

URBAN GOVERNANCE, COMPETITIVENESS AND RENEWAL PROCESS IN THE MEDIUM-SIZED SPANISH CITIES

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I. GOVERNANCE, AN IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPT IN EVOLUTION

The authors that have analyzed the governance offer different interpretations of the conceptualization of this term. The word begins to be distributed in late 1970 in relation to policy, management and internal administration of private companies (corporate governance) by the school of «neo-institutionalists». Thereafter, the term is used by the «think tank» Finance Institute, which promotes the so-called Washington Consensus, from which the World Bank and IMF loans only to the poor countries that have established governance systems. Strategies to combat poverty that defend these organisms then pass from interference in the national economies of these countries with strong economic adjustment programs. In the decade of 1990, the United Nations Program for Development (UNDP) softened the term by adding an adjective to talk about «good» governance (good governance), which generates less demanding government intervention in the pipeline financial assistance to underdeveloped countries and greater participation of «civil society.» It thus reduces the excessive verticality in the models of international cooperation to facilitate horizontal, introducing the private sector and the so-called «third sector» (NGO's) in decision-making processes in which interacts with the public sector. In 2001 the European Commission appoints governance as the ideal model for the functioning of EU institutions, and by extension, other public institutions, both local and regional, national or international. «Governance» is being introduced in the political institutions on a scale from high to low complexity from global relations between rich and poor countries to supranational institutions, then state, regional communities and finally to the municipal corporations, first to the big cities and then the rest. In fact, some authors (Rodríguez, Moulaert and Swyngedouw, 2001) argue that the term «urban governance» have substituted that of «urban governance» to refer to the increasing complexity of public intervention in the city. According Bernard Jouve, public-private coalition in the city government is only possible if the political characterization of its

production base and channels of mediation between local authorities and private actors are stable over time (Jouve, 2005).

II. URBAN RENEWAL AND COMPETITIVENESS. MORE THAN AN IMAGE CHANGE

Architects and geographers have studied the transformations of cities around the world since the early examples of the 1980's. The large-scale urban intervention in the empty spaces of central cities in the United States begins in places like Baltimore, Cleveland or Pittsburgh and later moved to the world, with case studies in Glasgow, London, Paris, Berlin, Rotterdam, Stuttgart, Birmingham, Hong Kong, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Tokyo, Newcastle, Lyon, Singapore, Turin, Bogotá, Lille, Milan, Guayaquil, Newcastle, and Santiago de Chile (Davies and Townshend 2002, Pacione, 2004; Pack, 2004 ; Murayama and Du, 2005, Lois, 2006), and in the case of Spain with examples mainly from Bilbao, Barcelona, Valencia, Zaragoza, Madrid and Seville. In all these cases, intervention strategies were linked to image reconstruction and promotion of the city, the commitment to enhance urban competitiveness and attract further investment.

The model was almost always the same, degraded areas and abandoned by the industry decline, decentralization and restructuring of production or changes in major transport infrastructure, were seized land use planning to create appealing spaces for the market, a new exclusive urban pieces purporting to represent the entire city image in the XXI century (Etulian, 2008).

Strategic planning has helped to consolidate this view of the large urban projects as engines and guiding urban development in the context of a dialectical relationship, not sequential, between objectives, strategies and projects. A schedule that allowed transcend the too rigid urban planning, and introduce the business language and ideology in urban governments. The strategic reorientation toward the business planning assumed the existence of competition between cities and therefore, logic seeking competitive advantage trying to project a dynamic and innovative city, stimulating and creative, able to compete successfully for attraction of new investments and consumers, tourists or new residents (Rodríguez, Moulaert and Swyngedouw, 2001).

The paradox is that the serial repetition of the same tools and artefacts from the architectural design and the choice of star architects to the promotional slogans, reintroduced the homogeneity and lack of differentiation between what is claimed to be distinctive and exclusive projects. Rather than introduce such differences had just creating similar landscapes (Harvey, 1989).

Globalization pretends to be the excuse of the new urban governance, when in fact the concerted actions of the private sector and public sector in major urban transformation projects are themselves generating processes of economic globalization, cultural transnationalization and interurban competition.

In these urban operations, governments proactively lead a new economic policy based in large stellar projects, promoting private investment through instruments of direct and indirect support, including labor deregulation, tax incentives and urban costly marketing campaigns. The strategies are organized around three interrelated trends: the movement of urban intervention priorities for growth and competitive restructuring, reorientation of the

focus manager and regulator predominantly urban policy to a proactive, entrepreneurial, and changes in implementing the intervention and the emergence of a new mode of urban governance (Rodríguez, Moulaert and Swyngedouw, 2001).

