

Why Rethink Urban Planning?

Thierry Paquot

Professor, Institut d'urbanisme de Paris(UPEC)
E-mail: th.paquot@wanadoo.fr

Abstract

After describing the stages of the history of this new field called urban planning, and its progressive spreading in the West and around the world since the late nineteenth century, the author will be wondering about its future. Isn't it linked to its conditions of birth: the industrial society of "solid capitalism"? With the globalization, shouldn't we rethink urban planning and consider the new forms of urbanization in Asia, Africa and Latin America? The world is entering a new period in which several "models" will coexist in a variety of combinations, often for the worse and perhaps sometimes for the best.

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Urban planning, like all academic disciplines, and like most skills, must be re-evaluated, updated, reoriented, and renewed periodically. There is nothing extraordinary in this. In France, it is an “odd” discipline that is an “ism” and not an “logy” like sociology and anthropology whose main “object” of study, cities and the urban, their forms and people, activities and interactions, representations and imagination, their rhythms and their temporalities, require the mobilization of numerous approaches, sensitivities, and skills. The French critic Marcel Cornu (1909-2002) once campaigned, albeit unsuccessfully, in *Les Lettres françaises* (directed by Louis Aragon) for “urbanology” [*l’urbanologie*]¹ and geographer Paul Claval (born in 1932), along with his wife Françoise, as well a geographer, offered “essays on urbanology” in their book *La Logique des villes* (Litec, 1981), which failed to trigger any interest within the university or among those in the profession.² Recently, the journal *Urbanisme* (begun in 1932) dedicated several of its issues³ to the necessary

1) Cf. Thierry Paquot, 2002. Marcel Cornu: de l’urbanologie à l’urbanistique..., *Urbanisme*, No. 332, pp. 83-89.

2) Cf. Thierry Paquot, 2004. Paul Claval, entretien avec Thierry Paquot, *Urbanisme*, No. 339, pp. 69-76.

3) As editor of the journal *Urbanisme* from July 1994 to June 2012, I directed its editorial line to create a reference journal, as early as 1997, I proposed a “Conceptual” folder (n. 296), in which several researchers had already tried to “rethink” urban planning, proposing new “measures of urbanity”, returning to the “suburbanization”, in defining the “metacity” or the “aerolaire network”. Two years later, we still come back to this notion of urban planner (*l’urbaniste*) (“L’urbaniste”, dossier d’*Urbanisme* n. 304, 1999). Then, I realized a chronological fresco of the various “urbanisms” that are developed and formalized, implemented and experienced (with more or less success),

conceptual enrichment of this multidisciplinary discipline by bringing it out of its hexagonal frame and opening it up to other approaches, both theoretical and professional, for the simple reason that urban planning has, for forty-some years now, been completely bound to global urbanization and is no longer strictly a matter of planning practice. Therefore, a new way of thinking about French urban planning is needed, to think outside the borders (*déprovincialiser la "l'urbanisme-à-la-française"*), locating what it is currently able to offer and help it invent that which will allow it to react to the globalization of the discipline, making it less constrained by such homogenizing forces.

In the same way that the overwhelming majority of established structures almost everywhere on Earth (community facilities, buildings, lots, towers, slums, villas, warehouses...) do not originate solely from the work of architects, "cities" themselves often "grow" without an overall plan, without any coordination between various urban plans and deployment of infrastructure, without collective reflection, without real

theorized and published during the course of the 20th century ("De la ville à l'urbain", *Urbanisme* n. 309, 1999). Meanwhile, we questioned the notions of gender ("Féminin", *Urbanisme* n. 302, 1998) and that of "user" (*Urbanisme* n. 307, 1999). Subsequently, we explored new themes: "Temps et territoires" (*Urbanisme* n. 320, 2001), "Tendances 2030" (n. 334, 2004), "Les chemins de la démocratie" (*Urbanisme* n. 342, 2005), the "Espace(s) public(s)" (*Urbanisme* n. 346, 2006), "Marcher" (*Urbanisme* n. 359, 2008), "À bicyclette" (*Urbanisme* n. 366, 2009), the "Petits riens urbains" (*Urbanisme* n. 370, 2010), "Jeunes: lieux et liens" (*Urbanisme* n. 375, 2010), "Aires numériques" (*Urbanisme* n. 376, 2011) "Modèles urbains" (*Urbanisme* n. 333, 2012). Is it necessary to say that the environmental concern traversed and traverses each issue and the majority of articles, not as much as I would have liked...

territorial policies, but at the initiative of financial opportunities, autocratic decisions, investment promoters, derogations to the law, the will of the mayor, etc. In the past, when a more or less binding urban planning project was realized, the extension of urban zones and the creation of new districts responded to state regulations and administrative control, for example, the French “new towns”. In the Anglo-Saxon world, urban planning and urban design, supported by urban studies, have favored a more concerted, decentralized and often private urbanization, as in the case of garden cities, or a public one, as in the case of “new towns”, as well as sometimes a mixed urbanization, based on a “private/public partnership” that is well-appreciated by the neo-liberals, e.g., the development of the London docks.

Professional practices differ from one country to another and over time, not forgetting that in its infancy urban planning was strongly patriotic, Nation-States were often constituted by (United States, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Greece...) or reinforced through (France, Great Britain, The Netherlands, Spain, Portugal...) colonization and large cities had to express their ambient modernity and their triumphant singularity. This modernity was nourished by the industrialization and mechanization of agriculture, provoking a significant “rural exodus” and a geographical expansion of cities concomitant to their population growth. Railways linked the towns between them, weaving an urban network that crossed borders and generalized a new spatio-temporal universe that each, more or

less, made their own. Infrastructures, signaling this modernity, were needed: train stations, tramways, subways, zoos, department stores, theaters, museums, luxury hotels, nightlife and its electricity, parks and public gardens, etc. But, if this modernity seemed the same in London, Vienna or Berlin, the urban plan and its architectural achievements sought to retain a particular character and to promote a well-defined style.

