27 Innovation in 'Urbanism' Thinking: Spectrum and Limits

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Abstract

Over the past 20 years, changes in urban planning and its translation into new instruments for urban projects and management have been observed in numerous cities throughout the world. The approaches resulting from this transformation process are often labelled 'innovative'. It could be assumed that the character of this innovation derives from a critical stance on previous, more traditional approaches to urban problems. However, over and above the dilemma of differentiating between traditional and new, which has played a constant role in the transformation in urban planning, since the late 20th century innovation has appeared to be adjusting to a need to link heterogeneous players, diverse scales, and multiple dimensions. This contribution examines the main perspectives associated with these issues, reviewing some of the topics that have arisen as problems in urban planning over the past decade. It should be noted that these reflections do not constitute a presentation of the state of the art, but instead represent operative reflections that emerged within the framework of an international comparative research project, in which self-proclaimed 'innovative and sustainable' urban interventions were analysed in different countries. This international comparison has made it possible to identify major similarities and differences between the various interventions and their contexts and prompted many of the questions on which this paper is based.

Keywords: Innovative urban projects; sustainable urban development; decision-making; history of urbanism; urban planning; habitat.

27.1   Introduction

Over the past 20 years, changes in urban planning and its translation into new instruments for urban projects and management have been observed in numerous cities throughout the world. The approaches resulting from this transformation process are often labelled 'innovative', 'strategic planning', or 'advocacy planning' and feature prominently in Europe and Latin America, along with 'communicative planning', the 'urban project' approach, and 'problem-centred planning' or the Local Agenda 21 strategies that have been drawn up throughout the world since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, also known as the Earth Summit.

It could be assumed that the character of this innovation derives from a critical stance on previous, more traditional approaches to urban problems. However, over and above the dilemma of differentiating between traditional and new, which has played a constant role in the transformation in urban planning, since the late 20th century innovation has appeared to be adjusting to a need to link heterogeneous players, diverse scales, and multiple dimensions. More broadly, while reworking ways in which to imagine the city and act accordingly, innovation sets us on a meandering path of ideas and off in shifting directions.

Although various writers have analysed changes in urban planning in terms of paradigm shifts, Taylor (2005) warns of the risks of applying this concept of Kuhn's (1962) to urban planning. On the one hand, it is not possible to identify scientific changes in a field which has difficulty gaining recognition as scientific in the strict sense and, on the other hand, the notion of 'paradigm shifts' lends credence to development in which "a whole way of perceiving and explaining some aspect of the world is overthrown and replaced by a new theoretical perspective" (p 157). Furthermore, although relevant changes can be identified in urban planning theories, it is not possible to assert that new theories have definitively and unanimously replaced previous ones; rather, the different approaches coexist in time (Taylor 2005). In more practical terms, Portas (2003) puts forward the view that, even though the planning crisis has been diagnosed for two or three decades, throughout this period, the formal or legal system based on the hegemony of structuring plans has not undergone major change in most European cities. These partial or global territorial plans have retained both their technical or conceptual characteristics and their implementation methods and processes. Peter Hall

has a similar opinion but adopts an explanatory perspective, stating that ideas as "products of human intelligence derive from others, branch out, fuse, lie dormant or awakened in exceedingly complex ways, which seldom permit of any neat linear description" (Hall 2002, p 5). Indeed, this complex web of continuity and rupture is woven from accumulated experience and epistemological transformations and is relative to changing contexts behind the different ways of thinking and acting. Within this framework, when questions are asked about who does and/or should change cities, on what scales interventions should be made, and how the capacities, tools, and values of experts and non-experts are defined, the answers begin to display multiple nuances.

Despite these warnings, a distinction can be made between the knowledge and experimentation of the interwar period, the experience gained in the aftermath of reconstruction after the Second World War, when what was initially urbanism became urban planning in the strict sense, and the profound crisis of the 1970s that opened up new directions. And although it appeared that, during a historic moment of great crisis in planning, the plan–project, technician–resident, and global–local oppositions could prevail, these polarities gradually diminished towards the close of the 20th century as a result of increasing complexity.

This contribution examines the main perspectives associated with these issues, reviewing some of the topics that have arisen as problems in urban planning over the past decade. It should be noted that these reflections do not constitute a presentation of the state of the art, but instead represent operative reflections that emerged within the framework of an international comparative research project[2], in which self-proclaimed 'innovative and sustainable' urban interventions are analysed in different countries. This international comparison has made it possible to identify major similarities and differences between the various interventions and their contexts and prompted many of the questions on which this paper is based. The two main questions that arise here concern the themes that emerged as problems in the programmes and projects analysed, and the ways in which ideas regarding the city and urbanism were created and disseminated at the different latitudes.

Responding to these questions presented considerable difficulties. First, although speaking of global development in any field raises complex issues, it is possible to identify broad international trends in urbanism. Referring to the capitalist world, for example, Ward (2002) shows that there has been a common international discourse in urban planning, but with significant vari-

ations in emphasis.[3] Therefore, the reconstruction and understanding of both the original concepts and the nature of the translations in different and particular contexts would appear to be a fundamental requirement.[4] The second difficulty, which is typical of any historical review, is that of periodicity. As mentioned above, the examination of the transformations in urbanism does not produce a precise linear chronology: each context reveals specific temporalities.

These dilemmas generate two clusters of issues. On the one hand, there is a need to revisit the theories, key authors, and experiences to demonstrate what was at stake in the various historical scenarios. At the same time, it is important to understand how ways of thinking and acting in urbanism were 'translated' in different geographical areas. As Pierre Bourdieu (2002) says, ideas travel without their context, which is why they can be read and interpreted in the light of the different realities in which they are received. On the other hand, consideration should also be given to the hazy temporalities of emerging, appearing, and disappearing ideas, which are reformulated with explicit or subjacent logics that are not always easy to grasp.

From this point of view, the present text makes no claim to exhaustiveness and presents a rough interpretative panorama of the urban planning debate while also offering a tool for positioning the above-mentioned research project in this area. It should be mentioned that many of the interpretations put forth here are owed to Taylor (2005), who succeeded in presenting a thought-provoking overview of the dilemmas in the field of urban planning theory.

To illustrate the concerns addressed in the present article, a differentiation shall be made between three problem-related moments in time. The next section on urbanism as a modern project offers a review of some of the dilemmas that were dealt with in the first decades of the 20th century and also after the Second World War, when attempts were made to establish urban planning as a field capable of interrelating technical, political, and social dimensions. These principles were challenged in the climate of 'loss of certitude' characteristic of the post-1960s period. In this context, reference will be made to changes related to the procedures of an urbanism conceived both in terms of modern policy and in terms of new actors, tools, and themes.

27.2 Urbanism as a modern project

27.2.1 Urbanism and urban planning

The conditions for the emergence of a new field of knowledge and practices concerning the city have been amply treated by various authors. On the one hand, at the level of words and their scope, the term "urbanism", coined by Cerdá in 1867, was examined and taken up by the *Société française des urbanistes* founded in 1911, and recovered by the English-speaking world with its traditional connotation of urbanity. This association of urbanism with urbanity, in the sense of 'lifestyles', appeared for the first time in the 1930s (Wirth 1938). And while town planning, city planning, and urban planning were the commonly used terms in English, it is not by chance that at the end of the 1980s, 'new urbanism' was adopted, thanks to North American thinking, as a concept evolving towards a theoretical and political critique of the city and urban planning (Ward 2002). This term was established by those who suggested a return to the norms and forms of urban art, of the 'made in USA' civic art of the early 20th century, in the sense of the tradition of urban design or even urban landscape. Therefore, new urbanism describes an architectural practice linked to the 'communitarian' urban composition (Katz 1994), through more liveable towns and neighbourhoods, but also through a search for quality in design, which had been watered down by the abstraction of the tools of urban planning after the Second World War.

