

Chapter 3

Global Sustainability: How to Rethink Urban Planning



Abstract In this chapter, we will dissect the salient elements of urban planning in terms of theoretical foundations and methodology, in order to demonstrate that in addition to criticism expressed by a certain number of authors regarding its transfer to cities of the South, urban planning does not focus on the key issues faced by local authorities and inhabitants, both in terms of target population groups and the infrastructures and services that should be given priority.

We will highlight the translation of these theories, essentially of western origin, and their application to “other societies”, trying to understand how throughout the course of history, this intellectual configuration of the city has been replicated in contexts subject to other injunctions and constraints. We will then deconstruct urban planning, viewing it not as a science but rather as a method that is applied with field-adapted techniques, based on precepts that often lack clear definition, yet that is guided by instruments that can spatially and materially organize the distribution of individuals, their activities, goods, services, facilities and equipment, within a territory that is identified for geographical and administrative reasons. Urban planning takes into account the potential and the limitations of the natural (spatial and environmental) and human entities in question, including in its analysis the causes and impacts of the dynamics that affect the transformation of the city and its dwellers. The difficulty with urban planning is that it is based more or less explicitly on different disciplines (urbanism, architecture, engineering, economics, sociology, geography, etc.), that function independently with no formal obligation to work together/cross reference, which means that many professional practices are used periodically and repeatedly.

Sustainable development and urban sustainable development represent a conceptual framework allowing us to rethink urban planning. More than a technical tool giving voice to all stakeholders, a participatory approach is the most advanced methodological manner of anchoring planning in a local and regional democratic policy.

As broadcast by the United Nations in 1987, “sustainable development” is defined above all by two essential components. First, the time factor, by emphasizing that development can only be sustainable if it “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Second, the focus on “an equal balance between the necessary ecological, social and economic dimensions of development”.

In addition to these aspects of sustainable development, two complementary dimensions will directly involve urban stakeholders. On the one hand, spatial organization would better regulate the distribution of human settlements and economic activities in the territory. It would also mitigate the excessive concentration of people and activities in saturated and weakened areas in favor of a decentralization that maximizes spatial planning with a lower ecological imprint on available resources. On the other hand, there is a cultural dimension, in that the proposed changes would take into consideration the value systems, the historical development of the human communities involved, the socio-political context as well as the social and cultural organizational structures prevailing in the regions concerned.

These conceptual precepts have to be linked to technological innovations capable of facilitating the creation and processing of urban and regional data, such as geospatial software (free and open source) and crowdsourcing.

Keywords Sustainability · Urban theories · Urban planning · Conceptual framework · Spatial organization · Cultural dimension · Technological innovations

3.1 Urban Planning in Question

I have spent more than 30 years following the changes in the urban world in both a general way and more specifically through fieldwork in three major world regions: Latin America, Asia and West Africa. This work, which takes the form of research, teaching and publications, has a common theme: namely issues of social, economic and territorial inclusion of the poor in urban areas. This includes individuals and families who living in urban areas for a generation or more, as well as new urban immigrants (mostly of rural origin) living in the precarious conditions. Through this work, I have gained a clearer understanding of their attempts to settle and make a life for themselves, generally outside the legal framework through informal arrangements, interpersonal/community cooperation and connivance with landowners and government agencies, and despite their limited means. Whatever the objective reality, their urban integration (i.e. housing, access to infrastructures, facilities, community services, job opportunities, income, education and health) must be a priority on urban agendas. Let us not forget that a third of inhabitants of South cities live in slums – an estimated 863 million people in 2014 (UN-Habitat 2014), or roughly one-third of the Global South’s urban population, a figure that has been steadily rising for decades. This is mainly due to strong urban growth combined with socio-economic segregation and increasingly fragmented urbanized areas.

The concerns that prompt this need to rethink urban planning are simple. Experts and decision-makers alike would like cities to be more human, more inclusive and, as such, more harmonious for inhabitants. However, translating these laudable principles into decisive actions is more complex and obviously less concrete.

Implementing spatial planning solutions different from those that have failed in the past is difficult, as it forces us to rethink the entire issue, given that it is no longer simply a matter of tweaking existing techniques. Rather, it is a question of identifying fundamental issues, translating them into planning objectives and determining what actions to take.

In the previous chapter, we saw that urbanization is most prevalent in South countries and brings with it an increase in urban poverty. This poverty is reflected in material, economic, social and even psychological impacts on city dwellers' well-being, despite thinking and investments to make cities more hospitable and productive (international programs, public/private funding, sharing experiences, etc.).

Hence, there is a real discrepancy in the diagnosis of the causes of urbanization in the Global South and in the efforts being made to develop the city. This has resulted in a sincere, deep questioning of urban planning practices in developing countries, whose impacts in the short, medium and long term are not truly felt and often fail to meet the challenges at hand. How is it that the number of urban poor continues to rise, despite record-high investments in planning and construction? From whence the hypothesis that informed the studies used as examples in this work: in most South cities, urban planning does not serve to (1) visualize the future, (2) prepare for it at the urban and regional levels, or (3) guide its development. The reason for this is simple: urban planning, as it is conceived and applied, is based on precepts that were forged *outside* of the contexts it is intended to address. Hence its impact is limited, and impacts neither the entire urban space nor its population, and thereby directly or indirectly accentuates social disparities and territorial fragmentation.