I. Solid Cities and Liquid Urban

Cities are thus considered as multipliers of both material and spiritual wealth. The modern cities are self-affirmed “productivists”. The smoke winding into the sky from a chimney proudly placed in the center of a factory is the emblematic symbol. Yet, since the birth of housing estates and workers neighborhoods, associations for the protection of nature have wondered about the harmful effects of these fumes spat out into the sky on the lives of birds (nesting, seasonal migration, air pockets around the factory chimneys, etc.) and of the release of polluted water into neighboring rivers on the local fauna and flora. In Manchester, a manufacturing city, a Police Act from 1792 (completed in 1828) authorized Police Commissioners to “take any steps which may be necessary for compelling owners and occupiers of steam engines and fire engines to construct the fireplaces and chimneys thereof respectively in such a manner as

most effectually to destroy and consume the smoke arising therefrom”⁴. By 1800, these commissioners created a Nuisance Committee that condemned any air pollution. Such committees appeared in several cities, though without the hoped for success. In the West at that time there was complete faith in Science and Technology, which shapes, it is well known, Progress. Everything is better by going faster! The recalcitrant to this kind of one-way progress belongs to the past, finding innovations to be fearful, at least this is the opinion of proponents of the rash deployment of technology! Yet, in retrospect, without idealizing the city of yore, the “productivist” city increased segregations and exclusions by inscribing them into the urbanized territory, all the while placing stress on their inhabitants, standardizing their behavior and dictating their movements (the famous “commuters”).

The “productivist” city reconfigures its surroundings by imposing its territorial division of labor; at first glance, the archipelago form corresponds well to the “putting out system” that was already organizing the textile industry at the end of the 18th century. Everything about this form will later inform the automobile business model that is centered around the parent plant (e.g., in Sochaux, France where Peugeot is the primary employer or in Detroit in the United States where the entire economy of the city depends upon automobile production). The

4) Cf. S. Mosley, 2001. *The Chimney of the World*, Cambridge: The White Horse Press, p. 137, cited by Charles-François Mathis, 2010. *Nature We Trust. Les paysages anglais à l'ère industrielle*, Paris: Presses de l'université Paris Sorbonne. p. 173.

city-dweller is a migrant, the word “nomad” sticks to her skin (this term begins to be used in the American press at the beginning of the 1890s), as if the rural exodus, having become critical, changed into a de-sedentarization constitutive of this new nomadic life (the word “exodus” contains within itself a terrible suffering and violence that makes us think back to the Exodus in the Bible or, closer to home, the years 1939-1940 in France during the war with Nazi Germany). These forced migrations are generalized and accelerated with the capitalism of globalized immateriality. Henceforth, the key word is “flexibility”, another way of saying “interim work”, “part-time work”, “unemployment”, “internship”, and “insecurity”. One also speaks of “mobility”, professional as well as territorial. *The Guinness Book of World Records* shows each year, with satisfaction, the average number of relocations of the common American citizen (currently eleven times during her life!). This figure exploded with the advent of a financed and globalized capitalism that trivializes the delocalization/relocation of industries and services, especially with the generalization of new information and telecommunication technologies that locate each user virtually, “*hors sol*”, in a geography limited to points. What may seem like a new liberty (“My house is in my laptop and I live territorially detached!”) quickly turns into a hellish addiction that blurs both time and space, the guarantors of privacy. Sure, “I’m available anytime and anywhere,” but “when and where can I shape my world?”

The “productivist” city is designed by and for creditworthy and healthy assets (and restricted by diverse credits). With the option of technological change, the “productivist” city is “festive”, “distracting”, “intelligent”, “creative”, and many other adjectives generated by urban marketing that create economic resilience and generate “events” (Olympic Games, World Cup Soccer, marathons, Gay Pride parades, Techno Parades, etc.). As such, deindustrialization frees industrial wastelands to be invested in by businesses (often a handful of international enterprises) and leisure time activities and the “productivist” city metamorphizes into a city dedicated to “fun shopping” and large-scale tourism. However, this conversion is not always possible and a city with obsolete industries and no workers is judged useless, surviving in a bleak and depressed landscape. Countless mono-industry cities throughout the world are becoming depopulated, abandoning to the wind their vast empty warehouses and to the ghosts their immense deserted workshops. Cities, like civilizations, are also mortal, something we pretend to forget. Rare are those that still possess enough resilient force; the mono-industry fought against cities such as Detroit where the automobile industry seemed indestructible and it was thus considered unnecessary to maintain other activities. As soon as the assembly lines stop, the protections that benefit the blue-collar worker fade and unemployment falls on the city like a swarm of locusts that will devastate everything. These stricken cities depopulate and the locals who stay do so because they

have no other choice than survival and are condemned to "odd jobs" that are tied to an informal economy and a nascent urban agriculture in improvised gardens that produce just enough not to starve.