Above and beyond recovering terminology and the recent attempts to rethink the form of the city, urbanism was a field of knowledge with practices based on various assumptions. First of all, a concept of the Enlightenment – the relationship between space and society – had enabled the city to become an increasingly prominent object of study and action during the 19th century.[5] Insofar as it was supposed that the city could be the object of scientific diagnosis and technical procedures carried out by specialists, one also imagined urbanism as a field of operation restricted to those familiar with and able to act on such bases. The profile of the specialist, the urban planner – in the metaphoric sense of the 'doctor of the agglomeration' or the 'orchestra conductor' – was that of a person who provided rational assessments and advice to politicians and acted as an educator for society. The scale of intervention of these 'plans' based on a diagnosis that took into account the 'laws' governing growth, intervention 'projects' that qualified space, and 'regulations' that ordered private activity and growth varied, even though the establishment of town councils provided a significant step towards their implementation. The pro-urbanism movement

in the interwar period initiated a series of outreach activities that helped to legitimise a field with weak epistemological foundations.

How then was the modern city conceived, starting from this disciplinary project? Centrally, as pointed out by Bernardo Secchi (1989), urbanism attempted to use new tools in order to deal with the problems stemming from the threefold metropolitan expansion of traditional cities growing outward (*extra-muros* growth), inward (densification that should dovetail with integration), and towards the future (through the formulation of projects). Within this framework, the mission of the plan document was to balance the space and function of a city that had been profoundly altered by the industrial revolution. Based on the enormous trust bestowed on scientific positivism, the multiple dimensions of the modern plan were examined as an 'urban file', in analogy to a patient file. 'Urbanistic evolution' studies were seen as components of the diagnosis whose aim it was to identify the laws governing the growth of cities; these laws were viewed as inputs for the formulation of renovation proposals.

As Novick (2006) explains, the concept of urban planning, along with the field of knowledge and practices it attempted to delimit, was not exempt from reinterpretation and ambiguity.[6] Giving an explanation of the word 'urbanism' itself, especially in a series of texts and pamphlets entitled 'What is Urbanism?' published in the 1920s and 1930s, was one of the strategies used to standardise terminology, concepts, methods, and tools, and it legitimised the new field of knowledge. Indeed, the arguments and iconography form part of outreach and communication strategies in line with the programmed objectives of a movement that hoped to achieve widespread consensus regarding the methodologies of a discipline established on a weak conceptual basis and the vague concerns of the urban planner's brief.

Neither the natural sciences nor the social sciences that were being developed in the 1920s and 1930s were able to provide sufficiently solid epistemological references to link the dimensions of science, art, and technique that are present in the definition of urbanism, into a relationship. In a desire to define the urban planner's field of action, an attempt was made to ground diagnosis in an articulation of the advances in statistics, human geography, and scientific methodology. However, it can be perceived that urbanism appeared not only as a solution to the social and spatial problems of the modern city but also as an outlook that redefined and created problems in order to address them, starting from the available solutions. In the first few decades of the 20th

century, alongside the implementation of a new written and graphic language, a new agenda (a problematic territory) was created that mediated between the 'imbalances of the city' (new demographic, social, economic, and technical considerations), the diagnoses that made it possible to identify them, and the 'formulation of answers' (tools and manners of management and intervention) (Novick 2006).

To understand the urban planning movement, it is important to note that in most urbanised nations, since the 1920s, and especially since the 1950s, planning has become a craft acquired through formal education at universities and polytechnics, and a substantial theoretical corpus has been built up over time. While some proponents of this theory strive to understand the practical techniques and methodologies that planners will always need, a number of planners seek to understand the very nature of the activity they practise (Hall 2002; Taylor 2005). While the former engaged in theories of planning, the latter will pursue theories in planning (Faludi 1973).

With regard to this debate, one must consider that as a form of social action directed at shaping the physical environment, urban planning is impelled by certain moral, political, and aesthetic values. This implies that the purposes or aims that drive urban planning entail studying the values that underpin urbanism, that is, a normative theory of what constitutes the ideal urban environment that urban planning should try to achieve. Normative theories should therefore refer to both the kinds of environment that town planning is seeking to create – substantive theories – and to those theories that deal with how to approach urban planning as a practical activity, that is, procedural theories. At the same time, one must also consider that procedural theories cannot be dissociated from more substance-based theories, as behind urban practices there are players representing values of what is considered urban. Hence, any decision-making process in urbanism, any choice of what is seen as the most appropriate alternative action, is above all a value-based consideration (Taylor 2005). In addition to this affirmation, the history of urbanism reveals a growing gap between theory and practice in most countries around the world.

In some ways, and returning to Novick's analysis, it is possible to see the advances of urbanism as constellations where technical ideas interlink with professional methods of action and forms of state regulation and intervention. In turn, these influence technical, political, and social agendas, as they are not categories but rather historically developed concepts that have been redefined over time and in relation to different realities. However, these crafts

of urbanism have been based on the articulation of knowledge – much broader than theories as it also refers to systematised experience – and practices (Claude 2006). The term was therefore initially put forward to refer to problems inherent in industrial cities evolving along an imaginary line stretching from tradition to modernity. After the 1960s, which marked the end of centralised planning, urban planning was rejected, as it was identified with a technocratic product that failed to factor in the processes of 'urbanisation'.

27.2.2   Modernisation, industrialisation, urbanisation

Historically, the field of urbanism is marked by two great moments in the period following the Second World War. The first is qualified by the equation between 'modernisation', 'industrialisation', and 'urbanisation', characterised by faith in the rationality of plans. The second is defined by the belief that, in the form of trend models, a scientific reference had been found for the discipline.

Some theorists examine different prevailing concepts of the nature of urban planning as a discipline, or, in other words, the different views of what kind of activity urban planning is or should be. A historical overview shows that for almost 20 years following the Second World War – a period described as the Golden Age – urban planning theory and practice in most Western European countries was dominated by the view that urban planning was an exercise in the physical design of an entire town or at least part of it.[7]

This approach was underpinned by physical determinism – the idea that the physical form of buildings and the environment could affect or determine social and economic life. Consequently, urban planning at the city or regional levels was frequently described as physical planning as opposed to social and economic planning. It was therefore assumed that the activity was carried out primarily by architects. Indeed, town planning was deemed an extension of architecture, on a larger scale of the physical design, and generally known as comprehensive planning. Based on this assumption, urban designers' primary task was the production of master plans for urban forms, which had to be as detailed as possible in order to guide and control the future development of an ideal city.

In the early 1960s, this perspective was replaced by system planning – a vision of towns as systems of interrelated activities and places in a constant state of flux. On the one hand, systems theory originated in the highly techni-

cal fields of cybernetics, where the modelling of systemic relationships using statistical and mathematical techniques was considered necessary to control systems, and also had a strong impact on other disciplines, such as geography. On the other hand, systems theory was inspired by ecological thinking, describing natural phenomena as an 'ecosystem' (McLoughlin 1969). Despite Taylor's reservations mentioned above, a paradigm shift can thus clearly be observed between the 1950s and 1960s.

While town planning was seen primarily as a craft and a technical practice until the 1950s, by the end of the 1960s most theorists considered that it should be seen as a science in its own right (Hall 2002; Taylor 2005). This approach led to the criticism that urban planners, focused on the design of ideal utopian settlements, lacked an adequate understanding of urban phenomena, particularly as far as social and economic dynamics were concerned. At the same time, urban systems theory was driven by wider technological and sociological factors, which were applied to analyse interrelated urban phenomena.[8]

Urban planning became a matter not only for engineers and geographers but also for social scientists and economists. In practice, systems planners were involved in two different kinds of activities: as social scientists, they observed and analysed reality, and as designers, they acted on reality in order to bring about change and deal with other professionals, politicians, and the general public.

