

## 48TH ISOCARP CONGRESS PERM / RUSSIA 10-13 SEPTEMBER 2012 FAST FORWARD – PLANNING IN A (HYPER) DYNAMIC URBAN CONTEXT

December 2012

### SUMMARY REPORT . TRACK 2

#### FAST FORWARD FOR PLANNING IN RUSSIA

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#### INTRODUCTION: FAST FORWARD PLANNING IN TIME OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND CULTURAL SHIFTS. DOES “POST-SOCIALIST CITY” MEAN “POST PLANNING” URBAN DEVELOPMENT?

The track 2 program encompassed papers on various issues related to fast forward planning under conditions of socio-economic transition. This transition places professional planners in a peculiar situation, in which the previous working methods and institutional frameworks have become obsolete, yet cities developed before they became irrelevant, are still there and are changing fast but not always moving forward.

#### FAST FORWARD POLITICAL TRANSITION: LESSONS AND PERSPECTIVES.

Case studies of planning in the context of transformation from socialism to capitalism exposed amazingly similar challenges affecting cities and urban societies under both of these conditions. While particular cultural and national characteristics bring specific attributes to individual places, the profound forces and trends found by the authors appeared to be generally the same everywhere. As Piotr Lorens stated in his presentation (paper 4), there are two sorts of conditions affecting all post socialist cities. Those inherited from the past: excessive territorial expansion, deteriorating mass housing, limited set of public spaces. And the new ones gained in the process of building a new society: growth of car ownership, concentration of jobs in city center, commuting flows, shrinking population and land-use changes. The later process was not easy as it was "a stress for all" - including for the planning profession. In case of Poland, about 10 years have gone by before people there got used to the new reality. In Russia this process is still in progress, and the inertia of replicating urban forms prevalent under socialism, for example the residential microrayon, is still very strong. (J.Golubeva).

An overview given by papers from Romania, Poland and Russia identifies three fast forward 'flows' of changes that seems to be common. One is "the fast death" of functions and related urban areas without fast recovery or replacement by the new ones. Abandoned industrial areas in case of Romania (I.Saghin, C.Ioja, A.A.Gavriliadis), disappeared cultural events that had been making a city famous for a long time or declined traditional sectors of local employment (pop music festival in Sopot and shipyards and fish processing in Ustka, Poland, A.Goledzinowska, paper 3) are among examples provided. It caused not only economic and social disturbances to local communities but deeply affected their cultural identity and in some cases led to kind of frustration or cultural collapse. This issue seems to be of great importance as unless being overcome, it interferes local societies to launch redevelopment process. Second one is just opposite - fast growth of new areas, and first of all - sprawling suburban development of various forms, both residential and commercial. And the third one is a fast evolution of new urban forms as well as mechanisms driving their development forward. A good example for Poland was provided by S.Ledwon. Retail facilities there have evolved from simplified suburban malls to complex multifunctional centres through four "generations" during only 12 years. Respectively the impact on their surroundings and city infrastructure was changing substantially. In line with that is more complex and fast changing social structure with new types of households and lifestyle permanently emerging (P.Lorens, paper 4).

Among instruments to cope with new challenges there were public spaces development and renovation (A.Goledzinowska, paper 3), new legislation (S.Ledwon), new forms of planning documentation (A.Golovin, M.Petrovich & I.Grishechkina). Legislation appeared to be twofold problem - not only lack or inadequacy of it prevent establishing effective regulations but the contradiction between planning instruments and laws regulating mechanisms of development. In Polish case -study on retail development (Ledwon) planning requirements to conduct special studies on retail centres impact over local communities were finally banned as not complying with national constitution. In case-study on S-Petersburg (M.Petrovich & I.Grishechkina) land subdivision regulations were conflicting to town planning ones and undermining quality of urban space.

Nevertheless similarity of problems is a good ground for a dialogue and learning between planners, but that does not mean that solutions can be borrowed. At the same time exchange of experience among professionals from post-socialist countries appeared to be scarce and rare. One of the steps to change this situation an idea of specialized sub-regional ISOCARP conference for Eastern Europe and CIS countries was suggested and get strong support by the participants.

## TOWARDS FAST FORWARD EAST-WEST DIALOGUE

Fast or, as in case of Russia, immediate collapse of previously long lasting planning tradition raised a demand new instruments and methods. "Import" of Western knowledge, approaches and document formats in planning realm seems to be one of options to find way out. A case-study of Perm master-plan therefore become a theme of special section of track 2. Having been made by Dutch architectural bureau KCAP it has provoked an intensive professional discussion in Russia and get either positive and negative reaction. Set of papers on that topic included presentation of concept and objectives of master plan (A.Golovin, head of local planning agency), results of external expertise (D.Vancutsem), detailed analysis of pros and cons of transferring planning expertise through the work of overseas consultants and advisers (E.Starodubtseva, paper 5). As a result it become evident that demonstration of new concepts and approaches in planning were among positive consequences of master plan introduction. Nevertheless its manifested neglecting of local legislation and socio-economic realities made it very difficult to be implemented. It requires transformation of the existing culture of administration and implementation which is impossible without greater local public and professional support. Both issues were missed in case of Perm. Besides a retraining and education of civil servants as well as local society as a whole are essential to such transformation. Projects designed by foreign offices require greater continuity, critical feedback and larger participation from the beginning.