Following Zygmunt Bauman⁵, I adopt his adjective "liquid" which I adapt to the city by proposing the expression "liquid urban". In *Liquid Life* (2005), he explains: "A 'liquid modern' society is one in which changes are occurring so fast that its members cannot successfully form habits and routines to deal with these changes." Capitalism, and thus productivism, knows a "solid" phase and a "liquid" phase and certainly numerous mixed, creolized, and hybrid forms. Moreover, these phases do not mechanically follow one another but coexist, even if it is the "liquid" phase that is necessary as a stirring force. "Solid" thus corresponds to capitalism, for example, in the factory town, with its housing estates and allotments, its staff housing (all of which constitute the real-estate of the company, as in Clermont-Ferrand, France, where Michelin fabricates tires, or in countless factory cities of the former Soviet block as well as in China, which is currently undergoing a (re)conversion to a capitalism that is more or less nationalized). "Solid" employers present themselves

5) Zygmunt Bauman, born in 1925 in Poland, had to leave during the "anti-Semitic wave" of 1968. It was then that he became a sociologist in Britain, at the University of Leeds. He examines his concept of "liquid" in various fields, *Liquid Life* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), citation from p. 7 of French translation [*La Vie liquide* (Le Rouergue/Chambon, 2006)], but also in *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003) and in *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007).

as familial and local. The “solid” working class proves to be disciplined, skilled, organized and housed. The father is admittedly happy that his son succeeds him at the factory. The machine tools are maintained, repaired, modernized, and are more or less long-lasting. All activity takes place according to an established temporal procedure. “Liquid” capitalism needs instability, built-in obsolescence, discontinuity, and instantaneity. In such a case, capital is financed and globalized (one does not really know who possesses what); management is unstable (the group of decision makers – among which we find few women – is in no way tied to a “corporate culture”, everyone is interchangeable, e.g., the boss of a petroleum company becomes the CEO of a group of superstores before accepting the position of Director at a multinational bank); and the “liquid” employees no longer enjoy resident housing, instead residing where they can and going to the office using their own means (being chauffeured in a company car belongs to the “solid” past), and they are no longer assured a job for life, they become in charge of updating their skills, furnishing their own professional equipment, and self-managing their work. The “liquid” urban produced by this “liquid” capitalism is comprised of a-geographical “technical platforms” linked together by highways, high-speed railways, airplanes, and sprawling, overpopulated “global cities” lacking in quality. The coexistence of “solid” and “liquid” capitalism is plain to see in France where the “solid” urban is neighbors with the “fluid” urban, both remaining

essential to the dominant “productivist” model.

II. Of Urban Planning

The French word “urbanisme” [urban planning] appears, for the first time it seems, in the title of an article, “L’urbanisme. Étude historique, géographique et économique”⁶, published in 1910 by Pierre Clerget, then a professor at the Ecole supérieure de Commerce de Lyon, in the *Bulletin de la société neuchâteloise de géographie* (volume XX 1909-1910), and is clarified but once over the course of the text. The text also contains a subheading (“III – L’urbanisme au XIXe siècle”) without being further defined. So we can ask ourselves if it is not the text that proposes the term? Neither the author (whose future books and articles will focus on the subject) nor the editor (Georges Knapp, 1855-1921) will bother to present this concept; so is this to say that it is neither surprising nor new, even if no contemporary dictionary mentions it?⁷ A year later, the word “urban planner” [*urbaniste*] is claimed by the founding members (Agache, Auburtin, Bérard, Hébrard, Jaussely, Parenty, Prost and the landscape architects Forestier and Redont) of the Société française des architectes-

6) Pierre Clerget, 1909-1910. L’urbanisme. Étude historique, géographique et économique, *Bulletin de la société neuchâteloise de géographie*, Vol. 20, pp. 213-231. [“Urban Planning. An historical, geographic and economic study.”]

7) Cf. Le Bulletin a-t-il inventé le concept d’urbanisme? 2011, *La “Pensée du Monde”: une société de géographie à la Belle Epoque*, eds. Patrick Rérat and Etienne Piguet, Neuchâtel: Editions Alphil, pp. 173-179.

urbanistes (SFAU); whose statutes were laid down in 1914. Before examining the French case, we must indicate the geo-historical framework conducive to the development of this “urban planning”.

We agree to consider, following the claim made by historian Françoise Choay, the Catalonian engineer and politician Idelfonso Cerdà (1815-1876) to be the one who coined the term *urbanizacion*. But note that *urbanismo* in Spanish means “*urbanisme*” which is derived from French, meaning that Cerdà’s suggestion for a term was not really “taken” from his own country. In Madrid in 1867, Cerdà published, *La Teoria general de la urbanizacion* [*General theory of urbanization*]; the first two volumes of the first part of a work which was intended to have a total of four volumes. In it, he says that he must forge a new word to describe a new science that studies the “set of principles, doctrines and rules to be applied in constructions and their grouping, far from (...) corrupting the faculties (...) of social man, they contribute to his development and enhance individual well-being and public happiness.”⁸ The implementation of the topographic map of Barcelona and the layout of the road network that he carried out in 1854 at the request of the Department of Public Works, as well as his trip to Paris in 1856, where he observes the Haussmann works, nourished his

8) Cf. Idelfonso Cerdà, 2005. *La théorie générale de l’urbanisation*, Preface by Françoise Choay, trans. Antonio Lopez de Aberasturi, Besançon : L’Imprimeur, p. 81.

reflection on the extension of cities, which often do not hesitate to extend beyond the limits of their fortification and, in the context of technical progress, are always guaranteeing greater mobility to residents. He witnesses many changes affecting his society and also neighboring Spanish societies, noting: “We are in a time of transition and struggle between two civilizations (...) where the city is both the battle site and the reason for the battle.”⁹ He insightfully observes the rise of certain techniques whose effects on human activities are decisive: “Electricity and steam, the telegraph and railway destroy distances, establish relationships more frequently among the most remote regions and transmit to humanity an irresistible tendency for universal unity.”¹⁰ He conceives of this hitherto nonexistent discipline, urban planning (*urbanizacion*), in order to meet the new requirements generated in part by “progress”. “All things considered, he says that urban life consists of two essential elements that cover all functions and acts of life. Human beings sit, human beings move. That’s all. There is only rest and movement. All acts of rest take place in the finite volume occupied by buildings and all acts relating to movement take place in the undefined areas called ways.”¹¹ Cerdà presented this planning as a set of principles that reconcile the expectations of residents and the new technological developments in order

9) Ibid., p. 95.