However, both were trained to analyse and understand not only how cities functioned spatially but also how they were linked to their regions in economic and social terms, a factor which introduced the idea of regional planning. In this approach, cities remain subordinate to regions.[9] At the same time, it was felt that urban planners had to be capable of evaluating the probable effects of any development proposal. Therefore, master plans as an end-state of an ideal urban development were questioned. Urban systems theories, emphasising activities, dynamics, and change, called for more flexible and evolving plans, envisaged as 'trajectories' (McLoughlin 1969) and enabling an ongoing process of monitoring, analysis, and intervention in fluid situations. These plans were intended to be strategic documents from the economic, social, and physical perspectives.

Planning schemes were formulated based on the assumption that scientific methods and forecast models were capable of providing reliable references for the political decisions that drove operations on the territory. Their input

consisted of explanatory laws on urban development, as well as the study of structural factors, functional relationships, and the ways of organising activities in space. Within this context, centralised state decisions concerning territory and the need for expert technicians who were capable of establishing diagnoses and taking action helped to promote the establishment of national planning bodies.

Nevertheless, the concept of town planning as physical design has not been entirely discredited. Although it has been marginalised for over 20 years, in practice the physical form and aesthetic has remained significant at the level of local planning that has been applied in more immediate interventions, while at the more strategic and long-term level urban planning has been driven by a systems view.

As a synthesis, starting from the aspects presented above, which are rooted in the 19th century, urbanism developed as a field of knowledge and set of practices that viewed the city as an object of study, intervention, and control. This was under the responsibility of specialists capable of streamlining intervention as well as that of state oversight bodies that possessed the competencies to transform not only space but also society, through policies, plans, and projects. After the 1960s, however, these views came up against their limits. From different vantage points, the following limitations became clear: first, those of a field not considered strictly scientific and which claimed validity on the basis of a multitude of sometimes contradictory disciplines and arguments; second, those of technicians claiming to take on a neutral role in their actions; third, those of a society whose knowledge about its habitat was not factored into decision-making processes; and finally, those of a state that had to reconcile its actions with the logic of the market. The critical climate of the 1960s developed in opposition to these limitations.

27.2.3   Loss of certainty

Towards the late 1960s, the changing trends that characterised the new era of the post-industrial city fundamentally challenged the planning ideas characteristic of the post-war boom years. Little by little, new visions of solutions for the city developed, while its problems and views on them were changing. Both urbanism and the scientific view of the environment as a system, coupled with a rational process view of planning,[10] were part of the European 'modernist' optimism of the 1960s regarding the use of science and reason (Hall 2002; Rabinovich 2002; Taylor 2005). Nevertheless, based on a series

of theoretical and empirical studies, strong criticism arose at the end of the decade against the comprehensive planning and systems planning approaches of the Golden Age, both of which ignored political reality.[11]

An analysis of American cities revealed that comprehensive planning and systems planning had done nothing to improve the condition of cities, especially the living conditions of poor inner-city communities. At the same time, planners in Europe[12] acknowledged that the ring of new towns built around London, for example, and also the inner areas of many cities had transformed the urban fabric.

The demographic decline, production transformations, and new issues in inner cities created a very different vision for the discipline. The Club of Rome acknowledged this new set of circumstances in its report entitled *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al 1972). The limits to growth that were assumed to be a continuous process, the actions of the state that was gradually changing in size, and an urban system whose configuration was changing also revealed the impossibility of resolving issues using traditional tools. The new reality, together with the new perspectives for analysis that attempted to explain it, modified the objects and the objectives of study. Thus, the basis for centralised planning relying on scientific methods and provisional development models was disputed from various points of view. As far as Marxism was concerned, planners, their proposals, and state action were seen as the result of capitalism or as the emergence of unrelated utopian illusions disconnected from social and spatial reality (Hall 2002). In the academic field, the focus shifted from physical planning to the consideration of social and economic factors. Faced with the limited ability of state action to provide solutions, research was undertaken with the aim of analysing social players, structural factors intervening in the modalities of urbanisation, social movements, and local power.

Hall caricatured this paradigm shift:

> In 1955, the typical newly graduated planner was at the drawing-board, producing a diagram of desired land uses; in 1965, she or he was analysing computer output of traffic patterns; in 1975, the same person was talking late into the night with community groups, in an attempt to organise against hostile forces in the world outside. (Hall 2002, p 366)

The Stockholm Conference of 1973 endorsed the environmental dimension, and the Vancouver Conference of 1976 on "Human Settlements" introduced new terms, such as the all-inclusive concept of 'habitat'. In a semiotic reading presented in 1965, which questioned the holism of specialised solutions, Françoise Choay considered urbanism as one of the utopias of the industrial city (Choay 1965). In the same vein, Jane Jacobs (1961) reinstated the value of the street and the urban community which had been destroyed by modernity; Henri Lefebvre claimed "the right to the city" (Lefebvre 1968); and anthropologists stressed residents' perceptions as a kind of collective knowledge. The field of architecture, for its part, in line with the initial questions posed by Team X[13], redefined itself on a new basis with the aim of recovering the leading role that urban planning had stolen from it. In the same context, but in a different way involving the juxtaposition of a mixed bag of French authors from the field of human geography and urban planning historians, in *L'architettura della città* Aldo Rossi (1966) endorsed the traditional forms by linking them to urban memory and converting the morphology of cities into a project input. These various writings led to the emergence of heritage rehabilitation operations and the transformation of the constructed context of cities into data for the formulation of projects.

In other words, the historical urbanism debate illustrates how urban planning theory evolved over nearly half a century. Wide-ranging and extensive criticism was directed at traditional planning, intervention modes, and, in particular, the management of urban space. This criticism was based on different theoretical, epistemological, ideological, and contextual arguments, and was primarily driven by the quest to integrate the social, economic, and political realities of intervention contexts and to include more actors in decision-making processes (Healey 1997; Bolay et al 2000). The principles that had previously served as a basis for urbanism were questioned from different perspectives.

The contributions from cultural studies, sociology and political science, the environmental sciences, and architecture left their mark. Along with the consideration of social actors and their capacities, increasing emphasis was placed on the importance of participation in the planning process. Decentralisation strategies found their place in a new political science that challenged centralised modes of decision-making. On a broader scale, environmental issues and the status of natural resources became priority issues. These shifts reflect the transition from planning to management and the dilemmas that resulted from the problematic relation of the whole and the parts and between the global and the local, which initially emerged as opposites but would later become connected.

27.3   Oppositions and interconnections

Urbanism became established as one of the dimensions of modern policy development in the interwar period. In conjunction with tools of intervention and control such as the plan, the new policies signposted the role of municipal authorities and the state as actors in the expansion of cities. In this context, urbanism appeared as one of the vectors behind the major shift in the relationship between public and private, state and society, technical rationalisations and political decision-making. In the post-war period, spatial planning provisions were mainly devoted to centralised spaces where technical competence assumed a substantive leading role. The planning offices that were attached to the central administration and the gradual adoption of trend models requiring specific methodologies and capacities both helped to establish the figure of the specialist. However, the notion of a process of rational planning, ideas about the appropriate role of the state, and the controversial relations between political rationales and technical neutrality underwent structural revision.

