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U.S. Urban and Regional Planning history, theory and partnerships for a new century

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Abstract

Planning history reflects the major social, economic and political events that shape a society. Planning has been variously defined by scholars and planning practitioners alike. This paper presents a set of definitions of Urban and Regional Planning (URP) in order to create a common ground with which to analyse planning's history and theories of urban revitalization and partnership collaborations at the turn of the XXth century. The planning history include the City Beautiful movement, the Urban Renewal period, and the City Enterprise. The planning theories range from rational planning, incrementalism and advocacy to communicative and collaborative planning. Finally, partnerships refer to collaboration and cooperation among businesses, non-profits, government agencies, education institutions and community leaders with a certain set of aims and goals. The takeaway points are that a partnership's success depends on the scale and scope of the arrangement, and the type and number of actors. Furthermore, urban revitalization partnerships should be built on shared interests, reciprocal support and mutual benefit with partners contributing according to their respective resources, strengths, and areas of expertise.

Keywords: Planning history; planning theory; partnerships; twentieth century; planning knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

The paper presents a set of definitions of Urban and Regional Planning (URP) in order to create a common ground with which to analyse planning's history and theories of urban revitalization and partnership collaborations at the turn of the XXth century. The methods consisted mostly of reviews and analyses of specialized literature on planning history, theory and governance. The takeaway points are that a partnership's success depends on the scale and scope of the arrangement, and the type and number of actors. Furthermore, urban revitalization partnerships should be built on shared interests, reciprocal support and mutual benefit with partners contributing according to their respective resources, strengths, and areas of expertise.

The paper is structured into five parts. Following this introduction, Part One attempts to define Urban and Regional Planning. Part Two discusses various moments in the history of planning in the U.S, namely, the City Beautiful movement, the Urban Renewal period, and the City Enterprise. Part Three characterizes some of the most influential planning theories with particular interest for urban revitalization, including rational planning, incrementalism, advocacy, and communicative and

collaborative planning. Part Four, focuses on urban governance and partnerships. And finally, Part Five makes some concluding remarks.

URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING

Planning has been variously defined by scholars and planning practitioners. For instance, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Emeritus Professor John Mullin defined planning as ‘a process through which society’s goods and services are distributed as equally and efficiently as possible and according to the will of the people and with regard to the future’.¹ In the early 2000s, the American Planning Association (APA) did not define planning *per se* but instead stated that ‘the goal of city and regional planning [was] to further the welfare of people and their communities by creating convenient, equitable, healthful, efficient, and attractive environments for present and future generations.’ Former APA President, Stuart Meck defined planning simply as ‘the application of foresight to action’.² The Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) defined planning as ‘a systematic, creative way to influence the future of your neighbourhood and city, your country and the world’.³ The fact that these postulates are different illustrates some of the complexity about the nature of the Urban and Regional Planning (URP) profession. In its 11th Guide to Planning Education, ACSP made clear that, ‘[U]rban and [R]egional [P]lanners use their professional skills to assist communities to respond to social, economic, environmental, and cultural challenges, by preserving and enhancing their quality of life, protecting the natural and built environment, promoting equity and equality, improving services to disadvantaged communities, and dealing effectively with growth and development of all kinds’.⁴

This brief discussion demonstrates that in spite of different definitions, there is some consensus regarding what planners do. They formulate plans and policies, develop strategies, work with the public, function as mediators, analyse problems, describe implications, present recommendations to public officials, and so on. Despite this diversified public-oriented work, URP was considered a minor profession and architecture and engineering major professions.⁵ This is so mainly because planning is a highly political activity, nevertheless always bounded by law, and has unstable institutional contexts, many contending views, different roles, and shared knowledges.