10) Ibid., p. 146.

11) Ibid., p. 147.

make the city more comfortable and to better coordinate the activities of human and technical networks. Year after year, incredible technological innovations made in the fields of information and telecommunications tend to negate the physical geography as a message is carried to the other side of the world in a fraction of a second. Space is no longer measured by the time it takes to traverse it. As for time, it is subjected to the implacable law of speed. More than a century and a half after Cerdà, human beings (and urban beings) no longer perceive the depths of time and space. With mobile phones and the Internet, everyone is here and elsewhere in real time! This is to say that urban planning must take account of these changes, not only technological, but also cultural.

In 1889, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* (*The art of building cities, according to its artistic fundamentals*) appears in Vienna, signed by Camillo Sitte (1843-1903), the son of an architect and an architect himself. In 1883, with the help of his wife, he reorganized the National School of Applied Arts in Vienna, putting forward those principles that one also finds in William Morris, namely, an “art for all”, a “useful beauty”, from the smallest object of everyday life (design) to architecture and urban comfort, associating the expertise of artisans with the creativity of artists. He coined the word *städtebau* precisely in order to go beyond the simple neighborhood plan and embrace the historical study of what already exists and will be modified by the insertion of a street,

the opening of a square, the construction of a set of houses, etc. He is convinced that “an urban plan that produces an aesthetic effect is not just an administrative matter but also a work of art.”¹² As such, he advises the “case by case” method, the rigorous establishment of a “program”, the precise study of the artistic qualities of the neighborhood in which such urban endeavors have been decided, its demographics and sociology. In an article published in 1904 (the year of his death), “Enteignungsgesetz und Lageplan”¹³ [“Expropriation law and layout plan”], he emphasizes economic and legal information, mentioning a book dedicated to “urban planning according to its economic and social foundations”, which was ultimately left in draft form. This book was a true success (it was sold out in a few months and reprinted several times over the years) and is translated into several languages, including a 1902 French translation by Camille Martin (a Swiss architect), who didn’t hesitate to add a chapter of his own and introduce various changes here and there (what is worse is that his work has been used for other translations).

It is believed that three architects in Germany and Austria greatly facilitated urban planning: Camillo Sitte, of course, but also Reinhard Baumeister (1833-1917), who in 1876 published

12) Cf. Camillo Sitte, 1990. *L’Art de bâtir les villes. L’urbanisme selon ses fondements artistiques*, Préface by Françoise Choay, trans. by Daniel Wiczorek, Paris: Livres & Communication, p.131.

13) Camillo Sitte, 1904. Enteignungsgesetz und Lageplan, *Der Stadtebau* 7, Heft 1, pp. 5-7; Heft 2, pp. 17-19; Heft 3, pp. 35-37.

*Stadterweiterungen*¹⁴ (“On the extension and regularization of cities”), and Joseph Stübbenpark (1845-1936), who was one of the authors of the urban plan of Cologne (1881), a benchmark for many “young” planners. Stübbenpark also presented at a conference in London (as a correspondent for RIBA); published several articles and books (including *Handbuch des Städtebau*, 1890); and went to the Chicago Exposition (1893), where Charles Buls translated his speech on the aesthetics of cities, which was influential on the City Beautiful Movement and the map of Chicago (1906-1909) laid out by Daniel Burnham (1846-1912). In Austria and Germany, the time seemed ripe for welcoming urban planning, among city councilors and practitioners alike (Vienna launched a design competition, many towns had a plan and specific legislation, such as zoning). For the rest, the term *der Städtebau* (urban design) would quickly be absorbed by the German language, along with its synonym *Stadtplanung* (urban planning), eventually becoming the title of a magazine founded by Camillo Sitte and Theodor Goecke (1850-1919) whose first issue was released in 1904. In the editorial, co-authored by the founders, we read: “As the interweaving of national, civic and personal life forms a content corresponding to the everyday behavior of the population of a city, the installation and the development of this city give it an external form, the container containing the content, which is why the sound and

14) *Stadterweiterungen*, 1876. *Technischer, Baupolizeilicher und Wirtschaftlicher Beziehung*, Berlin: Ernest & Korn.

natural development of the city is one of the most important productions of the modern cultural work. [...] *Städtebau* is a science, *Städtebau* is an art that includes objectives relating to research and large projects specific to applied practice. And this vast discipline, in which operates a sizable crowd of technicians, artists, national economists, hygienists, social politicians, administrative staff and judicial persons, of which all the inhabitants of our cities are somehow beneficiaries, this important and isolated discipline does not yet even have a magazine that is specifically devoted to it." Hence, the creation of this publication and the editorialists call for "the cooperation of all our colleagues, and the consideration of our investigations and communications by all those involved in this vast sector (...)"¹⁵.

Another "invention" popularized urban planning, the Garden City. In 1898, Ebenezer Howard (1850-1928) published *To-morrow: a Peaceful Path to Reform Realm*, reprinted in 1902 as *Garden Cities of To-morrow*. A year later, in Letchworth (50km from London), the construction of the first Garden City began according to the plan of Raymond Unwin (1883-1940) and Barry Parker (1867-1947). An international movement took on this ideal and Garden Cities – sometimes "faubourg gardens" or "suburb gardens" – were being built in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Hungary, Japan, etc. Undeniably,

15) Cf, Editorial, 1904. *Der Städtebau*, No.1, translated in *Urbanisme*, 1999, No. 308.

this enthusiasm creates a debate among cooperators, more generally, over the city, the spatial organization of its activities and the quality of life of its inhabitants. German supporters of Garden Cities also favored Städtebau, but not without a sort of “urbanphobie” tinged with anti-Semitism, as was the case of Theodor Fritsch (1852-1933) who defended the Garden City as a means of protection for the purity of the Aryan race and in which, unlike in the metropolis where cosmopolitanism rules, they will not mix with other races.