27.3.1   Planning versus implementation: criticism of the method

Within this context, many of the theories that supported urbanism as a science and field of practical intervention were challenged. First, there was a need to rethink the alternatives to the rational process view of planning that emerged during the 1960s and were analysed by Taylor.[14] To begin with, the plans considered as rational decision-making processes appeared to display significant differences compared with earlier plans.[15] Nonetheless, throughout the 1970s the debates also revealed their limits. Given the extremely complex character of the issues to be resolved, together with the fact that decisions are generally taken on the basis of persuasive arguments driven by the values of diverse groups of actors, decisions in urbanism are rarely based on rational choices. Therefore, the numerous facets of these debates gave rise to a series of key questions linked to decision-making processes, be they rational or not: Who decides what constitutes an issue and, above all, how should issues that are actually addressed be prioritised? The same logic applies to the quest for solutions: Who decides on the appropriate solutions, and based on which criteria?

In the light of these new dilemmas, it was generally considered that the emphasis placed on procedural theories had prompted urban planners to neglect reflection on the real problems to be solved. Yet at the same time no one questioned the purpose of urbanism, and references to the impact of interventions were avoided. The real nature of the theory and procedures was

challenged, and it was deemed essential to conceive of urbanism as a practice and to base it on empirical research, including an analysis of how plans and policies were or were not implemented. From the standpoint of implementation theorists, planners had to be concerned with the real world of action planners and policymakers, who might themselves become more effective actors and implementers by gaining an understanding of the implementation process in itself: the theory of planning should be the theory of planning in practice. Accordingly, questions were raised about whether planning should be seen as a problem-solving exercise or whether its role was to satisfy objectives, as well as about the nature of the relationship between planning and implementation.[16] At the same time, attention was paid to plans and policy-making and to policy and plan evaluation. Moreover, questions were raised about whether or not planning was an independent activity, whether it should be analysed in relation to the socio-economic and political system within which it developed and in which many players operated outside the public sector, and how its foundations could be established.

Some of the answers emerged in implementation theories – action-centred theories – in the 1980s, with alternative perspectives on the relationship between policy and action. While some authors believed that policy and action were two separate but interdependent phases, although not sequential as in a rational view of planning, others continued to stress the need to combine planning and action. Accordingly, the latter regarded policy-making as part of the action or implementation rather than something that precedes action. If development projects depended upon the acceptance of proposals and the will to invest (generally by the private sector in capitalist societies), they could not be considered in the final phase of planning, leading to a risk that they might never be implemented. The establishment of plans and policies as well as implementation alternatives should thus all be analysed simultaneously (Friedmann 1969).[17]

Implementation theories soon brought up a second issue, as theorists posited that effective implementation required interpersonal skills such as communication and negotiation. Planners had to learn how to cooperate with the market system and the developers of the private sector and how to negotiate with different players and groups. Towards the 1990s, this view of planning as a communication and negotiation process led to the development of 'communicative action planning' (Sager 1994; Healey 1997).[18] Pragmatically speaking, working with different players and particularly with the market meant compromising public planning ideals to achieve something that would not

otherwise be achieved. This pragmatism drew harsh criticism from the advocates of urbanism which continues to this day. It was felt that taking care of the problems of action with the aim of ensuring its implementation could compromise the critical questioning of which proposals should be implemented, how priorities are set and by whom, and, finally, who the beneficiaries are, as well as how to ensure that interventions do not exacerbate social inequality.

27.3.2   Technical neutrality versus political stance

In this context, some planning theorists warned that plans and planning decisions should be based on value judgements concerning the kind of environment it is desirable to create; they argued that urban protests reflected the fact that these judgements were political rather than technical or scientific. This approach broke with the assumption that planning was a matter for professional planners, be they architects, engineers, geographers, or economists. In fact, criticism was based on the assumption that until then, urban planners had acted as technical experts who developed their own, supposedly apolitical values.

At this point, some urban experts felt that planners needed to inform the public of alternatives, compel consideration of underlying values, and force public planning agencies to compete for support, that is, to become advocacy planners (Davidoff 1965).[19] Planners were, therefore, responsible for opening up the decision-making processes to the general public (Goodman 1972), including an ever greater variety of stakeholders – residents, local NGOs, associations, and others – at many different levels, including the local, regional, national, and international. This constituted a major shift in the view of the planner's role, from that of a technical expert to that of a facilitator who draws on other people's views and skills in the business of making planning judgements.

As an immediate reaction, planners themselves decided that top-down approaches, where technicians, experts, and governments (national and/or local) defined priorities of intervention, had to be replaced by bottom-up approaches. These were often described as neighbourhood action, grassroots, and self-help, approaches that include urban dwellers in the determination of their needs, thus becoming participatory and people-centred (Figure 1) (Hall 2002; Rabinovich 2002, 2007). Concerning public policies, the shift from top-down to bottom-up approaches constituted an inflection point in urban policy, a change in strategy, moving from what was labelled as 'assistance' policies to 'support' policies.

Fig. 1
Bottom-up
approach for the
revitalisation of the
Tha Tian historic
community in
Bangkok, Thailand,
in 1998. (Photo by
Y. Pimonsathean,
1998)

Recognising urbanism as a political activity would open up the debate on such issues as citizen participation, acknowledgement of the 'informal city' (Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1987), and the relationship between the public and private sectors.

27.3.3   Public versus private

Another key topic of debate in urban planning that emerged in the context of this paradigm shift was the role of the state, which had hitherto been acknowledged as a planning agent, and, in particular, the types of relations between the public and private sectors. The debate varied considerably depending on the development of political economy theory, both liberal and Marxist. While the former advocated cooperation with the market system in order to ensure greater effectiveness in implementing plans and policies, the latter defended a strong public sector in urban planning.

The most extreme liberal positions managed to discredit urbanism as a practice, along with all of its intervention tools, espousing the concept of capitalist societies where the market was given the role of setting the priorities of urban intervention while the state was relegated to an essentially normative and administrative role. In England, for example, during periods of economic recession and loss of public spending capacity, land value and ownership

were driven by market interests and pressures, as the state had lost its role of promoting development.

Socialism, on the contrary, emphasised the need for the state to exercise public and social control over the means of production through land ownership and all urban investments. Planning would therefore be done by the state, based on the priorities defined by the public sector and protecting society in general and the underprivileged sectors in particular. Whereas in the beginning an opposition was established between state backers and market proponents, intermediate approaches based on social democratic systems later tended to combine the two positions, stressing the need to maintain private land ownership while boosting the state's regulatory capacity. In this sense, the role of public authorities became more regulatory than normative and administrative.

During the 1970s, the search for reality-based urbanism led to a study of urbanism's undesired or unplanned mechanisms[20] and the initiation of discussions on the true role of planning – and of the state in particular – in the evolution of cities, as well as on the players in this evolution. On the one hand, Marxist theoreticians (Althusser, Castells, Harvey, Paris)[21] developed a social scientific theory of planning, arguing that in capitalist societies governments and the state usually take on the role of maintaining and managing the economic system (Castells 1973; Miliband 1973). However, the opposition between planning, as the sphere of public authorities, and the private interests of the market did not explain the negative effects of urbanism of the last 20 years. Rather, it could be said that urban planning helped to support and reinforce the capitalist system, that is, it was an integral part of that system. On the other hand, urban management theories argued that in liberal capitalist economies, market forces generally face very few restrictions and are therefore decisive factors in urban development and its impact, whereas the development of the public sector is clearly limited by public finances.[22]

The 1980s marked the resurgence of classical liberalism in Western democracies, which was strengthened by the collapse of the socialist system, and finally launched the debate on the need for a public urban planning system. 'Notional land use zoning' was advocated as a basic planning system in order to support the market-driven development of land, while other stands defended the dismantling of urban and land use planning, leaving the role of legal oversight to ensure the protection of private interests to the state (e.g. the development of residential areas). Towards the end of the decade, those planning theorists who did not necessarily adhere to this neo-liberal point of view

nonetheless accepted the need to adopt a positive attitude towards market-driven development. The debate, based on theories of 'regime and regulation', took place at the local government level, within the decentralisation processes framework.[23] This was characterised by spending cuts at the central state level and, accordingly, by a search for alternative forms of financing, including the provision of public services such as water, electricity, transport, housing, and other goods, as well as by efforts to convince the private sector to guarantee investments.[24]

At the same time, critical comments were heard regarding the efficiency of national companies, based on the lack of competition in this sector. This prompted their need to work with the private sector in order to benefit from its competence and enhance their ability to compete.[25]

This evolution translated into a change of style in urban governance, moving, according to Harvey (1989), from a managerial approach in the 1960s to an entrepreneurial approach in the 1980s, the decade when different urban planning regimes emerged. These reflected not only a wide range of economic circumstances that have conditioned local government actions but also numerous different political positions vis-à-vis market processes.