Although URP is difficult to define in a way that is broadly accepted by everyone, its usefulness is usually accepted in face of society's interconnectedness and complexity. Planning's political nature, processes and close links to ideology also influence the way we perceive and assess planning theory. Planning theory is needed due to the many roles a planner can perform. Theory forms the basis of how one acts, and it should be made as explicit as possible, so that others understand why we do the things we do. Even though there are four major arguments for and against planning (e.g., economic, pluralist, traditional and neo-Marxist), URP can be defended on theoretical grounds as performing four essential social functions: '(i) promoting the collective interests of the community, (ii) considering the external effects of individual and group action, (iii) improving the information base for public and private decision-making, and (iv) protecting the interests of society's most needy members'.⁶

URP is in fact a highly political activity. It is very close to ideology and about the proper role of government in society, and the demarcation line between public needs and private rights. There are three major arguments from 'the right': First, that the market does a better job allocating resources than does planning; second, that there are too many costs associated with planning; and three, that it involves bureaucratic decision making.⁷ According to the same author, the view from 'the left' mainly criticizes planning for supporting the interests of the capitalist society.⁸ Although classical debates about planning theory are centred on procedural planning theories (theories-of-planning or theories about the act of planning), there are also substantive planning theories (theories-in-planning, e.g., how the world works).

URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING HISTORY

In order to understand urban revitalization and collaborative planning in the United States at the end of the XXth century, it is important to have a thorough knowledge of at least three of Hall's periods in the history of URP: (i) City Beautiful movement, (ii) the Urban Renewal period after the WW II, and (iii) the 1980s, broadly characterized by the theme 'the City Enterprise', where under the Thatcher and the Reagan administration partnership arrangements started to receive increasing attention.⁹

While the modern beginnings of the planning discipline can be traced to the sanitary and hygienic reform,¹⁰ which occurred with the industrial revolution, it is important to recognize that cities and villages in many parts of the world have been subjected to ordering planning activities for many hundreds of years. The Greeks moved from the utilitarian designs that preceded their time, which were formed more as a result of physical conditions than from formal planning efforts, to balanced community planning. They also introduced the Hippodamian Grid responsible for the layout of many cities on a block grid arrangement, that can still be seen used today. The Romans took many of the principles, techniques and cultural aspects used by the Greeks and added highly developed engineering capabilities to build roads and aqueducts, mainly with military purposes. The Middle Ages was a period when the small towns turned to a more utilitarian mode of existence, and cities served as centres for power and higher learning, mostly associated with the church. The Renaissance period was characterized by the Baroque style, and the return of the influence of the military on development, and the reintroduction of symmetry and aesthetics. Two major tomes are critical to understand city development during these early periods; they are 'The City in History'¹¹ by Lewis Mumford and 'Cities in Civilization'¹² by Peter Hall. 'The City Reader'¹³ and 'Classic Readings in Urban Planning'¹⁴ are two other valuable books to understand planning history in the United States at the turn of the century.

In order to comprehend the City Beautiful movement, one needs to remember that early city planning in the US emerged from the landscape architecture and the *beaux-arts* programs of urban design. Mainly due to the industrial revolution, cities were considered ugly, unhealthy, overcrowded and congested. City planning was promoted as a means to mitigate these conditions. The City Beautiful movement in the US was based on traditional European Urbanism, epitomized by Baron Haussmann's transformation of Paris. Three main important ideas about this movement include: '(i) the city as a work of art, (ii) a broadening of the leadership involved in the planning process, and (iii) a theory of the city as an organism that required holistic and comprehensive rather than piecemeal planning'.¹⁵ The City Beautiful movement brought together the ideas of municipal art and civic improvements. Plans tended to focus on those things over which municipal government had clear control (e.g., streets, municipal art, public buildings, and public spaces). It sought to create or remake

a part of the city: A civic centre, a boulevard or a parkway. Frederick Law Olmsted saw planning achievements in the capacity to reduce disease and provide sunlight, good air circulation, open space and parks.¹⁶

But the City Beautiful movement was best symbolized by Chicago's 1893 World Columbian Exposition. This exposition played an important role in demonstrating the possibilities of re-planning city centres on a grand scale. Daniel Burnham was the leading proponent of the City Beautiful approach. This movement was successful with beautification goals, like putting utility wires underground, improving street furniture, restricting signage, and the expansion of parks and boulevards. Two major assumptions of this movement were that the solutions to the urban crisis were to be focused on the reform of the city itself, rather than to withdrawal to new towns and the abandonment of the city, and that the central city should have precedence over the periphery. Based on this philosophy of intervention, a group of rich merchants asked Burnham to develop a plan to boost business in Chicago. This request resulted in the 1909 Plan of Chicago and the Wacker's Manual of the Plan of Chicago. These two documents assumed the proportions of a real reform movement, where the predominant idea was that structured, orderly public buildings, circulatory systems and civic landscapes would result in an enlightened citizenry.¹⁷ Burnham's 'make no little plans!' motto is probably best exemplified by the Mall in Washington, D.C., with its vistas, symmetry and axial layouts.