In 1910, Stanley D. Adshead (1868-1946), who was the first chair of Civic Design (University of Liverpool) in 1910, launched *The Town Planning Review* in Great Britain. In his editorial he argues for the “organized city” (“In the well-organized city, individual expression is dependent on the civic expression of city as a whole.”), attributing to Haussmann and Alphand what he sees as the first successful attempt at voluntary planning and welcoming the efforts undertaken by many German cities to guide their expansion. He states that “a city is the greatest work of art; on its walls are inscribed its traditions and the history of its past; in its composition is imbued the human soul,” continuing on to say: “The city features expressed in color, texture and shape are reflected on the citizen herself. The design of the city, the consolidation of its structures and its appearance are elements of vital importance to the well-being of its inhabitants and that the development of this has in the past been left to blind chance demonstrates a lack of judgment – difficult to

understand – on the part of those responsible for the construction and for the city”¹⁶. In 1923, he published, *Town Planning and Town Development*, in which he introduces his conception of the layout of plans in connection with the economic activities of the city and presents numerous urban planning 'projects'. Upon leaving Liverpool for London in 1914, he abandoned his post to Abercrombie Patrick (1879-1957). Two other British theorists adopted the expression “Town Planning”, the architect Raymond Unwin (1863-1940) and the botanist and sociologist Patrick Geddes (1854-1932). The former wrote *Town Planning in Practice* (1909), eventually translated into French by Leon Jaussely in 1922, whose bibliography indicates the work of Camillo Sitte. Geddes wrote *Cities in Evolution: An Introduction to the Town Planning Movement and the Study of Civics* (1915), which also mentions Camillo Sitte, introducing the idea of “regional survey”; he opened the Outlook Tower in Edinburgh (an observation tower from which the townspeople discover their city and learn how it functions); and he finalized several “city exhibitions” (the first in 1910) and developed many city plans (Madras, Tel Aviv, and others).

In the United States, the urbanization that took place in the late nineteenth century, with the influx of migrants, the extension of the rail network, the end of the Wild West (and the myth of the “frontier”), grouped together large cities, each of

16) Cf. Editorial, 1910. *The Town Planning Review*, No.1, translated in *Urbanisme* 2000, No.310.

which were facing the similar problems of slums, sanitation, congestion and being under-equipped in terms of road networks and water, gas and electricity distribution. Some cities engaged themselves in the development of urban planning projects (Seattle, Chicago, Washington, Cleveland among others) often in the vision of Charles Mulford Robinson, author of *Modern Civic Art, or the City Made Beautiful* (1903). It is hardly surprising then to see a corps of municipal engineers deployed who are as concerned about the social and sanitation question as by the housing crisis and the construction of the city. It was in 1909, in Washington, that the “city workers” met to compare their practices and share their concerns. This conference has since been considered as the founding moment of city planning. It led in part to the 1915 release of the first issue of the journal *The City Plan*, a journal that continued to change its name over the years: *City Planning* (1925), *Planner’s Journal* (1935), *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* (1944), and, finally, in 1979, it was called *Journal of the American Planning Association*.

In Japan, it was not until 1918 that the first review of urban planning, *Toshi-koron* (*Cities in Debate*), began circulation at the initiative of politicians, government officials, law professors and technicians, all of whom were convinced that it was time to beautify cities and equip territories. In 1947, this publication adopted a new title, *Shin-toshi* (New City); though still addressing the territorial officials and defending the same ideals, in anticipation of the country’s urbanization. It was an excellent

intuition because Japan at the turn of the 70s and 80s possessed the most populated of the megacities, Tokyo, and the urban lifestyle would be largely dominant in the archipelago. In the editorial of issue number XIV published in 1919 it states: “Since urban qualities have a strong impact on people’s lives, it is desirable that the House of Lords and the House of Representatives begin to study the city in order to establish appropriate legislation constituting the sustainable foundations of urban development, thereby ensuring the well-being of the greatest number”¹⁷.

The Ecole des hautes études urbaines was established in France on September 5, 1919. Two of its mentors, Marcel Poète (1866-1950) and Henri Sellier (1883-1943), changed its name in 1924 to the Institut d’Urbanisme de l’Université de Paris (IUUP), and then to l’Institut d’Urbanisme de Paris (situated in Creteil in 1972). Since its inception, the Institute published a review, *La Vie Urbaine*, with an irregular distribution since the Second World War, at one point being discontinued but then restarted and ultimately disappearing. In the same year (1919), we see in Weimar the creation of the Bauhaus School, under the direction of Walter Gropius (1883-1969), and, in France, the vote of the Cornudet Law on “the development, beautification and expansion of cities”, inviting cities with over 10,000 inhabitants to establish a plan, though without much success... The need to reconstruct what the War destroyed in 1914-18 gave urban

17) Cf., Editorial, 1919. *Toshi-koron*, Vol.2, No.2, translated in *Urbanisme*, 2000.