The goal of this renewal in the urban sciences and planning practices is to analyze the many forms of urban poverty (precarity, segregation, marginalization, informality, exclusion, vulnerability and growing disparities, to name a few) and to take a closer, more anthropological look at what "institutional and social practices in urban planning" actually means in real life. How can public, private, associative and community stakeholders position themselves and partake in designing planning solutions that are better suited to the territorial/societal context and better managed by urban actors in the long-term? The ultimate goal is to create more coherent, friendly cities that meet the needs, expectations and demands of all citizens, including the poor.

Of all the analyses made of urban planning – be they theoretical, conceptual or relative to methodologies, practices and their impact in the field – it appears that this vision of the city and the resulting urban and/or regional organization is historically rooted in the West. Its translation to the Global South was long replicated based mainly on technical and procedural considerations, and without taking into account the human, cultural, geographic or urbanistic realities of local and regional contexts. The results have been mixed to say the least, and in reality are rarely instrumental in the planning and development of cities and the human activities that take place there. Many of the changes that take place in urban environments do so outside of normative and programmatic frameworks. The public administrations responsible for planning must manage investments and urban administrations that lack human

and financial resources and whose goals are often based on the political priorities of leaders, without any link to master or sectoral plans. Inhabitants – especially the poor – must therefore “navigate” outside the formal framework, which is often inaccessible to them (land rights, building authorization, legal access to basic networks, etc.) to meet their basic needs while awaiting the authorities’ recognition of the fait accompli. Urban planning that takes into consideration the realities of inhabitants should, by our analysis:

- be based on a multidimensional diagnosis of the social, economic, environmental, spatial and urbanistic reality;
- forge a vision of the city and region based on the interaction between urban, peri-urban and rural areas combined with the demographic dimension with societal dynamics (urban/supra-urban infrastructures and amenities, economic exchanges, social relations, environmental impacts, etc.);
- develop medium and long-term planning based on both needs analysis (according to expert studies) and requests from civil society (inhabitants, stakeholders, lobby groups, community associations, etc.), in order to establish a comprehensive, coherent assessment of unresolved issues and priority initiatives;
- formulate plans tailored to the priorities outlined in the diagnosis, given the available financial (budgets, fees/taxes, outside funding, loans for new facilities and to ensure maintenance costs thereafter, etc.) and human (administrative/technical skills, delegation to third parties, public-private partnerships, citizen participation, control, communication) resources;
- negotiate these priorities with partners involved in governing, financing and supervising planning (Ministries and national directorates for urban planning, provincial and/or regional administrations, private companies and international cooperation) to consider them within a framework that sets out the obligations, limits and potential of urban management;
- translate these plans into actual urban guidance through the use of project and monitoring tools (GIS and planning software, databases, monitoring, control of procedures and processes, accountability, exchanges between actors, tools and technological innovations).

3.2 The City, Urbanization and Urban Planning

Urbanity is almost as old as humanity itself. However, its description, analysis, projection and transformation have, over time, been commandeered by scientific and technological advances, social causes and political ambitions that aim to govern its morphology, land use, infrastructure, equipment, networks and connections with the immediate and surrounding environment. This has taken place at both the technical level as well as based on the social and economic dynamics that transform cities and the socio-spatial interactions they generate.

This urban paradigm that has evolved over time mirrors the changes that have taken place in societies where this model of “living together” developed (i.e. more or less densely populated human settlements with cultures, histories and relationships to the land).

The approach to addressing settlement and development issues in cities in emerging and developing countries must be completely rethought in an innovative way based on the scope and nature of more or less urgent needs. As mentioned previously, South cities have the highest population growth rates (Fig. 3.1). Yet, their urban administrations suffer most severely from a lack of financial and human resources for the issues associated with this growth. These complex urban societies, whose local and national realities often vary markedly, must endure the consequences of planning’s failures, i.e. material/social precarity, contamination of natural resources, informal economic activities, spatial marginalization, failures in governance, lack of citizen participation, etc.

We will begin by reviewing the theoretical foundations of theories on the contemporary city that, though rooted in a specific history and context, are also changing with local, regional and global challenges. This will enable us to better grasp the models they inspire, both in terms of the universality of the approaches taken and in their local implementation. Because of their varied and controversial nature, these “ideas of the city” have guided builders, i.e. “city makers” (Harvey 2012; Paquot and Younès 2010; Ascher 2010; Costès 2010; Pattaroni et al. 2009; Choay 2006; Davis 2006; Agier 1999; Lefebvre 1968;). We will now look at how these ideologies have spread throughout the world and inspired thinkers, researchers and operators in their effort to understand the city in its actual context to determine whether or not urban theories are taken into account in the actual planning and development of human settlements.

