

New planning experiences in democratic Spain:

the metropolitan planning of Madrid and the implementation of citizens' participation

by Fernando de Terán

1 An impossible process

The evolution of Spanish urban planning during this century has followed a similar path to that of other European countries. The universality of the theoretical models on which this has been based makes it difficult to identify a specifically Spanish case.

Significant differences emerge, however, if instead of focusing on the evolution of planning itself, one examines the actual process of urban development and its consequences. If the historical period selected covers the last twenty or thirty years, characteristic features, resulting from the particular political situation, can be identified. These are not merely the problems faced by any semideveloped country trying to create a sophisticated urban system, but involve the rapidity and pervasiveness of urbanization, the nature of economic development, the negative, isolationist, acritical and minority-oriented response offered by urban policy and even the very absence of policy itself. At worst these features sanction various kinds of abuse and corruption. At best the system is simply impotent to remedy them. The marked disparity between the outcomes of urban development and the ambitious aspirations of planning highlights the theoretical and idealistic nature of the planning process.

This is particularly evident if one contrasts the overwhelming and irreversible changes to the urban scene and the natural landscape that have occurred in the last twenty years with the promises, declarations of principle and reassuring predictions offered by planning, yet always refuted by reality. These forecasts were often formulated honestly and intelligently in technical terms, but turned out to be incompatible with the needs of an aggressive, officially promoted capitalism, which constantly violated the planning system to avoid the limitations it imposed. Such violations were only possible because of the protection offered by an unrepresentative government which, because the community was silenced and excluded, was not obliged to justify its decisions. Such conditions can certainly be considered defining characteristics peculiar to a dictatorship in decline. On the death of General Franco, a situation of maximum confusion had been reached. The system was discredited and incapable of formulating a viable urban policy and it was evident that planning itself was impotent within such a political context. (For a complete account of this situation, see Terán, 1978.)

II The case of Madrid

The structure plan for the metropolitan area of Madrid, which is made up of 23 municipalities, exemplifies this problem; it presented an optimistic scenario, never to be achieved in reality. The plan was officially approved in 1964, in response to the need to reduce demographic flow towards the capital. To do this it emphasized the development of the surrounding region through the creation of commercial and cultural facilities on the periphery, the relocation of heavy industry and the improvement and extension of transport networks.

In the years that followed, however, not only did the public works policy required by the plan, and on which it had been based, fail to materialize, but its whole spatial strategy was contradicted by the model of economic growth. This model was the hasty and ill-conceived outcome of the economic development policy of the 1960s, which concentrated population and industry in the capital and gave rise to important speculative processes. Political and administrative centralism exacerbated this further, leading to the establishment of numerous government offices in the capital. In consequence, Madrid is a heavily congested city, deteriorating day by day, losing its historic value and having a profoundly negative influence on its hinterland. The recently developed outer suburbs are characterized by high densities, limited social facilities and poor environmental quality. Beyond them are the remnants of a landscape which has been invaded in a chaotic and disorganized manner, where the traditional silhouettes of villages are no longer distinguishable but surrounded by a confused mass of mediocre new building. Some of the most attractive countryside has been engulfed by huge tracts of single family housing, while in other areas a motley mixture of factories and warehouses appears, laid out in accordance with no logic other than that offered by the pattern of rural landownership. This whole conglomeration stretches over a considerable area, and is connected by an inadequate road network, parts of which often reach saturation point.

This process of simultaneous expansion and contraction has, of course, run counter to the forecasts of the 1964 plan. Its objectives were so frequently nullified by modifications and violations that it was abandoned as a development model a few years after its approval. The lack of correspondence between forecasts and actual events, and the irrelevance of the plan itself, provides an obvious example of dissociation, and testifies to the unreality of the planning process.

In 1970 the need for a new plan was recognized, and in 1971 the Council of Ministers entrusted its preparation to the Metropolitan Area Planning and Coordinating Commission (COPLACO). Since then, however, several studies and trials have followed without reaching this objective.

There are three reasons for this failure.

- 1 The inherent difficulties of the task, which requires the mobilization of considerable resources and the development of manpower and data bases. These are particularly important in an exercise such as this one, aimed at producing an ambitious and all-embracing planning structure.
- 2 The fact that the planning process itself was discredited and in confusion as a result of the whole national experience under the previous political regime.

- 3 The unsatisfactory nature of the urban institutional framework in Madrid, which is reflected in the inadequacy of the planning entity, COPLACO, itself. On the one hand, its relationship with local political groups is badly structured, central government predominates and there are few local representatives. On the other hand, its function as a planning and coordinating body, divorced from the direct execution of investment policy, leaves it in a weak institutional position.