planning some visibility. But, for several years, it was the object of the attention of various pressure groups, including the Section d'hygiène urbaine et rurale (Urban and Rural Health Section) that opened in 1908 at the Musée Social, l'École spéciale d'architecture (created in 1865 by Émile Trélat), the SFU (Société française des urbanistes, which replaced the SFAU), which held its first international congress in Strasbourg in 1923, and so on. It was the Société française des urbanistes that, in 1932, supported the launching of the journal *Urbanisme*. This journal was followed by the *Bulletin* and the *Maitre d'oeuvre* (publications associated with the Ecole speciale d'architecture, whose director was Trelat Gaston, the son of the founder). The focus of the journal was the modernization of the city and chose Marshal Lyautey as their "sponsor", who was basking in his Moroccan "empire-building" glory and his role as curator of the 1931 Colonial Exposition, with a conference dedicated to "Urban planning of colonies and tropical countries". Jean Royer (1903-1981) and Henri Post (1874-1959) headed the editorial board, the former conducted the proceedings of the congress and the latter started his urban planning career in Rabat under the authority of Lyautey. In 1934, the architect Gaston Bardet (1907-1989) published "Naissance de l'Urbanisme", in which he mentions the incredible intellectual vivacity shaking the world of practitioners at the beginning of the century, and, in many countries experiencing an unprecedented increase in their urban population. This increase inevitably leads, according to him, to

the formation of a new discipline whose five preoccupations are: traffic circulation problems, sanitation and health issues, economic and social problems, aesthetics and political issues. He finds that these problems are solved “in the course of the natural evolution of the city.” Urban planning, taking account of the breadth of knowledge that it requires (law, geography, history, demography, architecture, cartography, ecology, sociology, anthropology, political science, transport and infrastructure engineering, etc.), demands a multidisciplinary training and a practice that is for the most part collective. The reason is simple, urban planning is about urban life. However, it cannot be understood by a single knowledge but rather by a plurality of approaches. This is where two opposing approaches, one that is all-encompassing and a second that is individualizing, meet with diverging results that are sometimes even revealed to be antagonistic. For the first, the all-encompassing, it is necessary to sum up all that participates in the urban question without leaving something out. The total obtained is translated by men and women in the discipline, that is, by those practicing urban planning. A good example of this method is the functionalism of the “modernist” movement, namely Le Corbusier (1887-1965) and CIAM (Congrès internationaux d’architecture moderne, 1928-1959), whose “Bible” is the Athens Charter (printed at the end of 1941 and put for sale in 1942). This Charter, which long dominated the thinking of architects and urban planners in most parts of the world, was written by Le Corbusier based on notes

taken in 1933 during the 6th CIAM in Piraeus. This small volume, written in a rapid and striking style, includes ninety-five scansions, grouped into three sections (“Generalities”, “Actual state of cities, critiques and remedies”, and “Conclusions”). The ideology of automatization transcends all the propositions formulated by the author, he denounces the ugliness of suburbs and the chaos of historic city centers and in return advocates a rational kind of urban planning that responds to the “needs” of human beings. He groups these needs into four “functions”: housing, relaxation (“leisure”), work and travel. Anthropologists have taught us about cultural relativism and nobody believes anymore in a standardized human being that could be used to satisfy “her” needs; the same for all (man and woman, child and adult, etc.) indifferent to ethnic and cultural origins! Le Corbusier went so far as to use a standard size (the Modulor, a man measuring 1.83 meters) that would serve as a module for the size of his apartments and furniture. Authoritarian and technocratic urban planning decided by an architect who is skilled and has knowledge of the conditions of human happiness, he created uniform architecture endlessly repeated regardless of the site. The housing units that Le Corbusier constructed in Marseille, Rezé, Briey, Firminy, and Berlin are all in the same vein: separation of lanes of traffic depending on the mode of transport, housing on stilts, horizontal windows, raw concrete and primary colors.

III. Beyond Planning

The bias towards unity focuses on the unit and not on the totality. This unity does not entirely correspond to the sum of interdependent elements, but to a quasi-organic harmony, a bit like what Frank Lloyd Wright had sometimes tried in his Usonian style houses. For twenty-some years now, there has been talk about ecological architecture and urban planning, that is to say, building in accord with the four elements (in the West and five in the East) and the six senses (hearing, sight, taste, smell, touch and movement). This sensorial kind of urban planning emphasizes neither functions nor needs, but instead plays on expectations and the paradoxes of each, taking into account the chronobiology of the inhabitants while accepting unforeseeable events, usages, and welcome mutations. As such, it is not as rigid and it integrates, without being pre-programmed for it, reversibility, conversion and reuse.

Thus, since its inception, urban planning is thought in and for a “productivist” ideology. However, the “demand for oil”, climate change, the depletion of natural resources, population growth (there were more than a billion inhabitants when the first urban planning theoreticians created their methods and, a 120 years later, there are over seven billion) and its aging (by 2050, persons over 65 years old will form the majority in many countries), the unending barrage of the transportation of goods and of travelers requires high-energy consuming, etc., what we

call “environmental concern”, which we measure by an “ecological footprint” and morbid accountability of those species under threat of extinction (the famous marker of good health or even biodiversity), encourages us to rethink urban planning, even abandoning it as it is, substituting it with an eco-urbanism nourished by alternative-urban planning!¹⁸ If the decline – this way of being-in-the-world that promotes the best and even the *most* – finds in consumption, work, travel, hobbies, the topics that can contribute to the reconfiguration, the reformation, the adaptation of human consciousness to the state of the planet, in the city, urbanization and more generally territories, it seems more hesitant and less ready to so. It is true that the majority of theoreticians of political ecology and “green” activists have not really grasped the urban question.

