



Introduction.

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The present publication contains the findings of the workshop developed between May and September 2013 under the coordination of ECTP-CEU on the topic "City without public funds". The results were presented in Cascais (Portugal) on September 20th-21th 2013 in the framework of the Xth Biennial of European Towns and Towns Planners.

For years cities have been characterized for continuing growth and occupation of new areas and new utilities and infrastructures have been built. But the present economic crisis has made cities face new paradigms because of the lack of the real estate market and public spending cuts. The outcome of these negative effects is a city without resources and the difficulty to carry out new urban projects and maintaining existing infrastructures.

The general topic "City without public funds" provoked reflections from different perspectives on new challenges that cities have to face in the context of economic crisis in Europe. As the Program of the 10th Biennial pointed out, this workshop "aims to bring up new ideas to overcome present crises, and should focus on other ways to manage and finance the city with regard to urban regeneration and public utility".

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The issue - Cities and economic crisis - is a widespread concern among opinion forums and European institutions. The Workshop took into account the main documents elaborated over recent years on this complex challenge: Cities Facing The Crisis Impact and Responses¹ and mainly "From crisis to choice: Re-imagining the future in shrinking cities: challenges and opportunities"². This document points out some important ideas within the framework of this workshop such as the importance of "not rely on national or European institutions to arrest the shrinkage process" but on the collaboration between public agencies, businesses and citizens".

The workshop general topic includes a second title or subtitle "Opportunities from the crisis to urban regeneration" which responds to the concern expressed in several European Union documents. Two important documents deserve to be mentioned:

- The Toledo Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development Declaration within the framework of the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Housing and Urban Development (21-22 June 2010) regarding to urban challenges in the context of economic crisis: "an opportunity to

¹ Urbact Programme, European Union, European Regional Development fund. November, 2009-

² European program -Cities of Tomorrow-Action Today. URBACT II Capitalisation, May 2013-



chart a firm course based on the principles of integrated, smart, sustainable, cohesive, inclusive urban development”.

- The recommendations to Commission approved by Committee of the Regions 9-10 June 2010 under the title *The role of urban regeneration in the future of urban development in Europe*, considers that when “making strategic choices for the forthcoming programming period (2014-2020) the EU should recognise the strategic importance of urban regeneration”.

The Workshop has been divided into three stages; the first two were carried out using online communication and the last stage was in person at the Biennial in Cascais (Portugal). The first stage was focused on comments and discussions about the abstracts that had been initially shared; the second phase consisted of further discussions on the papers that had followed the first stage to enrich the final documents; the last stage was a conclusion with final presentations at the Biennial in Cascais.

The Workshop gathered planners from United Kingdom, Spain, Ireland, Romania, Portugal, Italy and Germany. Each country's works are representative of different perspectives of the same problem and express not only different impact of economic crisis but also different responses to the planning challenges. Works elaborated from Spanish and Irish perspectives show a common urban and territorial impact of economic crisis; others demonstrated the important opportunities from the crisis to non profit associations and youth participation in restoring abandoned buildings.

Not only economic or social perspectives have been considered, there was also focus on spatial, physical, and morphological perspectives; potential opportunities for new spatial planning paradigms in UK planning system to respond to the challenges confronting regeneration proposed by the UK group; the opportunities from urban voids to rethink inner cities proposed by F. Berruete from Spain and the perennial elements that compose the urban environment developed by F. Barrocas from Portugal. Finally, M. Alexandru analyses the case of Bucharest where after decades marked by sprawl development and decaying of existing dwelling areas, the opportunities to regeneration of the valuable areas are analysed.

All these different perspectives of the same concern, -cities and economic crisis and challenges –regeneration of inner cities- have been development in nine works which specific titles and objectives are the following:



Elements of opportunity for change in our cities –by the Spanish group- demonstrates how after two decades of unsustainable urban growth followed by the recent real estate crisis and totally stop of new developments, Spanish cities have an opportunity of changing the model; to rethink the city under different paradigms. The initial abstract proposed three main points to investigate:

- to put attention working primarily at neighbourhood scale
- to declassify land which is planned to urbanize, facilitating its retrieval
- to rethink the structure, purpose and connection of the city in a way that could improve the quality of life of citizens and reduce energy consumption

Under the title **Planning for a post ‘Celtic Tiger’ Urban Landscape** Aoife Doyle, Colin Broderick, Rachel Ivers and Stephen Walsh from Ireland propose exploring the challenges should face Ireland’s urban landscape, an environment particularly badly affected by the current economic crisis with many unfinished developments and large amounts of zoned development land which solutions have been driven at national level, with the role of local authorities being mostly limited to implementation.

