



48 ISOCARP
CONGRESS
PERM

Fast Forward:
Planning in a (hyper) dynamic
urban context

PERM, RUSSIA
10-13 SEPTEMBER
2012

Congress Theme

Planners are increasingly exposed to a hyper-dynamic context that tends to characterize socio-economic as well as ecological change in a highly interrelated, increasingly urban world. This requires a fast forward response towards eco-efficient, low-carbon, socially-inclusive solutions and lifestyles, maybe even transcending the 'growth' mode for a 'quality' mode of general development.

High speed urban change is not entirely new – since industrialization fast economic and urban growth has been an international reality, accelerating in the second half of the last century. However, urban change is still speeding up. In the last three decades the number of metropolitan agglomerations above one and above ten million residents has dramatically increased, mostly in emerging and developing countries, leading to various urban typologies.

High-speed urban change is not only a growth phenomenon. Demographic changes, investment behaviour and migration lead on the one hand to rapid urbanisation and on the other to loss of jobs and population. Both growth and decline occur simultaneously and lead to polarizations on global, regional and local scales. Planners have to seek solutions for both. Climate-risk and environmental loss and degradation, resource scarcity and natural disasters seem to occur more frequently, on more drastic scales.

We are witnessing large scale socio-political change at breaking-news speed, organised in a crowd-sourcing fashion through the internet, social networks and cellular phones. Constitutional change and the urge to change the planning culture, -practice and education demand an accelerated learning curve and international cooperation among planners.

The commonality shared by these current phenomena is that they require regional policy, spatial planning, urban design and governance to cope with a high speed of change. Appropriate planning responses have to be robust: meet short-term demands while simultaneously paving the way for sustainable mid-term and long-term solutions. Planners need to shape organizational processes, prioritise planning strategies and controls, and identify key implementation actions. We need a fast forward planning paradigm and knowledge-sharing among planning professionals around the world to collectively find answers.

At this year's ISOCARP congress we will gather experience of how planners should treat speed with caution, as there are dangers like prioritising economic aspects while marginalising social, cultural and ecological needs resulting in externalities that may ultimately reverse fast forward to fast backward. And we want to discuss how planners ought to embrace speed as it creates opportunities for positive change, wealth, potential for infrastructure and betterment for local communities. We want to identify successful response patterns – how planners can employ the energies of hyper-dynamic processes strategically, to create quality despite high speeds, resulting in holistic sustainability fast forward.

Tracks, Sessions and Topics

ISOCARP's 48th Congress 2012 in Perm will be organized along three tracks. Track One is focused on the main congress themes. Track Two highlights the relevance of the theme for the host country, and Track Three is an open planners' forum for contemporary research, practice and ideas.

TRACK 1: FAST FORWARD - HIGH-SPEED URBAN CHANGE

The focus is on dynamic urban change: growth and decline; environmental and socio-political change; natural and human-made disasters. Alongside this main theme are two other significant themes. (Track 1 has several topics, see below)

TRACK 2: FAST FORWARD FOR PLANNING IN RUSSIA

This track explores the transformations taking place in Russian planning – the culture and practice of planning, the Russian planning system, and education for urban and regional planning. Papers are also invited on leadership for planning and planning culture after abrupt socio-political system changes, and comparisons between Russia and other countries.

TRACK 3: INTERNATIONAL PLANNERS' FORUM

Papers for this track are invited on any relevant topic of spatial planning and may include best practice cases, planning methods and theory.

- International best practice in urban sustainability, in designing and implementing projects, and in policy, including eco-efficiency, low-carbon sustainability, resilience, risk management, green economy and post-growth initiatives.
- Innovative methods, including in poverty alleviation, participation, financing, intelligent infrastructure systems, digital tools for spatial analysis, visualization, monitoring and evaluation.
- Academic contributions including urban geography, urban economics, urban sociology, spatial planning theory, globalization, urban systems and modeling.

TOPICS IN TRACK 1

Track 1 has seminars, workshops and parallel sessions on the causes of dynamic urban change as well as objectives and strategies in response. Papers are invited on the following five general topics.