The critics of this movement argued that it was no more than municipal cosmetic, it forgot housing, schools and sanitation. Some grand plans remained unrealized, due to enormous costs and lack of political will. Peter Hall argued that it was 'planning for display, architecture as theatre and design intended to impress.'¹⁸ In addition, although there were efforts to promote the plans, for instance with the Wacker's Manual of the Plan of Chicago, these visions tended to lack public participation during the making of the plan, mainly because political power was exercised with a top-down approach to accomplish city boosterism via public space improvements and public art.

The URP's utopian phase in the US is well represented by Ebenezer Howard's Garden City movement. The 1920s saw cities grow due to the beginning of the automobile age and the appearance of the first planning tools and zoning ordinances. This was followed by the Regional Planning

Association of America's (RPAA) attempts to address regional problems; while the Roosevelt administration enacted the New Deal policies to face the problems created by the great depression. Attention was primarily given to economic planning, and to the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The war effort led planning to concentrate on strategies of production, while mass production of housing to accommodate returning military personnel soon ensued.

About the same time, modernism ideals were being presented by Le Corbusier (e.g., 'machines for living') and by Frank Lloyd Wright (e.g., Broadacre City). In 1956, the National Defense Highway Act was passed and the suburbanization of population, which coincided with the suburbanization of economic activity (jobs, retail, and later entertainment) gained national recognition. Some of the forces behind the suburbanization process were mortgage finance, high employment and income levels, automobile ownership, expansion of the national highway system, improvements in electronic communication, baby boom and suburban housing boom.¹⁹

The Urban Renewal period was a time of intense redevelopment. It was also a time of social convulsion and criticism that ended in environmental planning requirements during the 1970s. Jane Jacobs and Paul Davidoff contributed greatly to our understanding of URP during the Urban Renewal period.²⁰ Urban Renewal was a way to deal with the difficulties that city centres faced when competing with the suburbs. Urban Renewal started as slum clearance and a housing program. Unfortunate sayings from this period were that 'what looks like a slum is a slum,' and 'urban renewal equals Negro removal.' Title 1 of the Housing and Slum Clearance Act of 1949 launched a series of measures aimed at redeveloping downtown areas in the US. This was the legislative mandate for the federal urban renewal program until 1974. Initially, this program was conceived to allow local authorities to acquire privately held 'blighted' land, predominantly residential in character, and to sell it for redevelopment. In Europe slum clearance was a central feature of urban 'improvements,' which were reinforced by the modernism tradition, by the WW II, and by the assumption that old cores could be opened up to accommodate automobile traffic indefinitely.

In the US during the 1960s, community-based movements strongly resisted redevelopment schemes that would displace neighbourhood residents. As a response to these complaints, the federal government passed the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act in 1966, which was

aimed at community preservation, coordination of physical and social planning and rehabilitation rather than demolition.²¹ In 1974, these two acts ended with the passage of the Housing and Community Development Act, which introduced the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). CDBG funds could be used for a broad variety of redevelopment activities, and local discretion concerning its use has varied depending on the policies of the national administration in power. The CDBG program remained the principal federal program subsidizing urban redevelopment, although it was argued that ‘its funding level shrunk[ed] substantially’.²² In addition to this decrease in federal funding, the out-migration of affluent residents to the suburbs contributed to what became known as the ‘central city shrinkage’ and its urban fiscal problems.