In the early 1970s, French agronomist René Dumont (the first “green” candidate in the 1974 Presidential Election) was concerned about “megalopocization” and stated that “rapid urbanization accentuated the predicament”, not only for urban dwellers, but for all inhabitants of the Earth, he also invited them to prevent rural migration by improving the living conditions of farmers and rural dwellers. For him, the requirement, in addition to stabilizing the world’s population, was to avoid the creation of unruly gigantic cities and, following the Belgian economist Paul Bairoch, he considered that populations surpassing 500-600,000

18) Cf. Thierry Paquot, Yvette Masson-Zanussi and Marco Stapopoulos (Eds.), 2012, *Alter-architectures. Manifesto*, Milan: Eterotopia and Gollion: Infolio.

inhabitants made any urban unity unmanageable, congested and polluted. André Gorz in *Misères du présent, richesse du possible* (1997), dedicates a few pages to what is necessary to encourage “in order to change the city”. Unlike urban-phobes, who somewhat idealize village life, he thinks that a reasonably dense and populous city (one in which everything is there) facilitates the exchange of experiences and that an agreeable place to live “involves polycentric, intelligible, cities where each neighborhood or district offers a range of places accessible to everyone, at all times, for self-activity, self-production, self-learning, the exchange of services and knowledge; a wealth of nurseries, parks, meeting places, sports fields, gymnasiums, workshops, music rooms, schools, theaters, libraries, multi-media libraries (...)”¹⁹. He believes in the communicative power of example, which led him to the Netherlands and to Denmark, in particular, for that which concerns temporary policies. He notes that young fathers are willing to work less, with a resulting loss of income, in order to make time for their children and family life and other activities. Psychologist Félix Guattari (who co-wrote several books with the philosopher Gilles Deleuze) shares this point of view on the “new domestic lifestyle, new neighborhood practices” and notes that “alone are lacking the desire and the political will to take such transformations” (“La cité subjective”, in *Pratiques Écosophiques*, 1995). Guattari expects a lot of

19) Cf. André Gorz, 1997. *Misères du présent, Richesse du possible*, Paris: Galilée, p.163.

change in the “urban mentality” in the wake of the “environmental awareness” that affects, according to him, the increasingly numerous city dwellers. Here and there, consciousness groups are bringing about the idea of a “subjective city”, focusing on greater individual autonomy and on the deployment of new information technologies and telecommunications, diverted from their consumerist and functionalist purposes to be put to an alternative service, both in terms of production and in terms of consumption and circulation. He imagines an incredible mix of civic sensibilities that combine “global” and “local” and spread throughout through happily “networking” and “rhyzoming”. Guattari calls for “the testing of a new urban planning”, while conceding that “the urban object is very complex” and requires the skills and daring of all practitioners and the inventive singularities of the inhabitants, which implies the creation of unpublished “collectives” capable of reactivating direct democracy. This does not happen by itself.

Echoing these few attempts to theorize a “different kind of city” manifests some “non-productivist” and ecological innovations like the Italian *Slow Food Movement* launched in Rome in 1986 by Carlo Petrini, which brought about *Slow Life* and later on incited the *Cittàslow* (or *Slow Cities*). There is also, in the United States, the *New Urbanism*, at least in Peter Calthorpe’s version, certain actions of Smart Growth and the Slow Growth

Movement; in Great Britain, the network of *Transition Towns*²⁰; in Australia, the “permaculture” (a contraction of permanent culture) developed in 1973 in response to the oil crisis and the influence of the proponents of “zero growth”²¹; and eventually, in Europe, some “eco-neighborhoods” (but here we must be careful because there also exists an “ecologically correct” urban planning that is more about communication than actual beliefs and changes to everyday life). It goes without saying that the analyses, proposals and experiments of these authors differ on many points and it would be absurd to group them under a single label, such as “Objectors to urban growth”.

We must especially think of various solutions given the plurality of forms of urbanization at work throughout the world. Indeed, global urbanization takes several forms: megalopolises with millions of inhabitants as in the United States, Japan and in most “Southern” countries (China, India, Indonesia, Brazil, Nigeria, South Africa, etc.); the “global village” (now about a dozen); “far-flung cities” (“regional capitals”, “dormitory towns” and “urban sprawl” in Europe); slum creation (the majority of the urban population lives in slums) and a myriad of “small towns” forced to join forces in order to finance a minimum of services for their inhabitants. A real estate product has conquered the world, the “gated community”, a secured

20) Rob Hopkins, 2008. *The Transition Handbook*, Darlington: Green Books.

21) Bill Mollison, 1988. *Permaculture: a Designer's manual*, Sisters Creek: Tagari Publications.

residential enclave, like a tower but horizontal, that breaks the continuity of street grid and represents a kind of enclosed island reserved exclusively for owners who are all from the same socio-cultural category, and even generational or sometimes sexual. This “non-city” prospers (in the name of security and standard), its “decay” can only correspond to its disappearance or its conversion into a neighborhood of a “real” city (who simultaneously knows the enormous challenges to maintaining its activities), by connecting through various streets to existing road networks, thus recreating an interrupted continuity.²²

Each of these urban “geo-types” (the practices they support, the populations they bring together, the powers and counter-powers they generate, etc.) does not enter into decay in the same way and at the same rate. It would be futile to draw any charter of the “happy city” that would guide the set of principles that orient the reconfiguration and transformation of existing urban ensembles no matter where. Any urban intervention can only be suitable for a single case, unlike the architectural-urban uniformity produced and maintained by the globalization of legal and administrative procedures, the industrial construction sector, large “starchitect” agencies, consultants and “models” disseminated by journals dedicated to the subject. To counter these powerful processes of homogenization that appear

22) Cf. Thierry Paquot, 2006. *Terre urbaine. Cinq défis pour le devenir urbain de la planète*, La Découverte.; Thierry Paquot (ed.), 2009. *Ghettos de riches. Tour du monde des enclaves résidentielles sécurisées*, Perrin.; and Thierry Paquot, 2010. *L'urbanisme c'est notre affaire*, Nantes: L'Atalante.

irreversible, I propose three tracks that I would characterize according to three principles: urban life is primarily a matter of temporality, urban life results from the nesting of several territories of different scales and urban life thrives on diversity (both real and imaginary).