III. FIRST BALANCES ON THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION AND GOVERNANCE IN SOME CITIES

When it has been more than 20 years since the first urban renewal projects, the balance of results is far less encouraging for those cities who led growth strategy towards the concentration of investments and projects in an specific area. In the three cases reported in the United States: Baltimore, Cleveland and Pittsburgh, the reforms succeeded in creating genuine reforms in the areas islands of style, luxury and cutting edge architecture. Gentrification spread across these areas, driving up housing prices, but the attraction of investments, businesses and people did not occur. Of course, to the magazine *The Economist*, and specifically according to Economist Intelligence Unit in 2005 Cleveland and Pittsburgh were the first two U.S. cities in the ranking of liveability. Indeed, the rankings and positions within them are one of the best expressions of urban competitiveness. According to official statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1980 Baltimore had 786,775 inhabitants while in 2009 were reduced by 18.7% to fall to 651,154 inhabitants. In this year the empty dwellings were 20% (for a nationwide average of 11.8%) and 20% of the population lived below the poverty level. In Pittsburgh, the American city more liveable for *The Economist*, the population was reduced in that period by 26.1%, from 423,938 to 313,118 inhabitants, with 16% of empty dwellings and 22% of the population below the poverty level in 2009. Finally, Cleveland, the jewel of Ohio, went from 573,822 inhabitants in 1980 to 439,013 in 2009 (a decrease of 23.5%), with a per capita income level that last year of \$ 16,581 compared with \$ 27,041 of national average, with 20% of empty dwellings and 30% of the total population below the poverty level.

In the thesis of the architect Juan Carlos Etulain about the urban renewal project of Puerto Madero in Buenos Aires (Etulain, 2008), the initial hypothesis was based on this issue, a project of this kind, either directed from the local democratic government could incorporate mechanisms and instruments that will enable the public sector to act not only as a driver and controller of the process, but as director of player that could reverse some of the gains, which later became «city investment» led to other sectors in urban and environmental deficits. Eighteen years later, the PhD Etulain concluded that the poor architect instances of participation, the lack of implementation of housing and public facilities, along with the capitalization suffered by the local authority and purely speculative operations of the private sector typified the project as a model privatization of urban management, which finally built a social elite enclave, a ghetto, an island in a sea gradient and in worse condition than before they started this project, a new city on 170 acres in an urban area of interest to local and international real estate market (Etulain, 2008).

As stated by several studies on other cities (Vicario and Martínez, 2003; Moulart et al, 2003; González, 2007; García, 2009), large cities are governed by neoliberal urban policies with local corporations to become a major player in sustaining the market, generating inequality and a highly polarized society.

IV. CRISIS AND URBAN RENEWAL IN THE MEDIUM-SIZED SPANISH CITIES

In Spain, the most obvious examples of urban transformation process sponsored by new systems of governance and strategic plans of competitiveness are limited to the examples of Bilbao and the development model promoted by the Guggenheim, Barcelona and the renovation of the seafront with Olympics and the Forum, Valencia and the City of Arts and Sciences completely renovating a slum, Zaragoza with fresh impetus generated by the Universal Exhibition of 2008 and from Seville to Isla Mágica renewal after the Universal Exhibition of 1992. Madrid, meanwhile, has outgrown the processes of property speculation in the metropolitan periphery, waiting to have a big event like the organization of the Olympic Games to act comprehensively on a large section of the central city, and may bring only recent example of the new skyline providing the four CTBA towers built on the soccer fields of the former Real Madrid sports city.

But what about the rest of the urban system?. To answer this question we refer to medium-sized cities, studying three examples: Avilés, Ponferrada and Pontevedra.

Avilés is an industrial city next to Oviedo and Gijón, with a population of 84,202 inhabitants in 2010, which represented a small decline from the 1991 population of -1.34%. Linked as the steel industrial city ENSIDESA (now ArcelorMittal) has suffered an intense crisis since 1980, which is shown spatially in the industrial environment of the ría.

To renew its urban and following the model of Guggenheim Bilbao, the regional government provided the city council (PSOE-IU) in 2006 the possibility of developing the project donated by the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer to house the museum of the Prince of Asturias Awards, internationally recognized distinction that the architect had received in 1989. The designs of the buildings were a gift Niemeyer express the Principality of Asturias on the occasion of 25 anniversary of these awards and when the project began to take shape early problems arose, both in terms of the final functionality of buildings, for Oviedo frontally opposed to «decentralize» the Prince of Asturias Award, and in terms of regional government involvement, as claimed Gijón similar treatment if he was going to pawn in the renewal of Avilés a large budget from regional coffers, in addition to not all the inhabitants of this city were very clear the need and use resulting from the project.