Another fundamental element that influenced urban planning theories in the late 1980s was the change in capitalism itself, marked by the globalisation process and characterised by the creation of transnational power based on economic and technological domination by transnational corporations.[26] The creation of this transnational economy, together with the process of outsourcing production to more competitive countries, had a major impact on countries of the North and South alike, creating new regulatory modes that profoundly affected urban plans and policies. Urban decision-makers and planners had to ensure that their cities could attract or at least retain investment business activity and cultural consumption. New investment priorities had a strong impact on the development of different city areas, with interventions such as waterfront renewal schemes (Figure 2), inner-city rehabilitation projects, shopping malls, and international tax-free zones. Although each country tackled global pressures in a different way, it was extremely difficult for any nation, and even more so for any individual city, to withstand or moderate globalisation processes (Ward 2002). It is not the aim here to delve into a debate on governance or on globalisation, which is a process that is not only felt in economy and finance but that also touches many elements of contemporary societies, including culture. The intention was to point out the contribution of the

Fig. 2
London's water-
front renewal.
(Photo by A. Rabi-
novich, 2007)

regime and regulatory theories, as well as the achievements of governance, insofar as they shed light on the various scales of the relationship between the public and private spheres.

Thus, starting from initial counterpositions, step-by-step attempts have been made to interrelate the two spheres. In fact, the modes of relationship between the public and private sectors have been a central focus of debate within the field of urbanism since the 1960s. In the background, however, the question persists as to who actually benefits from urban interventions.

27.4   New actors, tools, and topics

27.4.1   Technicians versus social actors

We have seen that citizen participation emerges from a critical analysis of industrial society and of the inherent principles of urbanism. Urban rehabilitation plans and projects and collective housing models developed by advocates of rationalism were subjected to critical analysis, as their standardised and strictly functional characteristics did not meet people's needs and aspirations, especially those of underprivileged social classes.[27] Participation, it was argued, would enable a better harmonisation of habitat with people's

aspirations, habits, and lifestyles while reducing habitat production costs by cutting out real-estate promoters, who were considered unnecessary intermediaries (Rabinovich 2002). In addition, reuniting intellectual work with crafts and trades would make it possible to rejoin what industrialisation had put asunder, to once again combine art with production.

Ever since the beginning of the 20th century, however, professionals realised that involving people, particularly the underprivileged sectors of the population, in industrialised countries such as the European nations was difficult and therefore remained only a remote possibility. Some planners had opportunities to go to developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The reality in the countries of the South was a key source of inspiration for planners who, working hand in hand with local social movements, became European planning pioneers in defending self-building and self-help and in recognising what was defined as 'the illegal city' (Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1987). For these pioneers, the planner's role should be to organise the self-builders' process (Turner 1976).[28] Viewed as an alternative to the operations of urban renewal and centralised models, bottom-up initiatives in the North and in the South, such as self-organised communities, self-building, and even spontaneously organised slums, began to constitute a kind of urban counterculture, which little by little won the admiration of different intellectual groups that saw in these approaches a reflection of the population's expressions of its culture, creativity, and its own organisation (Davidoff 1965).

An analysis of concrete experiences revealed that participation in urbanism did not always facilitate attainment of the desired results (Rabinovich 2002, 2007).[29] Various authors have shown that while participation does result in greater resident satisfaction, this effect is not related to a difference in the quality of housing but rather to the satisfaction of being involved in the processes (Conan 1988). Regarding habitat operations, for example, follow-up research conducted some years later revealed unacceptable living conditions in terms of hygiene, health, and security. In other cases, although often successful in improving the individual or neighbourhood environment, many individual or collective actions were initiated and carried out without being coordinated with local authorities and with little thought given to the well-being of society as a whole.[30] Thus, the euphoria of two decades of participation in urbanism (1960–1980) gave way to a certain disenchantment, at least among professionals and researchers in urbanism.

Since the 1990s, participation has once again become a buzzword in policies and development projects, reflecting a reappropriation by international,

national, and local institutions of issues which had formerly been monopolised by social movements (Bacqué 2005). This rebirth is linked to the distinctive leading role of sustainable development and the emergence of the concept of 'governance', in the sense of the modes of coordination between the various players who make up society, modes which enable public action (Le Galès 1995).[31] This extension of public action to a wider group of players implies not only opening up the process to new players but also momentarily integrating some previous major divisions, such as 'experts and laymen' (Callon et al 2001), and recognising the interests, needs, contributions, and reciprocal potential of different groups. At the same time, changes in decision-making processes are expressed in new urban consensuses and conflicts that call into question the public values of the city and concern much more than just urban agglomerations or towns. In reality, they refer to an inter-territoriality which conditions all scales of public action and puts them into a network within local, national, and international space. The way each level is connected with the other(s) varies according to the different development rationales involved. Consequently, the public's participation of the 1990s is no longer linked to bottom-up reasoning but rather to top-down, multi-player, and multi-scale approaches which also entail movements defined as bottom-up (Navez-Bouchanine 2007).

Within this new framework, the debate between the expert knowledge of technicians and that of the social players remains valid. Using the analysis of concrete experiences as a basis, the social sciences make a distinction between a 'ritual vacuum of participation' and the 'real power' of residents to orient project-related processes and decisions (Arnstein 1969; Lafaye 2001; Healey 2004).[32] Citizens generally express their disappointment, particularly about urbanism experiences in line with plans, while technicians fall back on what they call their expertise and question the residents' ability to appreciate the general interest or urban order of the plans and projects involved.

Overall, more than 30 years of participatory experiences, driven either by professionals and/or politicians or directly by grassroots social movements, make it possible to evaluate the potentials and limitations of participation by focusing on three main factors:
– The tools aimed at implementing participation;
– The aims, spaces, and moments (or time) for effective participation, linked to degrees of intensity and concrete ways to involve players, especially citizens; and
– The institutionalisation of participation and how it spreads, from a perspective of empowerment, as well as changes to procedures in hierarchical organisations.

27.4.2   Plans versus projects

Critics of the grand plans of the era following the Second World War worked in terms of a concept of the 'urban project', which was a key concept in the intense debate that developed in the ensuing decade. Contrary to the planning of the post-war years, the relationship between the urban building context, society, and its history was examined from numerous angles. Advocating the urban project meant supporting a 'project' rather than a 'plan', as the latter was deemed insufficient to define space and urban form in general. However, criticism targeted not only the limits of urban planning but also modern architecture, which was deemed incapable of coming up with an urban architecture. Perhaps this questioning of urbanism and modern architecture did not give sufficient weight to the fact that its failure was not limited to the resulting material forms. The stigmatisation of Le Corbusier and the large complexes in French working-class suburbs often glossed over the fact that the undesirable outcomes were also the product of the limits to growth viewed as ongoing. Nonetheless, the new concept gained ground.