The question therefore is whether these theoretical debates are invariably reflected in plans based on the precept that urban planning is a translation of concepts into concrete approaches and methods. Yet doubt remains, given the seeming disconnect between the “intellectual” production of the city and its “material” production (Fig. 3.2). Given the magnitude of this obstacle, other major issues must also be taken into account, notably the origin of the ideas, methods and techniques. The translation of these theories (which mostly are of Western origin) to “other” societies (colonialism, post-colonialism, commodification and a globalized Northern vision imposed on the South) has been denounced. We must now attempt to understand how this conceptualization of the city has been historically replicated, translated, transformed, denied and even fought on in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

We will also consider urban planning as a concretization of the theories designed reflect and transform the material, social, economic, environmental and political dimensions of reality. What do we observe in South cities from the field? How are Western planning theories and approaches used? Are existing models merely replicated, or have they been revisited and/or hybridized based on the requirements and constraints of the context?



Fig. 3.1 Destruction for renovation in downtown Shanghai 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Boley)

Planning in itself is not considered a science but rather a methodology designed to meet the needs of a given field. This methodology, which is based on precepts that are often either poorly defined or altogether inexplicit, is then reoriented using technical tools designed to spread individuals, activities, goods, services, infrastructures



Fig. 3.2 From planning to reality, Huaian, China 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)



Fig. 3.3 Master plan model for the city of Huaian, China 2014 (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

and amenities over a territory defined by administrative and/or geographical borders (Fig. 3.3). Urban planning should take into account the potential and limitations of this “entity” both spatially and in terms of the population’s characteristics. Its analysis *should* also incorporate the causes and consequences of the dynamics that affect residents and cause urban transformations, though this does not always occur in practice. The difficulty in designing urban planning and making it operational stems from its multidisciplinary heritage (planning, architecture, engineering, economy, sociology, etc.) but demands no specific requirements when it comes to justifying choices.

This diversity has given rise to a number of professional practices that are often used as a basis for specific and recurrent exercises. However, two disciplines in particular enjoy the upper hand: urban planning (often as a simple extension of architecture) and engineering (civil and environmental). The social sciences (geography, economics, sociology, management and finance) usually play as a supporting role rather than that of methodological co-creator.

Our thinking – both ambitious and modest – revisits the dictates, methods and applications of urban planning based on the societal, spatial and environmental realities of the cities we have studied in recent years. Our goal is to identify their similarities and differences, and to understand how their realities are interpreted and

translated into planning practices. The idea is to provide urban actors with a path that will take them from analysis to actual urban planning tools. This process is pragmatic, realistic and useful in terms of finding lasting solutions to the problems urban populations in general face (given that they are recurrent in most cities in developing countries) as well as more specifically, given the histories of places and people and current/future constraints and potentialities.

We shall start by looking at the general goals and move on to the theories that underlie them and methods and tools for implementing them (Table 3.1). This should provide outputs with deliverables that benefit the decision-makers, stakeholders and social actors who “live in and create the city.”

3.3 Urban Theories and Planning: Links and Practices

Though often appreciated for its projective and operational capacities, urban planning can also be used to observe and analyze a territory’s material and human reality. It is also informed by various theories, i.e. a body of knowledge and/or ideas that helps us understand and give meaning to a reality in the present based on its historical foundations and future projections. It is difficult to separate these two distinct but complementary dimensions of planning – one theoretical, the other practical – though the two are rarely combined in the discourse or practice of urban stakeholders (i.e. researchers or urban practitioners), as we will see in the case studies.

There is a discourse – or rather there are discourses – on the city; our vision of it is changing, echoing the shift from the city to the urban, to follow Françoise Choay (1999). Spaces, which have become globalized in accordance with normative global urbanization models, are nonetheless born of distinct, contextually-specific local and national histories, indigenous cultures, social practices and geographies, all in the complex ambiguity of massive heterogeneity (Paquot et al. 2000). This complexity must be taken into account in discourses on cities and urban environments.

For Castells (1969), and referring to the work of Chicago School researchers in the 1920s, the contemporary city can theoretically be understood as a “specific cultural system that produces norms and values that are characteristic of modern societies; a space shaped by changes in the socio-economic structure; and self-balancing environmental organization to respond to the new needs that develop inside or outside of it, “ (Castells 1969:173). This definition is still valid today and allows us maintain certain generic elements that will guide our future analyses. The first and most important is that the city is a social system that reflects a modernity forged on societal and technological interactions. Urban morphology is changing in tandem with society and the economy. The city is an environment that is both natural and built, and whose endogenous dynamics, external interactions, balance and break-points we will analyze.