In March 2011, was solemnly inaugurated the Centro Cultural Oscar Niemeyer, and without any reference to the Prince of Asturias awards, as the first step in an ambitious strategic plan for the renewal of the estuary of Avilés, first called «New Centrality» and later «Avilés, Isle of Innovation» that extends over a large area of 57.5 hectares and includes several residential projects that will take time to materialize.

Ponferrada, capital of the region of El Bierzo, in the northwestern corner of Castilla y León, had in 2010 68,767 inhabitants, which represented an increase over 1991 of 14.7%. The main industrial function of Ponferrada was until recently subject to Minero Siderurgica de Ponferrada Company, MSP, which had west of the modern urban sector (La Puebla), with extensive property, including the so-called «mountain of coal», a unforgettable visual icon.

Today, part of the MSP facilities housing the National Museum of Energy, but most of the former industrial area has become dwellings, including the Rosaleda Plan.

The beginning of this strategic plan of urban renewal is in 2000, and had the consent of the municipal corporation (PP) and the regional government, which adopted the reform

of the general plan in 2001, but the continuing irregularities, complaints and judgments of different courts, including the 2007 Supreme Court of Castilla y León against the same modification, slowed its implementation.

The carbon mountain served, among other things, to level the spot of the performance of the Rosaleda, extending tonnes of waste over an area of 65 hectares. The plan approved by the municipal corporation included the construction, only in this sector, of 5,000 dwellings, which accounted for 16.4% of registered households in the municipality in 2001, but also erased from collective memory the image artificial mountain, the politicians thought they should be replaced by another similar structure, building the Rosaleda Tower, the tallest residential building in Castilla and León, with 107 meters high and 28 floors.

Pontevedra in 2010 had 81,981 inhabitants, which represented the same percentage of moderate population increase from 1991 which recorded Ponferrada (14.7%). Throughout the second half of the twentieth century the historical centre of the city was losing population and becoming a marginal space, as has happened in many cities in Spain, while the modern urban sector and central saturated population and activities with consequent economic traffic problems meant that this downward displacement.

The municipal corporation that came to power in 2003 (BNG-PSOE), decided to make a strategic plan for renovation of the city according to two basic lines, to recover the historical and economic and residential space and reduce traffic in the city centre to improve quality of life for its inhabitants. The first step involved a considerable investment of effort and resources, but managed to recover the pride of the population by the sector that builds the city's historical memory, identity, and reviving the neighbourhood economically and demographically, now recognized along urban marketing strategies as the «city of stone.» For the second step was essential to understanding and cooperation of citizens, as to reduce motor traffic is now some initial support until they are changed travel habits, prioritizing public transport and pedestrian mobility. The result of this second process was recognized in 2010 with the National Highway Traffic Safety Award.

In the example of Pontevedra, unlike the other two, the space to recover/renew was the city itself. The living space that had been degraded in recent decades by the lack of functions or its excessive concentration. Pontevedra is now a medium sized city that has gained considerably in habitability openly acknowledge their citizens, all without having a spectacular space of an architect or an architect of international fame and a new skyline caused by property speculation.

V. CONCLUSIONS

As we could see in this paper, the term governance is not an innocent and harmless. It is an ideological concept, that part of the U.S. neoliberal school of thought that has been extended to all spheres of government institutions, from international cooperation organizations of local government, through supranational bodies and state and regional governments. Governance aims to standardize the creation of public-private relationship structures to direct the policies, projects and procedures of democratic institutions.

In the case of local governance, the stage is marked by the change in urban policies that are now adopting a proactive, dynamic and entrepreneurial, seeking opportunities

where the public and the private sector can enter into joint actions to increase urban competitiveness.

The physical expression of the new strategic planning and urban governance are the major projects of urban transformation, which began in selected cities in the United States and are converted from the 1990's as a constant in the main cities in the world.

In these urban projects, governments proactively lead a new economic policy based in large stellar numbers, promoting private investment through instruments of direct and indirect support, including labour deregulation, tax incentives and costly urban marketing campaigns.

In the coming years, many local governments will have to decide what kind of urban transformation rush in the Spanish medium-sized cities. A repetition of large-scale operations and analyzed, as in Avilés or Ponferrada, or a slow change at different rates, which looks after the interests of citizens and not the private sector, as in Pontevedra.

The only possibility at the beginning of the XXI century to redirect the development of Spanish medium-sized cities is changing the model, adopting a new paradigm in which human development and quality of life of people constitute the main objectives to be achieved, the city planning depending on the interests of citizens.

Only in this way can we live a few cities in which urban governance system collects formulas of social empowerment, the economic parameters are based on endogenous potentials, in which the planning takes into account women, people seniors, youth and children, allowing the development of talent and creativity without forgetting the roots that make up his personality as a people. A healthier cities, committed to the environment and sustainability.