Looking at the issue from this angle, we will now consider the arguments put forward by Alicia Novick (2003), which provide an explanation of recent developments with regard to the concept of urban projects and its reformulations.[33] According to Novick, many authors found the roots of this new mode in the large restructuring and renovation interventions of the 19th and 20th centuries; indeed, large-scale restructuring projects certainly began very early in the history of the city. The urban project thus seemed to be linked to the concept of urbanism based on urban design. In this sense, the hypothesis to place the origin of the innovations in Italy seems to be correct. The seminal concept was that of *progettazione*, which condenses the input of the plan and the architecture project into a single operation. This concept represented a new tool and was a key element in the intense debate that emerged in the 20th century, resulting in a real project culture that was interpreted in a different way in every country.

When seen from this perspective, the urban project appeared as a middle ground between an 'architecture project' and an 'urban plan' (Lacaze 1993). Contrary to global visions, the urban project offered an alternative to the plan: faced with the impossibility of anticipation, it presented the alternatives of open programmes and concrete actions. The urban area, when seen as a group of streets, squares, and the fabric of the city, gradually shifted attention that was formerly devoted to habitat themes and social equipment.

The new concept dovetailed with management changes in the agglomerations, where metropolitan and centralised entities were losing ground. In England, state reforms eliminated planning bodies, while decentralisation was introduced in France. President Mitterrand's monumental works in Paris were built within this framework, as were many experimental projects in Spain in the post-Franco era. In Madrid, the Immediate Action Programme was proposed in 1985, with the aim of handling functional issues, the lack of equipment, and the environmental requalification of the city. It was a case of an overall alteration to the urban territory via structural actions with multiple effects. Similar organisational objectives drove the actions of Oriol Bohigas in Barcelona, which had been preceded by the Estación Saints and the Parque de la España Industrial projects a decade earlier, in addition to a myriad of interventions to rehabilitatate historic centres and towns. At the same time the urban project offered a platform for the preparation of the Olympic Games. Such an approach offered an alternative urbanism to the outdated model of the grand urban-regional plans, and to the abstraction of quantitative zoning that relegated the consideration of the real building of the city to huge unrealisable ideas. Giving shape to public spaces went hand in hand with the renewed leading role of architects, who were capable of transforming public space through a set of ideas that could really be applied. A body of reasoning that governs the re-evaluation of the aesthetic dimension of urbanism also served as a basis for defending its cultural value and, therefore, the need to develop synergies between the quality of the design and cultural factors.[34]

The scope of the urban project was redefined from different analytical perspectives. Thus, in France a substantial effort was made to systemise concepts (Devilliers 1994). The urban project in both conceptual and operative terms was combined with sociological and urban management logics. In Spain, a major debate was held within the context of the Madrid/Barcelona interventions on the issue of plan versus project. Contributions from researchers from the South were also key to these discussions. It is interesting to note that in her overview of concepts and practices, Alicia Novick develops the similarities and differences between European and American experiences, something that goes beyond the limits of the present contribution.[35]

Within this broad context, François Ascher (1993) refers to the threefold scope of the urban project, which can take the form of the political urban project (the intention of a city resulting from strategic reflection); the operative urban project (strategic intervention operations); and the urbanistic and architectural urban project (limited to urban design). This approach reveals

borders between the 'urban project' and 'public policies' that are not sufficiently defined, a shortcoming that had already been pointed out by some specialists at the beginning of the 1990s (Mangin and Panerai 1999).

Nevertheless, in the past few decades the scope of projects has been redefined. In fact, project activity has abandoned its problem-solving status in order to create projects as such. When seen from this angle, and linked with 'second-generation' urban and architectural design methods, project activities resulting in approaches such as the 'programming conception' method were based on the acknowledgement that urban issues are in fact 'bad problems' (Prost 1992; Rabinovich 2002). In other words, they cannot be precisely defined at the beginning of the process and, therefore, planning is an iterative process of conjectures and rejection, whereby the definition of the problem becomes clearer through a search for the solution.

However, in addition to their potential and multiple dimensions and their ability to contribute to constructing the problems, a broad consensus has formed since the late 1990s regarding these interventions. Their antinomy was no longer emphasised, but rather the need to integrate them into a plan or a public programme with a broader reach. Strategies veered towards analysing negative effects while at the same time promoting effective tools to counteract them. On the one hand, the format of procedures able to include everyone's voice was examined, despite the fact that political will as a driver appeared to be a sine qua non for their implementation. On the other hand, the impact on land values due to improved regulatory tools was examined. From a localisation rationale, efforts were made to group new locations for interventions that were not limited to prestige and visibility, thereby adumbrating the potential of the edges and peripheries.

In other words, the urbanism of fragmented projects gradually stopped limiting the plan's scope. However, it was not a case of looking at plan and project as analogous concepts or of opposing them to or differentiating them from restructuring or embellishments. Rather, acquired experience consolidated them as a potential operational tool. The contest of ideas served to highlight the suggested innovative proposals and programme definitions that could be included in an integral view of the city and its problems. Urban projects that are capable of facilitating coordinated management of the numerous players taking part in production of the city and of taking form based on alternative and open scenarios characterised by their flexibility, could constitute a vital dimension of plans and programmes with greater scope.

27.4.3   Environment and inequality

Among other things, acknowledgement of urbanism as a political activity brought with it a repositioning of more substantive issues and problems that urban planning as a public policy should seek to address. Issues such as ever-increasing social inequality, the precarious living conditions of the underprivileged, and the degradation of both the natural and the man-made environment were priorities that had to be addressed again in a consistent manner on the public agenda. A problem-centred defence of urbanism no doubt gained strength from its counterposition to neo-liberal trends that emerged as a response to recession in different parts of the world, advocating a strong free market strategy as a vehicle for addressing urban issues. Indeed, the topics viewed as problems on technical and political agendas were studied in a broad range of discussions.

On the one hand, some urban planners focused on theories specifically related to the issue of social inequality, building it up as a complex problem for which there is no obvious solution. The theme of the 'habitat' of the popular (working-class) sector, for example, constructed from criticism of policies focusing on providing housing, shed light on the need to consider the relationship with more complex systems defining habitat not only as a group of material conditions of housing, infrastructure, and services, but also as a safe metaphysical space. On another scale, there is the promotion of visions of 'inclusive cities' (Westendorff 2004), with conditions for 'access' to multiple resources and to the labour markets, recognising the need to reinforce social and integration networks with practices of the so-called 'informal' sectors (Hardoy and Satterthwaite 1987), taking into account their different conditions, not only in socio-economic terms but also in relation to race and gender, for example. On the other hand, in the North, a wide range of topics have resulted in the so-called 'post-materialist movements'. Environmental themes and grassroots mobilisation have also appeared in the countries of the South. Their importance forms part of concerns about the quality of life. For example, the issue of 'risks' associated with environmental topics and technological development has added more and more items to the agenda.