Neil Brenner (2009) explores the many profound changes that have taken place in our contemporary societies in recent decades. The urban sector continues to expand in highly industrialized parts of the world with the diversification of land

Table 3.1 The different dimensions and steps of an alternative planning

Ultimate goal	Sustainable urban development	Appropriate planning	Socio-economic dimensions	Spatial and environmental dimensions	Urban planning and architectural dimensions
Objectives	Urban planning	Priorities: Functional, efficient planning	Planning: Suited to the needs of South cities and their current/future capacities	Methods: Inspired by the reality of the people and resources available to resolve priority issues	Tools: Adapted to stakeholders' (inhabitants, community groups, private professionals, public administrators) skills
Theories	The city and urban setting	Priorities: Up-to-date knowledge	The contemporary city in developing countries: Social, economic, cultural, institutional and political organization, for whose benefit?	Urban spatial and environmental organization: Characteristics, impacts, consequences and costs, for whom, borne by whom?	Territorial, urban planning, architectural and constructive organization, for whose benefit?
Methods	Approaches and indicators regarding urban issues (quantitative, qualitative and iconographic)	Priorities: Methods for diagnosing the local/global situation	Socio-spatial diagnosis: Settlement history, census of the population and its activities, urban public policies, evaluation of needs (by inhabitants/specialists), participatory approach, SWOT, etc.	Spatial/ environmental diagnosis: Inventory of the state of natural resources (water, air, soil), water supply, drainage systems, land and property status	Urbanistic and architectural diagnosis: Territorial mapping, infrastructures and housing amenities
Tools	Information and analysis tools	Priorities: Tools that can be used in a context of limited resources	Pre-existing documents, surveys, quantitative/ qualitative surveys, individual interviews, focus group	Pre-existing documents, surveys, plans, interviews with specialists, computerized databases	Pre-existing documents, surveys, plans, interviews with specialists, computerized databases

(continued)

Table 3.1 (continued)

Ultimate goal	Sustainable urban development	Appropriate planning	Socio-economic dimensions	Spatial and environmental dimensions	Urban planning and architectural dimensions
Outputs	Analyses and recommendations	Priorities: Decision support	Diachronic and synchronic knowledge of social, economic and institutional issues updated, helping to establish priorities in terms of intervention	Diachronic and synchronic knowledge of territorial, environmental and climatic issues updated, allowing for the setting of priorities in terms of intervention	Diachronic and synchronic knowledge of urban planning, architectural and material issues allows for the establishment of priorities in terms of intervention
Outcomes	Urban planning	Priorities: Use of a context-appropriate planning method/ tools by urban operators	Social, economic and institutional elements used to measure urban planning action are identified and classified	Spatial, land and environmental elements used to measure urban planning actions are defined, identified and classified	Urban planning, architectural and infrastructural elements used to measure urban planning actions are defined, identified and classified
Products	Software & training: Creation of a high-performance, easy to use software program	Priorities: Creation of a free, innovative, efficient software program	A tool combining social, economic/ institutional data allowing for the configuration of modes of intervention, their location, graphic configuration and temporal/ remote control is created	A tool combining territorial, environmental and climatic data allowing for the configuration of modes of intervention, their location, graphic configuration and temporal/ remote control is created	A tool combining urban planning, architectural and infrastructural data allowing for the configuration of modes of intervention, their location, graphic configuration and temporal/remote control is created

use, new infrastructures and the regional reconfiguration of rural-urban interfaces and modes of investment and governance. Marcuse et al. (2014) highlight the lack of reflection at the micro, meso and macro urban scales and the power struggles these urban dynamics generate. More recently and more pertinent to our discussion here is the fact that urbanization follows on the coattails of the globalization of economic exchanges and rural-urban demographic shifts. Moreover, it now affects the entire planet and is jostling more or less un-urbanized countries with record speed. The intensification and extension of the urbanization process is therefore changing the territory and social relations at various scales.

Three of Lefebvre's (1970) observations are still valid today. The first is the idea of urban centrality based on a concentration of inhabitants, infrastructures and activities. For the author, this centrality, which is economic and political first and foremost, is the result of the capitalist mode of production that now pervades the world. This echoes what we now refer to globalization, which is a process that is recognized for its largely economic dimension and wherein cities are a structuring element (Newman and Thornley 2011; Bolay 2006; Sassen 2000). However, we must also manage new rarities such as space, land and water, as well as climatic conditions, which further complexifies the urban reality. Lefebvre was far ahead of his time when he predicted the major environmental and service supply issues contemporary cities would one day face (Bolay 2012). Finally, this human, environmental and technological complexity makes the urban phenomenon a reality that 'fragmentary sciences,' as Lefebvre called them (i.e. disciplines of and relating to the city), can only partially analyze. Truly understanding this complexity requires an interdisciplinary vision that transcends scientific divisions (Bolay 1995).

As Scott and Storper (2013) point out, the debate is endless. The clash between different schools of thought is inevitable given that the subject itself is in constant transformation. While some deny the existence of 'urban singularity,' others conversely dissect cities' divergent natures (the global city (Sassen 1991), the neo-liberal city (Storper 2016), the creative city,¹ the ordinary city (Robinson 2006), the postmodern city (Newman 1995) and the smart city (Marsal-Llacuna et al. 2015)). The disembodied virtuality of new communication technologies have not replaced the physical/human reality. Rather, they reinforce these links and extend them sociologically and spatially (Riggs and Gordon 2015; Shiode 2000). Cities are also places where power (political namely, in the form of national, regional and/or local authorities, depending on the city) concentrates. However, this power is not only political; in their socio-territorial context, cities are places for decisions that have an impact well beyond their borders (public administrations, banks, small/large companies, lobbies, etc.) (Parker 2010).