In terms of planning history, the 1980s were characterized as ‘the City Enterprise,’ mainly due to President Reagan proposal to shrink the total role of government in the US economy. Municipal and state governments were increasingly forced to rely on their own sources of revenue to promote redevelopment. Soon thereafter, to entice private developers into investing in downtown areas, local authorities started to employ property and sales tax exemptions and abatements for a period of years after new construction, tax exemptions on construction materials, tax district programs (such as BIDs), and to return portions of the property tax or special assessments to the area that generated the funds rather than to the municipality’s general fund.²³

In addition, enterprise and empowerment zones were created to promote redevelopment. Originally proposed but not adopted, as federal legislation, a majority of states enacted enterprise zone statutes during the 1980s. State enterprise zones provided exemptions from state and local taxes and regulations. In 1993 a modified enterprise zone bill was adopted providing for the establishment of nine empowerment zones and fifty enterprise communities. This federal legislation was aimed at stimulating redevelopment in poor neighbourhoods and downtown areas, and at providing businesses in these districts with federal tax and regulatory relief grants.²⁴

Although, the success of these enterprise and empowerment zones was debatable, central cities in the United States experienced uneven development, with great attention paid to their downtowns and allocation of resources made accordingly.²⁵ ‘Downtown Inc.’ is a story of how shopping malls were built in downtown areas, and in the book authors’ perspective, dramatically improved urban life, by

creating well-paying and decent jobs for minorities.²⁶ Some argued that these jobs were mainly part-time, offered few benefits and seldom provided opportunities for promotion.²⁷

URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING THEORY

John Friedmann conceptualized four main traditions in planning: Planning as social reform, planning as policy analysis, planning as social learning, and planning as social mobilization.²⁸ The origins of planning theory probably can be traced to the beginning of the XXth century when planning started to be seen as a scientific endeavour. The New Deal policies of the great depression attempted to put in place an 'invisible hand' capable of shaping the country's economic health. In the 1940s this was captured by the rational model, which prevailed for several decades. The rational model comprises the philosophy reflected in the comprehensive plan, which is also illustrated by the policy analysis body of literature. Rational Planning's goal is to make the planning process as rational and systematic as possible. Its steps tend to involve the definition of a problem, the establishment of goals, comprehensive analyses, the formulation of alternative scenarios, evaluation and selection of scenarios, implementation and monitorization. Among the major criticisms voiced against this model there is the impossibility to obtain full knowledge of all societal issues, and that the study of all alternatives is not possible due to time and resources constraints.

In alternative to the rational model, Charles Lindblom proposed a method known as disjointed incrementalism or 'muddling through' – to a certain extent a more realistic approach to the planning process.²⁹ Advocates of this approach argue that in many cases it is much better to proceed with marginal or incremental change to a previous policy (because of the likelihood that it will be accepted) than with a totally new policy, which might require less knowledge and theory to justify its consideration. Incrementalism has been criticized for not taking into consideration the demands of the underprivileged and of the politically unorganized, as well as for neglecting societal innovations. Amitai Etzioni advanced a middle-range model called 'mixed scanning'.³⁰ This model reduces the unrealistic aspects of the rational model and overcomes incrementalism by exploring long-run alternatives. Mixed-scanning tries to first get the overall picture and then to decide which elements merit more detailed examination.³¹

The social conflicts of the 1960s, led to a planning theory known as: Advocacy planning. Paul Davidoff was its main mentor, and Norman Krumholz one of its followers, mostly advocating the need for more progressive and equitable planning.³² The main goal of advocacy and progressive planning is to defend the interests of weak or poorly represented groups, such as low income, environmental activists, minorities, and the disenfranchised. Advocacy planning motivated debate about citizen participation, and ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation’ gained wide acceptability.³³ A Ladder of Citizen Participation presents a typology for citizen participation arranged in a ladder pattern in which each rung corresponds to the extent of citizen’s power in determining a plan. The rungs are, from bottom to top, manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power, and citizen control. Arnstein’s major argument is that participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless.³⁴

Following the initial experiences with advocacy planning, planning theorists began diverging in different directions. The rational model gradually lost ground. And in the late 1970s it was common to talk about a ‘crisis in planning theory’.³⁵ A series of new directions emerged, focusing on planner’s facilitative roles in shaping decisions. Those new theories were often referred to as social learning theories, and basically emphasized planner’s roles in bringing stakeholders together, gathering and sharing information, and helping social structures to learn from their experiences.³⁶ Friedmann defended that citizens and civic leaders, not urban planners, had to be at the core of planning.³⁷ Schon provided an alternative theory based on the argument that planners should be reflective practitioners, and that they should be able to learn from their own errors.³⁸ Strategic planning came to be used by many private and public agencies due to its methodology focused on short-term and measurable achievements. A particular characteristic of strategic planning is that it is strongly participatory in nature and tries to use consensus to shape decision making, which also makes it suitable to collaborative partnership efforts.