It examines how communities can reclaim their localities through focusing on micro interventions and obtaining funding through unconventional avenues. They can then consequently explore alternative opportunities for stimulating urban development and regeneration in Irish cities, particularly those which are initiated and fostered at a local level.

From Germany, Friederike Günther, Stephanie Haury, Martina Klaus, Ines Knöfel, Sarah Langer, Steffen Präger in **“Young people develop empty spaces”** show us a different perspective of the cities: youth and cities. Youth and participation, proposing possibilities to value areas which economic sectors as promoters usually do not pay attention because for them it has no value. Public institutions give the opportunity to youth to participate in the renewal of abandoned buildings for their own use which has positive effects to surrounding areas. Two projects were carried out:

- “Kompott” in Chemnitz, realized by “Urbane Polemik e.V.”
- “Saline” in Erfurt, realized by “Plattform e.V.”

They were developed in the context of the research program founded by the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) “Young people develop empty spaces”. The research program demonstrates that adolescents can develop their own spaces in empty houses, which kind of instruments they apply and how



they organize their projects themselves.

In Public money is long gone: are non-profit organizations the only hope for the public city? F. Bonsinetti and E. Falco from Italy, expose how in the current situation of economic crisis no profit organization can be an alternative to rethink planning, manage services or attract investments to these services following the long tradition in United States. Authors consider cities need to overcome the challenge of lack of resources and spur ideas and solutions to attract new players and stimulate new private investments. Public-private partnerships based on a strong participation of the communities allow us to rethink the way cities are managed. The third sector is called upon to face those challenges and issues that local government cannot, or does not find important, to address.

Bridging the Funding Gap: Urban Regeneration in the Age of Austerity –by U.K group- analyzes potential opportunities for new spatial planning paradigms to respond to the challenges confronting regeneration of ‘the city without public economic funds’. This general objective is focused on five points which could be summarized in more implication of community, local authorities, business and private sector:

- A) Betterment: how planning policies are able to capture the value created through the designation and development of land and property.
- B) Business: the role that private sector organisations must play.
- C) Bureaucracy: The amount of unnecessary procedures that can be cut from the planning process to reduce the burden on developers and facilitate new ideas.
- D) Community: the local ‘neighbourhood’ level, addressing street and building specific issues.
- E) Cooperation, among Local Authorities, businesses and local groups.

F. Berruete from Spain invites us in his **Urban voids, spaces of great expectations** to change our view on urban voids, we need – F. Berruete insists - to seek new opportunities and innovative ways to recreate urban planning while addressing urban voids. But in his opinion, it is not only a poetic proposal because the new look will allow us to review our methods and look at the city as a new canvas for sustainability opportunities that would prioritize the citizens rather than the economical laws and, within new parameters, give these urban voids seen as forgotten, residual, limited spaces, the regained value they deserve.

M. Alexandru - in **Urban planning in Bucharest-** analyses the new paradigms of spatial planning in Bucharest that should be carried out after a long term of time controlled first by public power and after –the last two decades- by private sector. The result of this it that The last decades marked by sprawl development and decaying existing dwelling



areas, that's why planning should focus in regeneration of the valuable areas. This work show us how the last four years marked by the financial crisis are also marking a turning point towards a more participative planning. Especially the work emphasises on solutions on the municipal scale, up to now almost inexistent and having an integrated development strategy which let a dialogue among different involved actors.

Placemaking and spatial cognition: the way to go on diffuse urban areas? F. Barrocas Lourido from Portugal analyses how "Re-urbanization as a re-generative process seems fitted to respond to some of the problems of diffusely urbanised territories perennial elements that compose the urban environment: biophysical system, streets, public spaces system, heritage and building footprint" and proposes in a context of Welfare State retreatany resilient strategy for the city must have a special focus on local community building, particularly in that kind of territories, highly complex and dependent on technology for its operation.

Opportunities for the city transformation: the right to the Neighbourhoods -a second work made by Spanish group- focuses in the neighbourhood scale insofar as they consider neighbourhoods as an opportunity for the integrated urban regeneration. This work highlights the importance of neighbourhood associations in the planning decisions in the seventies and the opportunities from economic crisis to involve different citizen initiatives that have appeared as taking advantage of the opportunity that some sites or disused building raise, propose their use and provide the basis for more complex organizational proposals.

To conclude, I would like to congratulate all participants for their excellent work, João Teixeira for offering the framework of the Xth Biennial of European Towns and Towns Planners for the final presentations, the ECTP-CEU Executive Committee and especially Dominique Lancrenon ex ECTP-President, for their support to this ECTP-CEU project and Julian Hills for proofreading of this text.