These typological distinctions are real and merit investigation. Certain general trends should nonetheless be borne in mind, given the global nature of this phenomenon, which heavily impacts emerging and developing countries. To begin, there is the synergy between economic development and urban growth as, generally speaking, cities tend to be highly technified hubs and motors of the contemporary econ-

¹<https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/> (Accessed 27 May 2019).

omy² (Csomós 2017; Ellen Mac Arthur Foundation 2017; Sassen 2011). The concentration of infrastructures and the sophistication of technologies and services are assets that reinforce cities' spatial centrality, economic primacy and social interactions (Duranton 2014).

It is in this multi-dimensional spirit that the Institute for Urban Strategies (2017) ranks the 40 most powerful cities in the world according to six urban functions – economy, research and development, cultural interaction, livability, environment and accessibility – and 70 identification.³ We might easily be tempted to do the same for agglomerations on a country by country basis, while attempting to compensate for what is – in our opinion – the lack of a political dimension in this global nomenclature. Intentionally or not, the authors forget that governments and their administrations also bring power to cities. The work of GPCI also helps us better understand what is happening in terms of urban planning and places where public action concentrates.

Before considering how and whether planning as it is designed and practiced today is adapted to South cities, we must recognize certain emblematic features that characterize all cities. These include spatial/economic polarity, political/economic power, a concentration of individuals, capital, goods and activities, and dynamics of proximity, gathering and interaction. Cities themselves are systems, networks of interdependent technological, institutional and sociological elements that form a system of systems (Wyly 2012). Today, cities are the framework upon which contemporary societies and decision-making are configured and organized.

These urban characteristics are everywhere, in both the histories of cities and in their contemporary geographical diversity. It is based on this interplay of similarities and differences that we know how to think and act knowledgeably in cities. However, it is essential that we become more aware of the challenges the Global South faces through the application of urban planning tools. In their introduction to *Urban Theories beyond the West*, Edensor and Jayne (2012) show that theoretical debates on “the urban reality” are dominated by Europe and North America, and that South cities are almost always studied *in contrast* to these models (Fig. 3.4). And yet, their human and spatial realities differ in numerous ways.

Regarding attention to social practices in the field, I clearly recall the authority of tribal leaders in the Nylon zone of Douala, where old Biteck (now deceased) held authority over almost 200,000 people – which is more than the government delegate, prefect or governor who actually requested *his* authorization to renovate the neighborhoods in question (Bolay 1988). I also recall the religious and sacred dimension of certain public spaces in African cities, like the Sacred Wood, which urban planning colleagues in Lomé, Togo, showed me.

These are not the remnants of the past but rather of another modernity that shapes the cosmopolitanism of South cities. It is not possible to consider the urban South simply in light of the processes taking place at the planetary level. Rather, these cit-

²<https://www.citylab.com/life/2015/03/sorry-london-new-york-is-the-worlds-most-economically-powerful-city/386315/> (Accessed 27 May 2019).

³These criteria define Global Power City Index (GPCI).



Fig. 3.4 The poor Nylon neighborhood in Douala, Cameroon, in 2013, with its informal settlements. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

ies are marked by the multifunctionality of their spaces (be it the different uses of sidewalks, when they exist, or roadsides with no pedestrian crossings and that serve as areas for foot traffic, vending and informal business). They are also shaped by forms of control, social integration, exclusion and negotiation that have little to do with what we know in Europe or the United States. It is therefore both impossible to model South cities on theories produced elsewhere and unrealistic to implement planning models created in environments and societies that are different in more ways than they are similar.

3.4 From Words to Deeds: Thinking About the City

According to Fainstein and De Filippis "...Planning theory is divided into those who understand planning through analyzing existing practices and those who theorize in an effort to transform planning practices," (2016:2). They add: "most planning practitioners largely disregard planning theory and not so often think of any planning theory course they had to take a student..." (De Filippis 2016:3). Hence the difficulty of considering a continuum that does not exist (planning) through the theories that define it, as planning is derived from various scientific fields and uses specific methods. Planning practices are self-referential, meaning that current and future planning are based on an analysis of the objectives and results of previous works and rarely question their aims, or how they contribute to a certain "idea of city" or projection of urban society in the making. Focusing specifically on urban planning practices is therefore extremely important as it reveals their theoretical and ideological underpinnings.

Returning once again to the two authors cited above, we easily understand the distinction they make between what they consider to be the two crucial dimensions of planning: "We also see planning theory as sitting at the intersection of the city and region as a phenomenon and planning as a human activity. Planning adapts to changes in the city and region, which in turn are transformed by planning and politics. Planners not only plan places; they also negotiate, forecast, research, survey, and organize financing. Nor do planners have an exclusive influence over territories; developers, business groups, politicians, and other actors also shape urban and regional development" (De Filippis 2016:4).