Since the 1990s, the renewed priority given to the environment and its corollary 'sustainable development' has undoubtedly been a key factor in the debate on the problems of urban development. Concerns about ecological damage began to be addressed in the late 1960s, in the context of a growing countercultural environmental radicalism that mapped out alternative

paths to large-scale capitalism and government. During the 1980s and 1990s, however, these ideas began to underpin more moderate opinions, leading to the development of the concept of sustainable development (Ward 2002). Within urbanism itself, the promotion of development models that favoured a balance between social, ecological, and economic dimensions began to take shape, in association with the creation of ecological political parties. In this context, it is more than illustrative to review the role given to international agreements, as was the case at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, after which member states adhered to the action plan presented under the name of Local Agenda 21 (LA21). Its principles are also partly 'political compromises', a factor that explains the still somewhat vague character of the notion of sustainable development and the difficulties encountered in its practical application. The operational dimension of the 'sustainable development' concept raises the question of the criteria and indicators for assessing or estimating degrees of sustainability (Wiesmann 1998) as quantitative and qualitative measures of the economic, environmental, and social dimensions in a particular context. Nevertheless, while this operational dimension is fundamental for some authors, others wonder whether the criteria and indicators used for evaluating sustainable development will not, once again, classify those always excluded (Querrien and Lassave 2000). Moreover, 20th-century planning theory shows to what extent sustainable development has been an implicit leitmotif, or an unknown concept (Campbell and Fainstein 2003).[36]

Finally, together with the emergence of new territorialities, the inner areas and particularly the old historic centres affected by deterioration due to the economic depression of the past decades were the object of study and actions. The need to turn them into areas of development for the market through legislative measures and investments in infrastructure and services, and the re-evaluation of the heritage value of existing buildings, oscillated between policies which, linked to the mechanisms of economic and cultural globalisation, promoted tourism as a source of revenue while striving to avoid gentrification. In different parts of the world, promotion of heritage values gradually became a relevant issue for urban planning, and discourses about heritage are evolving from building preservation to a broader approach encompassing sociocultural values as well. Therefore, it is also important to consider the impact of specific rehabilitation policies at the international level, such as the internationalised UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation] World Heritage Centre policies.[37]

Our research project is situated in this precise framework. It is not by chance that the identification process of self-proclaimed sustainable innovative interventions has led to the selection of projects that were undertaken in the historic centres of various cities around the world: Buenos Aires, Havana (Figure 3), and Bangkok.[38] These were concrete interventions related to habitat, in the framework of plans and public policies that take different approaches to heritage values. Looking at similar projects at different latitudes serves to illustrate what persists and what changes over time, what is similar and what is different in each context. Viewed from this vantage point, the ultimate objective is to understand the alternatives in the fields of knowledge and practices of urbanism. Although the examples do not give an account of all the reasoning applied in the production of the city, they do make it possible to touch on some of the arguments. Indeed, the cases chosen make it possible to analyse the connections between planning and implementation; illustrate the different types of relationships between public and private, technicians and residents, local and global; and show that the perception of sustainable development is strongly context-specific. Its study is therefore paradigmatic in the framework of innovations in urbanism.

27.5   Concluding remarks

As a first step, it seems important to specify once again the scope of this contribution. It is an approach to the history of urbanism based on some topics for debate that have caused the discipline to develop as a field for thought and action for over a century. The background is that of innovation, in an attempt to define a broad problem context that makes it possible to analyse – in an operative manner in our research – concrete experiences in different regions of the world. Accordingly, we asked several questions in the introduction, such as: Who does and/or should change cities? On what scale should intervention take place? How are the capacities, tools, and values of experts and non-experts differentiated?

Throughout the article, we have shown how the answers to these questions have changed over the past century, although the nuances and overlaps are numerous. At the beginning, the emphasis was on the logics and the deceptive certainties of a militant movement that suggested transforming politics through science and technology, via the figure of the technician, the image of the plan, and an arsenal of tools. The same movement also wanted to give a key role to the state and to technicians capable of transforming city and society. Owing to the profound crisis of cities and interpretive points of view, the issues aligned themselves in terms of opposition.

In fact, in conjunction with questioning the method and the specialist's political neutrality, the knowledge of society counterbalanced the figure of the demigod technician; the role of the market offset the hegemony of the state; and the notion of the project opposed that of the plan. Notwithstanding, the need to create intermediate space, connecting space, slowly became very clear. Avoiding simplification means not only seeking adequate answers to complexity but also accepting its multiplicity and differentiated appropriateness for issues that can be analysed from different angles and that can have different answers. Reflecting in terms of multi-player, multi-scale, and multi-dimensional processes reveals decisions that are not very linear. In other words, diverse social, economic, political, spatial, and environmental realities were progressively taken into account. Consequently, the move from a sole intervention model to relative pluralism in urban actions characterises contemporary urban planning.

A second series of questions were raised in the introduction: What were the topics that came up as problems in the projects and programmes analysed?

How were ideas concerning the city and urban planning conceived and disseminated at different latitudes? Perhaps the topics and issues broached are, in a broad sense, similar in Western countries, as a series of networks and communications between experts facilitate intense dissemination of ideas and experiences. However, in each context defined by different socio-economic political and cultural realities, theories and experiences were interpreted in very different ways. In this sense, more so than in terms of deformation, which assumes that there are truths and copies, it is necessary to review country-specific knowledge and experience in the light of the controversial journeys of ideas from one country or continent to another, which has always been a part of the field of urbanism. From this perspective, it is plain to see that the scope of innovation differs according to geographies. Although innovative solutions respond to objectives, procedures, and implementation methods that are all bound by a common point of reference, one can single out the impact of local contexts in the wide range of achievements observed on the ground. Moreover, we must consider that the answers provided by innovative approaches that were developed to tackle the complexity of urban problems will vary depending on the territorial scales at stake. We should therefore refrain from simply reproducing identical solutions at the local, regional, national, and global levels.

It is precisely on this problem horizon that innovative decision processes should, in the end, lie. However, even though the most recent suggestions extol the virtues of diversity and pluralism, which can be considered as a lesson for urban planning, it is safe to say that there might still be some overarching universal ideals to which urban planning should aspire. The question is, once again, that of understanding who will define those ideals and which institutional contexts and political dynamics are capable of ensuring that the voices of less organised, under-represented actors will be heard.

In the framework of our research we will identify and analyse the way in which the objectives, values, and interests of different groups of actors are concretely negotiated in the decision-making process of innovative urban projects. To conclude, however, we believe that from a disciplinary perspective it is important not to lose sight of the fact that in the 21st century, the dilemmas and solutions will not be found exclusively in the sphere of the knowledge and tools of urbanism.

Endnotes

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[2] At the time of writing, this research project, entitled "Innovative decision-making processes in sustainable urban projects", was ongoing under the direction of Dr. Adriana Rabinovich (Laboratory of Urban Sociology, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, and NS Tools Sàrl, Lausanne, Switzerland) and Professor Andrea Catenazzi (Universidad de General Sarmiento, Buenos Aires, Argentina) as part of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South. Case studies were carried out at the local level under the direction of Dr. Alicia Novick (Universidad de General Sarmiento) in Argentina; Patricia Rodriguez Alomá and Dr. Carlos García Pleyán (Master Plan of the Office of the Historian of Old Havana and Cooperation Office of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) in Cuba; and Professor Yongtanit Pimonsathean (Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, and Thammasat University) in Thailand. For more information, see http://www.north-south.unibe.ch/content.php/page/id/77 or http://urbanisme.nstools.com.

[3] In some cases, although international trends have arisen in response to local concerns (generally those of Western countries), many or even the majority of them have been transplanted – not always successfully – to other countries in the North and in the South (Hall 2002).

[4] This is particularly important as our research project ultimately aims to formulate recommendations on how to extend and replicate innovative strategies developed in particular contexts.

[5] Urban planning experts argue that as an intellectual and professional movement, 20th-century city planning essentially represents a reaction to the problems of the 19th-century city. Pioneers' concerns were based on the plight of the millions of poor people trapped in the Victorian slums (Hall 2002; Ward 2002; Taylor 2005).

[6] Her arguments are taken up here as they give an account of the alternative names, the concept, and the construction of the field of urbanism.

[7] In fact, the urbanism approach, strongly influenced by modernist utopias, was characterised until the late 1950s by attempts to build ideal new towns based on different models (such as Howard's Garden Cities or the Radiant City of Le Corbusier). Whereas the Radiant City represented the ideal modernistic town, the model for the city of the future, the Garden City reflected the wish to return to nature and hence contained a certain anti-urban aestheticism and resistance to modernisation.

[8] For example, the idea that a good city should be based on functional ordering principles (different functions organised and contained in specific geographical areas linked by motorway arteries) gave way to the recognition of a mixture of uses, of an "intricate and finely grained diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and socially", as a precondition for a good city (Jacobs 1961, p 14).