1A. Rapid urbanization: Steering high-speed growth towards low-carbon, eco-efficient liveability

Don't wait: A fast forward planning paradigm is needed during – not after – high speed change

Papers are invited on successful navigations of urban development towards eco-efficiency while growing at high speeds.

During rapid urbanization over the past 200 years, fast growth has been organised around a dominant planning paradigm with an economic model for development and typically a simple set of planning and building codes. For instance, the fast growth of central European cities during industrialization produced a differentiated grid of streets with streetcars, and city blocks occupied by five to seven storey buildings. As another example, the rapid growth of Chinese cities in the past thirty years has largely followed a specific model, process and a set of regulations.

During and after deceleration periods, it seems that a mode of reflection of the previous models of development occurs and adjustments are made that reflect new paradigms and possibly neglected aspects. An example might be the period following the 1970's with Europe's rediscovery of the compact, walkable mixed-use city as a desirable model.

Today, there might be an opportunity to 'fast forward' the period of reflection into periods of fast growth as they indeed exist simultaneously in different regions.

Stimulating questions:

- What lessons can be learned from various rapid urbanization phases, cases and planning systems?
- Does planning in hyper-dynamic situations become incremental project planning – with functional separation and segregation, and with investment products executed by the private sector – rather than integrated urban planning?

- How can plans, infrastructures and buildings made in high-speed situations have an inherent resilience and adaptability so they can respond to the changing needs of later phases?
- What best and simple instruments can planners apply to harness the positive effects of high speed while minimizing the negative impacts?
- How can planners accelerate and decelerate selected dynamics to optimize the benefit for the city, the community, the economy and the environment?
- How can hyper-fast global finance be tamed to limit the negative impacts on cities while retaining the positive effects?
- Do we need a 'speed limit' and 'breaks' for various indicators of urban dynamics – and if so, how can they be applied?

The quality challenge: sustainable urban design and place-making despite 'turbo-planning'

Papers are invited on successful cases of urban design and implementation in high-speed contexts.

Urban design integrates various aspects in the public realm, organizes multiple modes of transport in the public spaces, integrates landscaping and has the potential to make public spaces that people identify with and feel comfortable in. It guides development and provides an identity and image for a district or neighborhood. All of these elements are essential for incorporating (for instance) food production, water conservation, nature, energy efficiency and biodiversity into the urban environment.

Despite this, under conditions of rapid urbanization, urban design may be left out in order not to slow down the implementation of (at times) rigid physical development frameworks and infrastructure systems. During rapid growth, city-scale land use frameworks and regulatory planning may become the sole basis for site planning and architecture without the essential intermediate step of urban design covering a district or neighborhood scale.

Stimulating questions:

- How can planners and designers ensure quality in 'instant' cities when 'turbo-planning' leaves a gap between large-scale planning and site planning?
- How can critical elements of sustainability be incorporated in rapid urban development when urban design is omitted from the development process?
- How can designers integrate profound natural and cultural context analysis as a basis of identity protection, even if the process does not allow for it?
- What are successful cases where the integrative power of public urban space has been realized at high speed?
- And vice-versa: how can the desire and demand for instant urban character and identity be accomplished, while being sustainable?

Don't postpone: social inclusion, cultural and ecological conservation, eco-mobility

Papers are invited on cases and approaches that include social, cultural and ecological aspects from the beginning of a planning process despite realities of high-speed urban context.

High-speed urban processes may come at the cost of social exclusion and a loss of community and culture. Local identity, cultural and natural heritage, pedestrian-friendly public space, local transit and bicycle access may all be sacrificed to speed and known business models.

Stimulating questions:

- How can social inclusion be organized in fast planning and decision making processes and top-down structures?
- How can the need for rapid economic development and poverty alleviation be harmonized with goals for eco-efficiency?
- Is it a contradiction to attempt the conservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage at high speed change?
- How can high-speed construction of infrastructure and transportation be phased such that sustainable urban typologies are ensured in all stages of development?
- How can eco-mobility be ensured under the conditions of rapid urbanization and decline?

1B. Economic decline and population loss: An opportunity for 'post-growth' pioneers?