In my opinion, planning should primarily be regarded as an anticipatory action whose purpose is to modify the city in the long term and, as such, the spatial planning and socio-spatial organization of the urban environment. The goal of planning therefore is to make a difference by reckoning the whole, and not merely acting as the sum of the sectoral entities and projects for the months or years to come. Planning drinking water supply and household waste treatment are essential but must be part of a more global vision of the idea of "today's city" in 10, 20 or 50 years. Plans must establish an order of priorities that will ultimately be translated into actions and anticipate the effort required to do so. Ideally, urban planning should extend beyond personal, corporate and special interests to reflect an entity (the city) and a collectivity (urban society) without naivety, differences of view, conflicts of interest or power struggles. Such an approach must be supported by institutions (i.e. local government) and shared with individuals and entities who will (1) participate in its implementation (planning professionals, companies, social organizations, politicians, etc.) and (2) theoretically benefit from it (namely inhabitants, the public community, political representatives and the managing urban administration). The latter must ensure that the approach and interventions planned are legitimate in the eyes of inhabitants and urban stakeholders.

There is, of course, a broad spectrum of possible interpretations in such a dynamic, notably with shared implementation and decision-making between the

public and private sectors and given the political forces involved, their ideologies and their vision of the “city of the future”. This multiscale process is linked to the collaborative (i.e. non-oppositional) relationship between decision makers at the local, regional and national levels based on the distribution of their decision-making powers in terms of policies in general and urban planning more specifically. Thus, depending on the city, it may be conceivable to move from a highly “centralized” model that is fully supported by the public sector to a highly “liberalized” one in which the local government delegates urban management to private companies. Between these two extremes we find other configurations. Some are chosen (e.g. public-private partnerships (PPP)) while others are the fruit of necessity or indifference (i.e. *laissez-faire* or focusing on only certain sectors where the local governments’ intervention is deemed necessary and which vary from one city to another (e.g. electricity supply, public transportation, subsidized housing)). In either case, these models are chosen in lieu of others, which are deemed either secondary (and thus are left to private initiative, e.g. housing, health, culture) or too expensive and beyond the financial means of urban governments (e.g. waste recycling or the fight against air pollution).

Identifying the variations between the different areas, sectors and projects, and determining who is responsible for them would allow us to develop an analysis grid that can provide an overview of the city’s layout and operational organization. Such analysis is critical to urban planning design and production for the decades to come, quite simply in order to determine who will do what, with what authority and with what financial resources. This should take place at three key phases in the planning process: the design phase, the realization phase and in the maintenance and development of existing works.

Newman and Thorney (2011) point out that understanding the national context is important for understanding urban planning in both its historical context and current reality. Even if the national government defers certain decisions to the supranational level (as is typically the case in the European Union) and delegates other responsibilities to lower levels of the political structure (provinces, federal states, cantons), as in the United States, Switzerland and many South countries (e.g. Brazil, Mexico and Argentina), the contemporary era is marked by decentralization that is not only limited to highly industrialized countries. Decentralization, which is a key phenomenon in the transformation of political systems and can be observed in both Latin America and Africa, has obvious repercussions on the territory. As the case studies presented hereafter show, the central government remains a decisive player in planning and establishes the normative framework for the different sectors involved in urban development and land use. However, the State is often the main lender due to the more or less conditional granting of public funds and/or international loans at the regional and communal levels. Given this, the interfaces between the local, regional and national levels are also decisive in determining the degree of legitimacy of the planning programs and projects envisaged. Conversely, decentralization will have to be carefully examined to fully grasp the scope of the delegation of power – from the relocation of central political bodies to the redistribution of budgets and national, regional and municipal devolution of decision-making powers

(taxation of individuals/businesses, property and property taxes and other market and service taxes).

One must also not forget funding from foreign cooperation agencies, NGOs and other foundations that, more often than not, also play a role in urban development on a project by project basis. However, as Beard et al. (2008) note based on analyses of decentralization processes in different South countries, certain similarities were observable between decentralization policies and neoliberal policies during the 1980s and 1990s. At the time, it was not simply a question of restoring certain decision-making powers to the local governments, but also of transferring responsibilities in terms of the management of services provided to the community (water, energy, public transportation, etc.) to the private sector. This often involves heavy investments that not all communities can afford but that, in most cases, are also significant sources of income.

The picture would not be complete without again considering the city's size (area and population) and function given that, as mentioned earlier, small and medium-sized cities are often overlooked or discredited. Yet, we know that replicating the planning used for big cities is not appropriate (Way 2016). Not carefully considering the characteristics of intermediate cities would mean ignoring their potential for growth and development (Bolay and Rabinovich 2003). We must therefore look more closely at how the situation is developing in the Global South, both in terms of the perception of the relationships between urban theories and at how planning is concretely implemented.