Findings on Perm case-study was supplemented by experience of EC planning agenda realizing in Romania (P.Elisei, G.Pascariu, paper 2). It appeared that European policy aimed on socio-economic cohesion missed its objective due to absence of instruments and goals developed for level of municipal governance. Sharp difference in planning culture in Italy and Romania, so decentralized and highly centralized, was demonstrated as a serious obstacle for implementing urban policy frameworks inspired by international agencies. "It often happens that cities tend to use and adapt suggestions generated in other contexts, or imposed/suggested by national or continental scale policies, but have neither knowledge, nor the facilities to support too complex strategies, or development pathways not proper to their rooted know-how".

Finally an intensive discussion took place. As one of the Russian participants, M.Meerovich has stated, Russian planners complains on problems while foreign consultants blame them for outdated thinking and suggest bundle of ideas which are good but not dealing with the real problems the former ones were busy with. While international experience is useful even as a "refreshment tool" allowing to more open-minded understanding of local problems and international context they are linked to it is necessary to develop national planning agenda, which can properly absorb and steer experience of international consultants. As E.Starodubtseva stated in her Good Practice Guidance learned from her study on Perm master plan, it is necessary to take into account "the importance of establishing an effective and symmetrical relationship between foreign and local experts" while

local planner should be ready for "thinking out of the box" and beyond its habitual planning methods and customs.

## WAY FORWARD FOR PLANNING PROFESSION

Discussions on fast changing context of planning when all aspects of people life changing simultaneously let identify profound challenges of planning profession. "Transition" time should not be considered as temporal and exceptional period for planning justifying its current inability to govern urban development. Just opposite fast and radical changes put on test vey basics of profession as the more changes mean the more need in planning. And its dependence on socio-economic models as one can see on post-socialist countries poses a question on how far universal are the planning approach to urban development. Having lost the support of state the profession now seems still looking for its new role. Variety of suggestions for self-definition proper witnesses its current state: moderating, curatorship, planning as process management, etc. Indeed current state of profession, at least in post-socialist countries often become "an advocating a developer" who took a leading role in making proposals for cities' future. It forced planners kept rather "reactive" than "proactive" role that in turn led to lack of credibility of the profession in public opinion.

While "restructuring planning profession in the post-socialist countries and – being part of this – rethinking the post-socialist cities is the enormously complex issue" (P.Lorens) key questions need to be answered to solve that issue were identified along the discussions. Who is the client if it is not a state anymore? Is more complex and multilateral milieu of contemporary urban development demand a planner to be more independent and to raise public awareness on "traditional" aspects of planning such as quality of public spaces, sufficient infrastructure, livability, etc.? These issues are not subject of real estate market provision but are a result of interaction among many actors involved. To govern this interaction a kind of professional code of ethics like the one of the physicians' may be a prerequisite. To be ahead not backward to fast forward urban transformations new methods and tools are urgently required. A "kickstarter approach" (M.Appenzeller & M.Probst) might be one of them allowing to regenerate urban fabric by means of small scale and easy-to-do projects like street refurbishing or old industrial premises conversions that can be undertaken by local citizens with professional assistance. Following to rule that time and tide wait for no men, different kinds of "direct planning" actions have been already launched by young urbanites in Russia who is no more willing to act within existing and rather bureaucratic system of projects adaptation (A.Antonov). While it may be not a best way to tackle serious city problems like traffic congestion or old housing degradation this tool become a useful instrument to promote need to change cities and to stimulate authorities to react to evolving requirements of the citizens. Thus communication skills are to be among prominent for the planner: "It is necessary to be honest with people. Don't be afraid of feedback given by people on one's plan - discussion on it will rise not let down respect to authorities"(A.Antonov).

Apart of repositioning the planner in urban society there is a need to evolve planning methods in line with trends dominating the urban development. Good examples of it were provided along section on transport and mobility. It was focused on railway transport regarding its crucial significance for Russia. Evolution of planning paradigm from separate network and land-use planning into accessibility planning based on community involvement, integrated development goals, building of different development strategies and scenarios implied by them were demonstrated by papers of Ron Bos on Almere and S.Seerappalli Ponnusamy, Sekar & S.Karuppannan on Chennai. Need for common language integrating different sectors of planning and studies as well as strong necessity of modeling future development as basis for decision-making were clearly demonstrated. Minsk case study on city light railway system development (M.Stepura) raised the same question of integration of transport planning with overall city mobility and accessibility development strategy. Demand for complex solutions like intermodal transport nodes were also demonstrated by presentation of M.Grudinin. To overcome influx of everyday news and event a "Dutch Approach" for long-term integrated spatial vision development looks to be promising planning and research instrument (M. van der Wagt). It combines principles of balanced governance, alliances of power, and using design also as a tool to study nature of the problem or goal and stakeholders

involved. To keep pace with fast forward processes changing the cities the subject of planning will be less spatial form but more launching new positive development processes (A.Finogenov).

## CONCLUSION: FAST FORWARD PLANNING MEANS FAST FORWARD LEARNING.

While initially focused on issues of greater importance for Russia the track 2 has discovered high degree of similarities between post-socialist countries in general and thus proved that their experience being a part of larger international planning agenda. Implications of that experience let formulation directions of development to be followed by planning profession in closed future:

- Public participation as a cornerstone of new planning practice
- Public space as an instrument of urban transformation
- Integrated, interdisciplinary framework planning
- Socially/human culture approach for deeper understanding of social problems and contexts.
- Steer existing processes of urbanization, steer market forces toward creation of greater public amenity

To be adequate to more dynamic, complex and contradictory urban development planning profession should be changing in sync with pace and complexity of transformations of society.