Shrinking cities and regions are also cases of dynamic and sometimes rapid change, calling for new kinds of interventions and new styles of planning. Spatial polarization tends to characterize contemporary economic geography from the level of global regions down to cities. We observe the swift rise of economic activities and new economies in one place and equally rapid decline of another. We know of 'ghost towns' in various places. We saw the breakdown of entire industrial regions and a subsequent dramatic loss of population and investments, for instance in heavy industry areas of Europe and the USA. We see Asia's dynamic rise while North America and Europe is decelerating. We see growth and decline within metropolitan regions. It seems we have to accept the existence of two speeds for geographies, on one hand hyper-dynamic, economically prosperous urban territories and static areas maintaining the status quo or experiencing decline. Papers are invited on case studies, methods and new approaches.

Stimulating questions:

- Could 'slow territories' provide testing grounds for post-growth regional economies?

- What specific lessons can be learned from declining regions and planning responses in USA, Europe, East-Europe?
- How can cities and regions develop innovative ways of enriching urban life under conditions of negative growth?
- Is there potential for ecological and cultural regeneration based on a notion of 'post-growth'?
- Or can migration and economic policies balance growth and decline, fully utilizing assets of shrinking cities by welcoming new residents and businesses?

1C. Environmental change: 'slow-motion catastrophes'. Needed: fast forward planning

Environmental loss and degradation, significant decline in biodiversity and climate change have all accelerated. These, and desertification, ocean acidification, pollution and sea level rise threaten the resources on which life depends. There needs to be a rapid reversal in the performance of the human habitat, from consuming to producing resources, from wasting to generating energy, from polluting to restoring water resources, from producing to recycling waste. Papers are invited on cases and methods of coping with progressive scarcity and loss.

Stimulating questions:

- How can planners act in light of scarcity of natural resources, loss of land for ecological functions, farming and urban development?
- How can urgent climate change risks be assessed and addressed in built-up urban areas?
- How do natural resources scarcities and a rapid decline in ecological functions constrain urban dynamics?
- How can the process of diminishing ecological infrastructure functions be mitigated, compensated or redirected?
- What kinds of land use patterns and urban operations can minimize the effects of environmental change or even reverse degradation?

1D. Disasters natural and manmade: Immediate action and long-term guidance

Droughts and floods, cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcano outbreaks as well as manmade disasters like wars and acts of terror seem to occur with higher frequencies and impact on urban areas and human life. The aftermath of disasters pose extreme challenges to planners requiring ad hoc decision making and drastic prioritisations. Papers are invited on cases and approaches to disaster response.

Stimulating questions:

- How can planners act in chaotic situations that demand ad hoc answers to solve immediate necessities?

- What are the essential principles for managing rapid rehabilitation and redevelopment involving many different players?
- How can planners effectively offer short term solutions while providing a strategic path for a sustainable medium and long term recovery?
- What core professional principles are universally applicable in such situations of emergency aftermath?

1E. Urban dynamics: Understanding speed in systems and subsystems

Our 'urban speedometer' measures a variety of indicators such as growth and decline of population, jobs, demographics, urban area, constructed floor area, land and green coverage, roadway and railway length, car ownership, transit ridership, GDP, GDP by sector, tax income, Gini coefficient, academic enrolment etc. They indicate the dynamics of systems and subsystems. A better understanding of the mechanisms may result in better options for points of strategic intervention by planners. Papers are invited on research and scholarship related to high speed urban process analysis and modelling to enhance our understanding of system and subsystem speeds.

Stimulating questions:

- How fast is slow (too slow?) or fast (too fast?) for which aspects of urban change?
- How does the speed of urban change relate to the scale of urban agglomerations?
- How do respective systems and subsystems interrelate with regards to acceleration and deceleration?
- Are there phase-patterns that can be identified?
- Are there threshold speeds at which processes of different quality are being triggered?
- Are there models that simulate speeds, acceleration and deceleration of various parameters successfully?
- How can our understanding of the impact of the speed of urban change on various dimensions improve the effectiveness of urban planning, i.e. what kind of intervention at what phase in what subsystem is most effective?