3.5 South Cities and North Planning

Among the authors who have explored urban planning in the Global South, it appears that the initiatives taken in this area are far from being consistently satisfactory and only partially address the problems at hand.

The first shortcoming is that plan development, be it comprehensive (e.g. master plans) or sectoral, is no guarantee of future investments and actions. The necessary funding is not always available at the local level, and foreign lenders generally prefer to support individual projects than series of projects over time (Fig. 3.5). This is what we found in Koudougou, Burkina Faso, which we will be the topic of a later chapter.

The second shortcoming that often emerges concerns the territorial scope of planning. Often, potentially hazardous informal urbanized areas (i.e. land regularization, the construction of new infrastructures, evictions and material destruction) are simply ignored. Development planning tends to focus on city centers and formal (i.e. legal) residential areas and to improve amenities and collective services in them, thus reinforcing the socio-spatial segregation of the poorest segments of the urban population. This is what we gleaned in Montes Claros, Brazil, and will consider later in the book.



Fig. 3.5 The new bus station in Koudougou, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation 2014. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

Finally, issues emerge from the potential contradictions between the local government, planning agencies and residents, who are often the informal producers of poor neighborhoods (Fig. 3.6). Planning processes seldom allow for a true societal dialogue that takes into account social demands and jointly set priorities (Fig. 3.7). Nueve de Julio in Argentina has been facing such issues for over 25 years, as we will discuss later in the book.

All of these shortcomings combine and, again, can be attributed to the fact that the foundations of urban planning were developed in Western countries (i.e. norms, cultures and ways of life) and are thus ill-suited to the realities of South cities. This is what Devas (2001) concludes from a comparative study conducted in nine South cities. He found that, in all of the cases, the standards chosen in terms of infrastructure, amenities and buildings were unsuited to the conditions of the poor and actually constitute a system that is designed for citizens with economic, financial and/or



Fig. 3.6 A poor neighborhood in Montes Claros, Brazil in 2018. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

political power. Based on comparable criteria, Nagendra et al. (2018) compare North and South cities, showing that the differences clearly outweigh the similarities: “As demonstrated, the city prosperity index, infrastructure development index, quality of life index and environmental sustainability index are significantly lower



Fig. 3.7 A poor neighborhood in Nueve de Julio in 2018. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

in cities of the global south compared with the global north” (Nagendra et al. 2018: 341). Like many authors, they also add that urban knowledge is largely founded on examples from the Global North: “Many metrics of sustainable cities were developed using data from European and North American cities, and may not sufficiently take into account the vastly different per-capita consumption levels between the north and south, as well as within the south” (Nagendra et al. 2018:243).

At the same time, South cities are gradually being integrated into the global economy and are thus benefitting from computer connectivity and new communication technologies. This economic and political integration of countries that 20–30 years ago were more or less marginalized offers new technological capabilities for better managing cities and foreseeing future changes. Yet, this integration further commoditizes the relationship between urban society and its territory through investment priorities (public budgets facilitate the emergence of or increase in private operators) and the privatization of collective services (namely water, energy, transportation, culture and public spaces). The most “dynamic” cities – i.e. the most populated and internationally-connected – will be the first to enjoy this “internationalized urban liberalism.” (Fig. 3.8) What is less clear is the fact that small and medium-sized cities are the prime targets of this urban marketing and that differences between cities are likely to become more marked if management models are based on economic profitability alone. Small and medium-sized South cities of 5000, 10,000, 50,000 or even 100,000 inhabitants rarely have urban planning departments. When they do, are merely bare-boned and without permanent and/or competent staff trained in state-of-the-art GIS and mapping techniques, high-performance equipment or the latest generation of computer systems. In some cases,



Fig. 3.8 Shanghai and Huaian in 2014: new cities, construction and destruction. (Reproduced with permission from Bolay)

they do not even have an internet connection. Practically speaking, in most cases, the local government mandates foreign or local private firms to produce urban planning documents. Regardless of the quality of the plans it is clear that, for these firms, the issues are not the same as for the political authorities or local government

officials. For private firms, it is a business that must be profitable and meet the terms of the contract, with little time to spend on citizen consultation procedures or other participatory planning processes.

Watson (2009) reminds us that demographic and territorial growth in South cities inevitably results in a concentration of poverty and social, economic and spatial inequalities. Today's urban planning is therefore unable to anticipate the needs of these cities, much less solve their many interrelated issues (individual/family/community needs, projections for the entire territory, etc.). The result is slums that, located on the margins of the models applied by decision-makers and planners, are in fact the epicenter urban problems due to their number, size (area and population) and the urgency and severity of the issues they face. The slum is a tutelary figure of the contemporary South city founded on disparities and shortages.