Collaborative urban revitalization at the end of the 1990s was greatly dominated by a wave of collaborative and communicative planning theory.³⁹ These academics claimed that a new type of theorist was emerging, and Judith Innes even defended that this had achieved the status of a new planning theory paradigm.⁴⁰ Innes claimed that those ‘new planning scholars do ground theorizing

based on richly interpretive study of practice,' in a way they study planners' attempts at influencing public action.⁴¹

It was argued that through communicative strategies, which complement their technical work, planners can alert citizens to the issues of the day, arm them with technical and political information, and otherwise encourage community-based planning actions.⁴² This implied that planners needed to work in the midst of very different views and be able to formulate consensus policies. Communicative planning theory emerged based on those assumptions and from observing planners at work and reflecting on what they did, how they did it, and why they did it.⁴³ Communicative action theorists acknowledge that planning is an interactive, communicative activity, and that they rely more on qualitative interpretive inquiry than on logical deductive analysis. Communicative planning theory during this time built on the work of German critical theorist Jurgen Habermas's work on confronting practical and ethical questions about professional knowledge. Rather than forcing planners to try for a value-neutral, expert role, in which they do not believe, communicative planning theories advocated that this new framework allowed for a self-reflection 'emancipatory way of knowing.'

The communicative turn in planning theory was characterized as having the following emphases: '(i) all forms of knowledge are socially constructed, (ii) knowledge and reasoning may take many different forms, including storytelling and subjective statements, (iii) individuals develop their views through social interaction, (iv) people have diverse interests and expectations and these are social and symbolic as well as material, and (v) public policy needs to draw upon and make widely available a broad range of knowledge and reasoning drawn from different sources'.⁴⁴ The hope in communicative planning theory was that 'through learning how to collaborate, a richer and more broadly based understanding and awareness of locality relations and conflicts [could] develop, through which collective approaches to conflicts [would] emerge'.⁴⁵

Consensus building and other forms of collaborative planning are increasingly used for addressing social and political fragmentation, shared power, and conflicting values.⁴⁶ Collaborative planning is used to describe the process by which participants arrive at an agreement on action that expresses their mutual interests. The collaborative planning theory is related to place building and the need for new, more inclusive, governance practices, of which partnership arrangements are a major example

(Figure 1). It was argued that ‘collaborative planning as an approach in a multi-stakeholder society is justified because it is more efficient (reducing regulatory transaction costs in the longer run), because it is more political legitimate, and because it ‘adds value’ to the on-going flow of place-making actions, through building shared knowledge and understanding, generating opportunities for creative synergy, and developing the capacity among stakeholders to work together locally [in order] to solve common problems’.⁴⁷

Figure 1 Monument to partnerships in Philadelphia, U.S. (Author’s archive)

There are two sets of important elements in collaborative planning.⁴⁸ First, how collaborative processes are constructed (e.g., planning practices), including who gets involved, the arenas where collaboration happens, and how legitimacy to a wider constituency is ensured. Second, the dynamics of the processes of interactive strategy building (e.g., planning systems), including how new ways of thinking get generated and shared, and what encourages mutual learning and the development of collaborative skills. These considerations, which involve questions of trust, communication, dialogue, power relations, conflicting views and consensus generation, constitute the basis of partnerships.

Although it was with interest that we researched the main tenets of communicative and collaborative planning theory, we were reluctant to accept its premises that communicative practices can operate ‘as if the workings of power can be temporarily suspended through communicative planning practice to produce new consensual planning discourses’.⁴⁹ This new planning theory paradigm is not without problems. At a glance, there are three major criticisms to it. First, communicative planning theory seems to forget the economic and social forces that produce endemic social conflict and domination by the powerful,⁵⁰ which implies the need to acknowledge the relations and the context of power and inequality a lot more.⁵¹ Second, it puts the spotlight on the planner, instead of asking what is to be done about cities and regions.⁵² Third, in practice it requires lengthy time for participatory processes, which can lead to burnout among citizen participants and disillusion, as little gets accomplished.⁵³