[9] In 1915, the pioneer planner Geddes wrote of cities and their regions as functioning entities (Geddes 1915). However, apart from his writings on the need to do surveys prior to planning (precursors of the rational process view of planning), Geddes's ideas remained marginal throughout the first half of the 20th century, which continued to be dominated by architectural ideas (Taylor 2005, p 62).

[10] The rational process approach strove for an understanding of the planning process itself. Town planning was considered as an ongoing process involving several stages; during the whole process it is possible to return to any stage to review actions or the view of problems, or to consider new alternatives not previously defined, as the planning process involves continuous action and never ends.

[11] The studies expressing this criticism were based on philosophical right- or left-wing urban political scientists' works, linked to the process of democratisation of public decisions and residents' participation in the 1960s.

[12] Particularly in England, France, Belgium, Spain, and Switzerland, among others.

[13] Team X was a group of 10 architects who challenged the modernist discourse on architecture and urban planning. Team X emerged in 1959 following the dissolution of the Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne (C.I.A.M., in English: International Congresses of Modern Architecture), an organisation founded in 1928 by the most prominent architects around the world to promote the principles of the Modern Movement.

[14] Although some scholars describe systems and rational planning together – given that both share the concept of the environment as an interrelated system of activities and places – Taylor feels that these two theories are conceptually distinct (Taylor 2005, pp 59–73).

[15] The idea of a rational process as a continuous process represents a significant break with the traditional design-based view of urban planning. In particular, it implies the rejection of blueprint planning.

[16] For more information on this aspect, please consult the research done by Faludi (1973, 1985) and Needham and Faludi (1973).

[17] A first step in rational planning was made by the development of disjointed incremental planning, which was put forward as a more realistic account of what the process of planning was like and could be in practice. Nevertheless, this approach did not specifically address the issue of implementation.

[18] In fact, urban planning theories have tended to focus on communication theory, based in particular on Jürgen Habermas (1984), whose dream was to make the planning process as democratic as possible by opening the communicative process of decision-making up to all interested parties. John Forester was one of the pioneers of communicative action planning, which is based on communication theory (Taylor 2005, p 123). However, the need for urbanists to develop communication competencies is not exclusively covered by implementation theories but is also approached within the context of the debate on participation.

[19] This trend was inspired by Marxist theories that were becoming accepted by intellectuals, gaining ground over positivist logic. Davidoff was one of the first to urge planners to practise bottom-up planning by becoming advocate planners. This would make the debate about the setting of goals and objectives explicit – a debate that had been bypassed by blueprints and systems planning based on the assumption that this was the professional planners' concern (Hall 2002; Taylor 2005). Shortly thereafter, urban architects such as Christopher Alexander at Berkeley, N. John Habraken in Holland, and Yona Friedman in France went on to introduce participatory planning methods in universities, particularly at faculties of architecture and urbanism.

[20] Densification processes in inner cities, conurbanisation and suburbanisation processes (associated with models of containing cities via green area rings), as well as the inflationary impact on land and property prices were identified as characteristic results of urban planning over the past 20 years. These territorial and economic effects were associated with social segregation, as they affect different social groups in different ways. It is interesting to note that the concept of 'the market' did not previously include the actions of private individuals independently producing their own habitat, but rather referred to companies looking for profit in urban planning.

[21] On Marxist theories, see Hall (2002) or Taylor (2005).

[22] Lack of financial and human resources in public administration is characteristic of cities in the South, particularly at the local level. Another factor is the difficulty of undertaking coordinated strategic action, given the diversity of capital invested in urban operations (i.e. the investment of migrants' remittances in housing, services, and infrastructures).

[23] The coalitions and partnerships with other agents, including non-governmental actors, can be analysed like regimes, which are defined as the informal arrangements by which public bodies and private interests function together in order to be able to make and carry out governing decisions (Stone 1989, 1993, 2005). Stone distinguishes four kinds of regime: maintenance regimes, development regimes, middle-class progressive regimes, and regimes devoted to lower-class opportunity expansion.

[24] On the privatisation of public services such as water, see Catenazzi and Da Representaçao (2004).

[25] This discussion took place within the context of structural change in Western societies at times of great economic depression, marked by the retreat of the central state and by a need for local governments to play an active role in order to revive their own economies.

[26] These new transnational corporations are characterised by their search for an exponential increase in profits linked with a drastic decrease in costs.

[27] As early as 1950, England's Association of Architects invited Giancarlo de Carlo, an Italian architect who supported self-building by explaining that housing problems of poor people would not be solved by municipal housing but by the concrete will and action of the people themselves. Planning could help, but only as the manifestation of community collaboration (Hall 2002). Decades later, this approach would also be criticised, as it justified the state's withdrawal from seeking solutions to low-cost housing issues, especially in developing countries.

[28] In fact, in English-speaking countries in particular, the tradition of integrating community intervention into the process of promoting individuals and collectives dates back to the early 20th century. In countries with a more state-interventionist tradition, this would emerge only much later in urban policies as the result of appeals by social movements. In the countries of the South, the issue of participation is contemporary with their initial forays into development policy, which go hand in hand with self-help policies concerning habitat.

[29] Other ways to take into account social knowledge have developed, but there is no denying that participation has been one of the most hotly debated issues throughout history.

[30] In Latin America, for example, where a relatively large proportion of the population has access to individual water facilities, it is nevertheless estimated that only about 10% of the collected sewage is treated and the quality of treatment is generally low.

[31] Governance issues can be approached in two ways: one more directly managerial and the other more theoretical and critical.

[32] As early as the 1960s, Arnstein set up an 8-level participation scale, ranging from 'manipulation' to 'citizen control'. She asserts that without redistribution of power, participation is a frustrating process, especially for the more underprivileged sectors of the population.

[33] Her analysis refers to several authors, including, for example, Portoghesi (1969), Merlin and Choay (1988), Lacaze (1993).

[34] This debate was based on the different approaches to the concept of culture. Understood on the one hand as related to 'art', it resulted in the creation and development of 'cultural districts' in cities (museums, art galleries, concert halls, etc.). On the other hand, policies were developed in relation to a broader and more democratic vision of the concept of culture, including different kinds of expression that contribute to the life of the city, such as sports, public spaces, and meeting and recreational areas. In the countries of the South, the demand for informal cities by some urban planners, in particular social science specialists, was linked with the revaluation of self-building as an expression of the culture of the less privileged sectors of the population.

[35] See, for example, Solá Morales (1987), Tsiomis (1996), Toussaint and Zimmermann (1998), Pérez Escolano (1999), in Novick (2003, 2004).

[36] As, for example, in Geddes's Beautiful City, in the Garden City of Howard and Mumford, in the conservationist and bioregionalist approaches to comprehensive planning, and within the vision of the world as an ecological system developed by representatives of urban systems planning of the interwar period.

[37] Several meetings and charts proposed measures to tackle the degradation of historic centres: for example, the UN Convention in 1972, the Macchu Pichu Charter of 1977, the 1983 Heritage Symposium in Mexico City, and the Washington Charter of 1987.

[38] The main objective is to explore the strengths and limitations of emerging innovative approaches to urban planning that aim at integrating the three relevant EES aspects of sustainable development (economic, environmental, and social aspects). The analysis is based on a comparative approach, focused on the study of local urban projects: a) The 'San Francisco Block' within the Programme of Residential Consolidation of the Management Plan for the Historic Centre of Buenos Aires, Argentina; b) The Old Square in the framework of The Master Plan for the Rehabilitation of the Historic Centre of Havana, Cuba; c) The Revitalisation of the Tha Tian Historic Community in the framework of the Conservation Master Plan for Bangkok, Thailand.

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