However, slums are also representative of urban dynamics that favor the integration of the poor into urban life through job creation, income generation, community organization and collective participation in rehabilitation projects in informal areas. Dharavi, the biggest slum in Mumbai and perhaps the world, is a perfect example of this economic and social creativity (Crerar 2017). Again, according to Watson, the question is twofold: on the one hand, the planning models and practices come from North countries whose socio-spatial contexts are incomparable; on the other hand, planning is applied in a strictly technical way and has little regard for local urban history, local actors, specific interests or a holistic vision of urban society.

In a more recent article, Watson sarcastically evokes "African urban fantasies" to describe the pharaonic plans the continent's major cities are making in collaboration with major North American and/or Asian urban planning agencies (Watson 2013). According to the author, these "urban follies" have certain elements in common that merit critical analysis: "They are large scale, in that they involve the re-planning of all or large parts of an existing city or (more often) restructuring a city through the creation of linked but new satellite cities; they consist of graphically represented and three-dimensional visions of future cities rather than detailed land use plans, and most of these visions are clearly influenced by cities as Dubai, Shanghai or Singapore; they are clear attempts to link physical visions to contemporary rhetoric on urban sustainability, risk and nest technologies, underpinned by the ideal that through these cities Africa can be "modernized"; they are either on the websites of the global companies that have developed them or are on government websites with the references to their origins within private sector companies; their location in the legal or governance structures of a country is not clear – where formal city plan exist these visions may simply parallel or over-ride them; there is no reference to any kind of participation or democratic debate that has taken place" (Watson 2013:217). Implementing such projections would have an undeniable social cost for populations in urbanized and restructured areas as well as for rural populations whose land would be monopolized to create new cities. Again, these investments – initially private but built on public lands – would mainly benefit the most powerful players in the largest cities and further widen the gap with small and medium-sized cities.

Quoting Roy (2005), no connection exists between the spatial and social levels; territories, networks and amenities are not actually designed based on how people

live. Moreover, a blind eye is turned to informality, which is the only way for the poor to integrate the city, whether they want to or not. In most cases, the poor are neither consulted nor involved in planning decisions. Rather, they simply suffer the consequences rather than enjoying changes that would improve their daily lives. Later in this book, we will closely examine the master plan creation process in Montes Claros, Brazil. The results of such top-down approaches are poorly-targeted investments that do not solve the crucial issues poor urban dwellers face. The question arises for both the choice of amenities and, more commonly, accessibility, with costs that are disproportional to the financial conditions of the poorest segments of society. We found evidence of this in a comparative study of different urban services in Argentina, Bolivia and Cuba (Bolay et al. 2004, 2005).

These changes result in increasingly fragmented urban territories, gentrification (depending on neighborhoods' amenities) and socio-economic segmentation of functions and uses of the city (Marcuse 2006). In short, slums on one side, gated communities on the other, and a city center in collapse.

Taking the example of the Palestinian territories and reflecting on planning alternatives in a context of high demographic pressure, Yiftachel (2006) feels it would be useful to rethink planning based on five crucial points for more coherent development of the urban territory. These include (1) land use and distribution criteria; (2) public policies against segregation; (3) decision-making procedures (with social participation to help integrate the urban poor); (4) considering the socio-economic dimensions of the city (disadvantaged urban populations more specifically) in a holistic way and; (5) the impact of urban changes in terms of increasing property and real estate value in rehabilitated neighborhoods.

Here we are faced with a dilemma. On one hand, private investors, who are often supported by the local government, are primarily concerned with urban competition and profitability, while most citizens are focused on their urban integration and access to urban services. Urban planning is torn between these two lines of reasoning, one based on economic profitability, the other on integrating the city socially. What is more, the changes are rarely transparent; instead, much of the process remains opaque, inaccessible or simply unknown based on goals that vary according to the actors involved, power struggles and attempts to monopolize "urban capital."

If the goal is indeed to move away from classic plans that are ill-suited to the South context, planning must then focus on the different facets of urban poverty. These include informality in key areas such as employment, land, habitat and access to basic networks (e.g. water and electricity) as well as economic inaccessibility to key areas of urban development (e.g. health, education and culture) to support the poor in their quest to live in conditions that are worthy of urban life, rather than favoring megaprojects that marginalize them further into the urban periphery (Harrison 2006).

Any change (made or planned) must be understood within in a dynamic system whose evolution depends not only on the planning as implemented but also on endogenous and exogenous factors over which there is little control. This applies to all developing countries and should encourage us to think of urban planning as a

creative, innovative approach that is has been designed to face the unexpected—and not as a routine step doomed to failure (Grunau and Schönwandt 2010). In this sense, innovation that favors efficient, contextually-appropriate planning in South cities must be a coherent, multidimensional approach that focuses on the human dimension of urban development before translating it into technical and constructive programs and projects.

A multitude of variables must be taken into account in planning processes, including interactions among social, environmental, economic, political and administrative actors. As planning is often applied in rapidly changing, poorly controlled contexts, it can no longer be designed in a linear way as it was in the 1960s. Rather, it must provide for a certain degree of uncertainty that, in order to be understood and accepted, must be allowed for in the planning process itself based on communication and collaborative efforts between the many actors involved in planning the city's future (Woltjer 2000).

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