

Conclusions



Conclusions.

Ignacio Pemán Gavín, ECTP-CEU Young Planners Workshop Chair

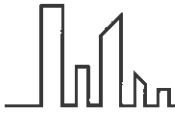
Different approaches to the problems of the city in crisis have been developed and published in various articles; their titles are usually self-explicit. Possible alternatives have been identified in the workshop regarding models of growth, planning and funding; these different approaches complement each other. But, furthermore, some common conclusions can be identified regarding the causes of the shortcomings of current models as well as about city opportunities offered by the current urban slowdown and possible solutions.

Indeed, despite the articles have carried out different approaches on the general topic, the cities and economic crisis, some ideas and thoughts on the causes and possible solutions to overcome the problems cities face in the economic crisis have been common to most of works.

1.- A commonly shared diagnosis is the negative impact of the excessive role of economic interests; creating cities mainly destined to develop new areas and spaces to attract investment and businesses. As result we have fragmented cities, without identity and disconnected from citizens. The construction of large suburban roads, infrastructures, airports and large residential areas have been a major break in the shape of the city and has created many urban voids.

In the same frame, spatial planning has been over the last years a tool creating competitive ground to attract investments and activities; and the city has very often been driven by economic interests over the principles based in urban cohesion; compact city with citizens participation. Specially the works describing the Portuguese, Irish or Spanish situation, include a negative diagnosis of real estate "boom" because of its impact in the morphology of cities. Participants in the workshop agree on the importance of overcoming the current situation considering different paradigms that have led to the current situation.

2.-In this sense, most of the works demonstrated the agreement that the economic crisis is also an opportunity to change our ways of thinking and developing cities. It is time to rethink the city under different principles, to implement cities according to social cohesion, urban regeneration, and compact model of cities and from human being's perspective. In this way, the crisis is also an opportunity to rethink the city towards a new paradigm which does not place competitiveness as its guiding motivation but places people at its core.



This opportunity has been underlined from different perspectives:

a) Un opportunity for improving planning systems. As concluded in Bridging the Funding Gap: Urban Regeneration in the Age of Austerity "The austerity agenda provides a valuable opportunity to reassess the ways in which the planning system can be improved upon to secure the greatest public benefit". Or in similar way, Urban planning in Bucharest underlines that after the negative diagnosis of last year's growth of Bucharest: "a Bucharest Strategic concept comes as a response to the need of having a guiding vision for Bucharest".

b) The lack of interest of the real estate market in developing new areas is an opportunity for urban regeneration instead of occupying new areas; an opportunity for boosting declining areas, empty lands, abandoned districts, or developing places in which although the real estate market is not interested in this development, it could be attractive for other kind of projects in this crisis period.

This regeneration of the city should reflect the steps of the city's emptiness: as Urban voids, spaces of great expectations demonstrates how urban voids can be seen as absences, but also as promises, encounters and spaces of great expectations. Placemaking and spatial cognition: the way to go on diffuse urban areas? proposes Planning the city is important to identified material, immaterial, slow and fast urban perennities on which we can base territorial and urban intervention, in particular reurbanization,

Consequently with this new scenario, cities should take advantages of this period of time for the regeneration of inner spaces, urban voids, urban gardens and rebuilding abandoned buildings. Without the pressing of economic interests, the economic crisis is an opportunity to think the city from a quality of life point of view.

c) The economic crisis of cities is also an opportunity to enlarge social participation in the process of planning; -Elements of opportunity for change in our cities- mainly for social layers so far without voice in the city. Especially, youth participation could boost city areas in decline by using empty buildings. As Young people develop empty spaces proposes, it is an opportunity for "new ideas and concepts, for election of spaces for experiments and creative use and for New forms of financings".

d) Finally, it is an opportunity to find alternatives to public investments in order to carry out urban projects such as crowd funding; such as Young people developing empty spaces points out. And also, it is an opportunity to encourage social community to support social services, adopting



a more dynamic role in managing social utilities following the example of other experiences described in Public money is long gone: are non-profit organizations the only hope for the public city?

3.-The way to achieve these common solutions is also mostly shared: the opportunity to bottom-up solutions, the importance of local and neighborhood scale, the importance of involvement of all public and private sectors. In conclusion: the need to encourage participative models, the connection between citizens and institutions in the common task of planning the city.

4.-The final presentations of the works in Cascais in last session ended by drawing some conclusions by the workshop participants. These conclusions were made spontaneously and I think that they summarize the findings of the workshop very clearly. They are literally transcribed here below:

- The importance of using vacant land and buildings, for example: Food growing, public gardens, flats, artist communities.

- The importance of people to planning, for example: Many temporary uses need to give land back when the market improves.

- The importance of the local level, for example: Lack of national strategy in Ireland and England as well as new Neighborhood Planning in the UK.

- The future for the "empty" and "shrinking" city, for example: The need to tie together urban voids, abandoned buildings.

- The future relationship between old and new, for example: The rapid urban growth to 2008 has failed to tie new and old areas together.

- The importance of the "right to the city": To what extent are people subject to the market, either using or lacking housing.

- The role of young people in urban processes: How can they be involved and participate in planning?

- The need for new, flexible and adaptable tools for changing scales, actors...etc: How can new needs and behaviors be integrated in planning or how can planning externalize some of its preoccupations?