URBAN GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS

The turn of the twentieth century brought tremendous change in the way urban governments work. The urban government became less and less of a 'direct provider' and was more seen an 'enabler'.⁵⁴ It was more about 'steering' and less about 'rowing.' Partnerships have always been an element in the activities of post-war urban governments. Yet their increased use at the turn of the century appeared to be part of a broader shift in the process of governing. Associated with collaborative planning and with partnerships one found the concept of urban governance. This concept focuses on the interdependence of governmental and non-governmental forces in meeting economic and social goals. Governance is an analytical concept used to look at 'emerging forms of cooperation between public and private sectors'.⁵⁵

Shifting from government to governance meant focusing more on process and less on institutions. Governance was defined as 'the process through which local political institutions implement their programs in concert with civil society actors and interests, and within which these actors and interests gain (potential) influence over politics'.⁵⁶ The main risk associated with governance is that the traditional public administration parameters, such as political control, measuring performance, accountability and equity, need to be reinvented to incorporate the practices of governance.

But what are partnerships? Why are they formed? How have they evolved? Are there differences between American and European partnerships? These are some of the questions we attempt to answer in the following paragraphs. The term partnership became a 'buzzword' in economic development planning. It refers to collaboration and cooperation among businesses, non-profits, government agencies, education institutions and community leaders with a certain set of aims and goals. While there are many different types of partnerships (e.g., joint management, joint investment, cost sharing, regulation and permitting, tax exemptions or incentives, and private grants or donations), we are concerned with those utilized to revitalize a certain geographical area of a community. Partnerships are widespread, but the theoretical basis for understanding their development is poorly understood.⁵⁷

Partnerships allow partners to pool resources and expertise, coordinate their efforts, improve management, build consensus, and have greater operational flexibility by acting through nongovernmental channels (Figure 2). Their main advantages can be grouped as resource availability,

effectiveness, and legitimacy. It is almost a given that public-private partnerships are important to the success of urban revitalization programs. An effective revitalization scheme needs the support and expertise of both sectors. Public sector entities are generally slow moving, rigid and with limited financial resources for the numerous areas of public expenditure they are accountable for. Private sector entities can be flexible and efficient because their decision-making processes are not subject to public comment. They answer to relatively narrow ‘niche markets’ or ‘special interests’ rather than to all consumers or all voters.

Usually, the debate on partnerships focuses on public sector accountability vs. private sector flexibility. Partnerships can be more efficient but they are less accountable. This means that partnerships also have risks, such as blurring of accountability, loss of control, undermining of public values, credibility, image, reduced flexibility in decision-taking as the views of partners need to be taken into account.⁵⁸ Advocates often present partnerships as a way to reduce the role and size of government, and critics argue with privatization of public functions. The inherently unequal nature of partnerships has not been taken into consideration much.

Figure 2 The symbolism of pooling together (Author’s archive)

Traditionally, the principal beneficiaries of partnerships are large corporations and developers because the tax burden and other costs are shifted to consumers. Massive subsidies for downtown projects have been justified in terms of benefits that presumably will trickle to other parts of the city, but, in fact, rarely do.⁵⁹ In a way, partnerships tend to divert resources away from public services to fund tourism attractions and housing for well to do groups. Two types of biases have been identified: a policy bias and a political bias.⁶⁰ The first refers to the idea that partnerships tend ‘to drive policy in the direction of capital-intensive projects,’ and the second refers to the idea that ‘the owners of capital have a privileged position in dealing with local government’.⁶¹

In the United States, partnerships gained a prominent role in development planning shortly after World War II.⁶² Quasi-public redevelopment corporations were formed in the 1960s to produce many redevelopment projects. In the 1970s and 1980s, deindustrialization added a new momentum to

the rise of partnerships. Municipal governments became more entrepreneurial in hopes to capture investment.⁶³ The politics and policies of the post-1970s were illustrated by the ‘Rouseification’ of downtowns across the US. Rouse Company built ‘festival marketplaces’ in Boston, New York and Baltimore.⁶⁴ These partnership projects were so blurred that they were praised as the ‘epitome of civic achievement’.⁶⁵ Partnerships have occurred in cities around the country and at all levels of government.

