world wide?

Unfortunately, this is not the case. Baeten and Oudeampsen, for example,[2] describe the impact of urban renewal projects in what once were the temples of European city planning: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Copenhagen. Here we find stories that are in substance, if not in style, the same as the ones we lament in the cities of the South: low-income and/or vulnerable long-time residents of centrally-located districts are forced out of their homes and their communities because the land they insist on is far more useful for other purposes, while decreasing incomes and rising prices prevent them from finding suitable accommodation in the city. To those who still gloat in the distinction between developed and developing — for example in the North being the depository of wise and humane forms of governance — this is a sad discovery indeed. *De Te Ipso Fabula Narratur.* The doctors, and the medicine — as well as the operating table — are likely to be the same everywhere in this globalized world of ours.

Hall seems to castigate planning and planners for doing nothing about the "problem". But if one looks at it from the perspective of this paper's main conclusions, things can be viewed in a completely different way. Institutional urban planning in the North, for all practical purposes, has espoused neo-liberal thinking and the neo-liberal agenda. Regardless of the variety of dispositions that may have accompanied this shift (enthusiasm, indifference, opportunism, or simply a grudging sense of inevitability), urban planning in the North has

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2.　In BAVO, 2007.

survived, and indeed found a new life in some cases (witness the Eastern Europe experience), precisely because it has chosen to take the punch, and to roll with it. So, urban planning is dead: long live urban planning. But the new king, even assuming he had the resources to alleviate the sufferings of his less fortunate subjects, is of a different disposition altogether. Accordingly, it would be very hard to think of "new planning" as being able to do something of consequence about "the problem".

On the other hand, and given the situation, the reward for rolling with the punch is considerable. Urban planning, once freed from its asphyxiating mantle of long-term decision making, arbitrariness, unreasonable rigidity and regulatory obsession, is given a clear, albeit limited, range of action. Municipal and metropolitan-body planners are encouraged to join other development actors in public-private partnership projects. Projects aimed at improving the liveability of problem neighbourhoods not targeted for urban renewal (street lights, sports and recreational facilities, facilities for education, health and social support) are welcome and indeed encouraged, within the limits of the decreasing reach of municipal budgets. Land use plans are also necessary, if only to guarantee what the current literature defines as *certainties* in the urban development business. Legislation inventing new kinds of plans packed with environmental safeguards and inclusiveness clauses provide for professional jobs and consultancies, as long as they do not interfere with the real decision making processes. And in addition, rewards are there for the taking for planners willing to pay more attention to the new mantras of the urban development imperative, such as creativity, competition, public-private partnership, privatization, entrepreneurship. But there is no such thing as a free lunch (for those who need one, that is), and this is the reason for the virtual disappearance of social housing from the planning agenda. Basically, planners are requested to do their job when asked to and not to interfere with the main agenda — one that, incidentally, they are not equipped to meddle with in the first place.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, the overall Global Report 2009 exercise aims at identifying urban planning's role world wide, based on evidence drawn from regional and sectoral reports. This report's view is that there is no such a thing today as a *North American* strand of urban planning, a *Western European* one, an *Eastern European* one, or an *Oceanian* one. In all regions of the North, there are only different styles of interpretation, if you will, of a same paradigm. And this model is that urban planning must serve cities in their national, regional and worldwide competition to retain and attract resources and investment.

Accordingly, it makes little sense to characterize urban planning configurations in individual countries through, for example, institutional and legislative nuances. It is of scarce interest to find that in "Country A" planning is the entire responsibilities of municipalities, and that in "Country B" an important role is played, on the contrary, by regions and/or provinces. What really matters, given the globalization and homogenization of the neo-liberal brand of urban planning, is where alternative approaches to the global urban planning model can be found, and in particular, where, and why, and how. Unfortunately, a literature-based investigation in this area would not yield much except the unverified information that is often the basis for inconsequential box narratives. Much more in depth work needs to be done in this area, and in fact this seems to be an important and very legitimate role for the planning profession, for planning research and for planning education.

Caution should also be exercised about the ability of new actors to address urban issues that urbanists and planners do not have the power, the authority, or the will to address. In a

supremely elegant and scholarly article, Banerjee[3] argues that it is futile to expect that fairness, justice, sustainability can be accomplished, as if by magic, by that mysterious and ill-defined entity called "civil society". The reason for this is that civic groups and civic action can coalesce about parochial and self-serving objectives as easily, and even more easily at that, than on what used to be called "the public interest". For that, it would be wise to rely on institutions that face the hurdle of the electoral process.

Banerjee concludes his article with an appeal to "*the conscience of planning*". This brings about a dilemma: can planners appease their conscience by serving the government (or the master) of the day, or is there a higher order of principles that they should adhere to? Recent efforts in this realm, such as the New Charter of Athens[4] or the American Planning Association's *Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability*,[5] of European and North American inspiration respectively, together with the "Reinventing Planning" document[6] emerged at the 2006 World Urban Forum would seem to point in the second direction. Unfortunately, they are all affected by the blurring handicap of political correctness: they welcome all actors, pursue all reasonable objectives, nor they question any of the global forces that affect urbanization and urban development today. Perhaps an honest and independent approach to the quest for a conscience may imply a more engaging and less harmonious course.

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3.   Banerjee, 2007
4.   European Council of Town Planners, 1998.
5.   APA, 2000.
6.   Farmer et al, 2006.

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