First, urban life is a matter of temporality, by this I mean globalized time; it is necessary to enhance the diversity of times and ensure chronotopy its place. Chronotopy consists in considering the temporalized uses of place when arranging it as well as the seasons, urban rhythms (day is not night, Monday is not Tuesday, etc.) and chronobiology that is specific to humans and to the living. This recognition of time in understanding places assigns to each culture and each individual a unique spatio-temporal universe. If any city dweller is spatial, that is to say spatializing and spatialized, she is also temporal, that is to say temporalizing and temporalized. Do not remove one of its qualities; it could lose its collective wealth! The collective temporality (history, administrative geo-history, laws, building construction and public works, construction sites, urban projects, ecosystems, methods, professional practices, performances, etc.) is based on these various human rhythms (the time of everyday life needs to be determined by each person as the time of life and here the intergenerational find their solutions). Time belongs to a temporal ecology struggling to thrive. More refined schedules can make some public buildings multifunctional, better allocate their maintenance, heating and lighting costs and save energy!

Opting for slower transportation, and thus less energy consumption, would be in the right direction, while “TGV-izing” public transport increases energy consumption and only pleases the upper class who can afford these very expensive trips. Developing another employment/residence relationship, increasingly working away from the office and commuting by foot or bicycle, would contribute to the creation of livable cities where people would not work a third of their time, for the least paid, in order to pay for their car (an average car costs 5000 euros per year!). Motor vehicles (500 million worldwide in 1990, 800 million now and 3 billion in 2050) will only disappear if the economic system is based on this sector and privileges bio-regions (areas with low energy expenditure and a high capacity to develop the “Rs”: recycle, recover, repair, reuse, etc.). Moreover, it is true that the effects of information and communications technology over time have only recently come to be appreciated: I can defer time, slow down, deny, “geographize” (“*géographiser*”), anticipate, economize, reduce, etc. I am here and now, but also elsewhere and later or before. Forgetfulness and memory resonate with what is to happen and what is possible. What remains is the question of the probable.

Secondly, urban life must generate for each kind of *homo urbanus* her own existential geography. To the urban dweller is crowded and reduced to consume that which others impose on her; the *homo urbanus* should fight for an increase in autonomy and escape from destructive institutions. The self-generation of

her energy efficient and sustainable housing, participation in public debate on urban planning and landscape, the choice of her most ordinary actions contributes to the making of her multidimensional environment, also affective. An environment is not an ordinary container, as a whole, it generates all content by changing the container and extolling their interactions. It is active and reactive, aesthetic and ethical. I wear my environment as it carries me and brings me.

Third, urban life cultivates diversity, which means that I must always demand the impossible. Urban life, in the beginning of 21st century, which lit all the indicators at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio red with anxiety, combines into one an inextricable tangle of social insecurity (and the instability, unemployment, and programmed misery that comes with it), land insecurity (waste of arable land, real estate speculation, real estate bubble and other capitalistic absurdities, relocations, large unnecessary urban projects), digital insecurity (inequalities in access to information, insufficient privacy controls, low-quality interconnections, etc.) and environmental insecurity (climate refugees, widespread junk food consumption, pollution of soil and water, yields disproportionate to cultivated hectares, depletion of livestock, subjection of everyone to consumption imposed by totalitarian advertising, etc.).

In this situation, urban planning is to radically rethink in Dubai (where we import sand for concrete!) as in Shanghai (where the floor sinks several centimeters under the weight of

skyscrapers), in Los Angeles as in Rio, in Lagos as in Mumbai, in Moscow as in Seoul. Think of the current debate over the "Grand Paris" project which incorporates the old recipes of the productivist era (*Grand Paris Express* where there dominates a material dependence on "iron", an authoritarian establishment of two clusters – the Saclay plateau and the Cité Descartes Marne-la-vallée – which will require thousands of workers daily to use them, a densification with "energivore" towers, a concretization of agricultural land, a denial of urban agriculture, etc.). Beyond any environmental concerns, few present themselves in the creation of towns and other forms of urbanization, it seems essential to understand that "the" city is not necessarily a "cite" (*Polis*).

Then why should "rethink urbanism"? Cities and new forms of contemporary urbanization no longer correspond to the urban planning of industrial capitalism and the colonizations born in the 19th century. The colonies are in the process of becoming totally absorbed into the "culture medium" specific to each continent and former colonizer. The United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Qatar) is becoming urbanized and involved in the international real estate economy by speculating in their major capitals and investing in elaborate architectural-urban projects. The three new great powers (China, India and Brazil) are breaking with the Western urban planning that was imposed on them and reconnecting with their local and regional cultures (because each country exerts influence on its edges). Western

planning produced by industrialization can in no way become “sustainable”; to recycle itself without questioning what gives it life and meaning. I see the end of the “Western era” of city life and other forms of urbanization. Certainly, *planning-a-la-Western*, i.e., productivist, will still live on for a few years through demand by training institutes, municipal officials, politicians, but, at the same time, it will compete with something else, which does not yet have a name, a sort of “beyond” urban planning, more open to the environmental approach, the landscape approach, a bioclimatic architecture, that will reveal itself here or there. This leads us to the recognition of the “theft of history” indicated by the anthropologist Jack Goody²³; several billion inhabitants of the Earth free themselves from a chronology that was foreign to them, including that of urbanization. Alternative ways to “make human settlements” based on another kind of relationship to nature and, more generally, to the environment, have already been implemented in Brazil²⁴, as well as in Mexico, India²⁵, China, Malaysia and the Philippines. The world is entering a new period in which several “models” will coexist in a variety of combinations, often for the worse and perhaps sometimes for the best.

23) Cf. Jack Goody, 2006. *The Theft of History*, Cambridge University Press.

24) Cf. Jaime Lerner, 2003. *Acupuntura urbana*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record.

25) Cf. Anne M. Rademacher and K. Sivaramkrishnan (eds.), 2013. *Ecologies of Urbanism in India: Metropolitan Civility and Sustainability*, Hong Kong University Press.