Three basic trends existed in partnerships in the US. First, there was more emphasis on strategic and democratic planning, with a broad involvement of neighbourhood interest groups, community leaders and non-profit organizations. Second, linkage policies held developers and businesses more accountable. Third, there was the formation of community development organizations (CDCs). CDCs did not rely on the trickle-down theory to provide economic benefits to distressed neighbourhoods; they sought to channel direct investment into low-income areas.⁶⁶ Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) were created as innovative partnerships to harness additional tax money to pay for additional services, mostly in shopping areas.⁶⁷ The Main Street Program also utilizes partnerships to channel public and private funds to the revitalization of historic districts.⁶⁸ While redevelopment partnerships tend to be mostly top-down approaches, CDCs, BIDs and the Main Street Program illustrate a bottom-up approach to the problems faced by many run-down areas.

Although partnerships have a long history in many countries, like for instance in the US, in Europe they were mainly created in the period 1980 onwards.⁶⁹ Public private partnerships have become ‘the public policy of choice for many European cities’.⁷⁰ A growing consensus ensued that in order to address the interconnectedness of urban problems a strategic framework was greatly needed. This consensus was based on the premise that urban regeneration required strategically designed, locally based, multi-sector, multi-agency partnership approaches.⁷¹ In Europe, partnerships have been typically in the hands of government, or controlled by the public sector, meaning that ‘public officials orchestrate the action and apply the resources’.⁷²

Nonetheless, this changed as competition for mobile capital among cities and regions increased, and single sector, single agency approaches proved to have major limitations in tackling the social, economic and physical problems found in many urban areas. If partnerships were used primarily in

urban regeneration, ‘in the 1990s they were extended to practically all aspects of public policy – training, housing, community care, and social services’.⁷³ Some American authors regarded this European trend towards partnerships as ‘an almost naïve adulation of American privatism’.⁷⁴

The European Union’s role in promoting partnerships should not be underestimated as it has sought ‘to forge new coalitions with local and regional governments and voluntary organizations’.⁷⁵ Although national, political and cultural factors distinguish different forms of partnership in different countries, for the European Union membership states the significance of multi-level governance became increasingly important, since cities and regions applying for funds from the EU had to show that they would do so in partnership with local businesses.⁷⁶

CONCLUSION

Planning history reflects the major social, economic and political events that shape a society. While we cannot necessarily write about the history of planning *per se*, we need to remember that every country has its own history and its own unique national events and societal developments, despite many of them being subjected to similar international and global trends. URP’s history is largely a response to urbanization forces and the problems they originate.

Planning practice and theory have also been influenced by postmodernism debates. Postmodernism signifies a break with the modernist idea that planning and development should focus on large-scale, metropolitan-wide, technologically rational and efficient urban plans. On the other hand, postmodernism cultivates different conceptions of the urban fabric as necessarily fragmented, a ‘collage’ of current uses, many of which may be ephemeral.⁷⁷ In theory, the post-modern challenge has put multiculturalism, ethnic, racial and gender differences in society at the centre of planning theory debates. Postmodernism thinking was characterized as being deconstructive, anti-foundationalist, nondualist, and encouraging of pluralism.⁷⁸ Planning theorists who acknowledge postmodernism debates respect diversity and difference, accept multiple publics, recognize various forms of evidence, involve communities early in planning processes and share power and theory with those they plan for.⁷⁹

Partnerships have been utilized in urban revitalization programs for various decades.⁸⁰ Although partnership's potential is commonly overstated and they cannot be seen as a fad or a panacea, partnerships can be important to create a conducive institutional environment through which all stakeholders are allowed to play a role and public and private investments can be channelized to the revitalization arena. But 'true multisector collaboration is difficult and often faces numerous dilemmas'.⁸¹

Partnership's success depends on the scale and scope of the arrangement, and the type and number of actors, and should be built on shared interests, reciprocal support and mutual benefit with each partner contributing according to their respective resources, strengths, and areas of expertise. Successful partnerships reveal 'a capacity to adapt to changing conditions, meaning that they are flexible and reflective'.⁸² It is also important to be aware of specific means 'to negotiate cultural and structural tensions that are likely to surface'.⁸³ The flourishing of partnerships should not contribute to the decline of public support for public purposes, and its need for accountability, transparency and democratic choice.

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