III The urban movement

The urban crisis and the broader environmental crisis have become key political issues in the advanced industrial societies today. The conflicts they have produced and their electoral repercussions have had a profound effect on the decision-making process. The emergence of popular social movements as a characteristic feature of urban society in capitalist countries in the last ten or fifteen years has played a significant role in the development of this situation. The same general process occurred in all the major Spanish cities in the period immediately preceding democratization with the rise of the so-called 'urban movement', a movement of considerable qualitative if not quantitative power.

One of the most lucid students of this phenomenon (and at the same time an active instigator of its development) has summed up as follows:

Neighbourhood organizations, users' committees, consumers' organizations, housewives' associations, women's groups, youth clubs, pensioners' associations, ecological organizations, shopkeepers' groups, disabled associations, hiking and sports clubs, preservation societies and many others daily countered the silence imposed by police repression and refuted the passivity of a society founded on the absence of democracy. Although uniting only a minority, the movement has been decisive in the defence of the living conditions of a population experiencing a continually worsening urban crisis. It has also been the means of establishing more human and solidary social relationships in cities which became increasingly impersonal and aggressive under capitalism and the Franco régime (Castells, 1977; see also Castells, 1978).

The movement is composed of associations of all kinds which give public expression to the problems and needs of a populace suffering the effects of aggressive and unbalanced urban development. The heterogeneity of their membership is notable: including workers and employees, technicians and professionals, housewives, pensioners, young people.

In the case of Madrid popular discontent began to find expression during the 1960s in a series of protests and campaigns. These were very effective in terms of their political repercussions and were often translated into positive results, such as the modification of plans, the construction of facilities, the completion of delayed projects, the provision of services, etc.

By about 1970 an organized urban movement existed in Madrid, developing particularly from 1974 onwards and reaching its maturity in 1977. The close connection between this process and the country's political evolution must be stressed in order to understand its dynamic completely, since the origin of the movement is clearly linked to the struggle against the dictatorship. Because of this the initial objectives were of a political, rather than purely urban, nature, and the leaders were

strongly radicalized. They, nevertheless, succeeded in mobilizing non-affiliated groups on urban matters. In 1977, when the Provincial Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Madrid was formed, there were more than a hundred associations with some 60 000 members. These associations had a considerable voice given their small size compared with the 4.5 million inhabitants of the Province of Madrid. Today there are two hundred neighbourhood associations principally concerned with urban problems.

Thus, the urban movement, as it has developed historically, is not an entirely appropriate basis for the organization of popular participation in the democratic management of the city. Forged in the absence of legally recognized political parties or channels of communication between the people and a non-representative administration, it became an instrument of political struggle as well as a pressure group for urban demands. Its validity and justification at that time are endorsed by its successes and its undeniable achievements in the satisfaction of concrete objectives. Nevertheless, the movement suffers from a certain class exclusivity and excessive reliance on specific political parties, which has prevented it from transcending its minority character. Because of this, the key question today, following the restoration of democracy and the first municipal elections since 1931, must focus on the urban movement's ability to translate the mentality and strategy of its heroic times into a new role. In other words, on its ability to organize and channel popular participation in the evaluation of the most keenly felt problems, aims and needs, and on its capacity to set the priorities to be achieved through collaboration with the newly representative administration, which now appears to be closer to the people and more willing to enter the debate.

Obviously, an adequate institutional framework, capable of stimulating, capturing and responding to the outcomes of this positive collaboration, is necessary. This implies the introduction of innovatory forms of public participation in the process of planning, control and management, through a new understanding of these functions and new approaches on the part of the various administrative bodies. Such an imperative occurs, however, precisely at the moment when the previous conception of planning functions is undergoing profound revision, not only through the general evolution of the debate centring on the issue in recent years, but also because of the administrative and political transformation of the country. All this has led to the need for new forms and definitions of the urban process. These new models force the administration to seek the collaboration which is essential for the organization of public participation. Actual attempts in this direction are diverse, but in every case the need to enlist the participation of the most dynamic and sensitized social groups is evident, to the point that did they not exist they would have to be invented.

There are, thus, two overlapping requirements for public participation to be authentic, valid and effective. On the one hand the administration needs active social groups. On the other these groups need imaginative, innovative and adequately formulated proposals. If the administration succeeds in leading the way and in drawing up a suitable framework, then the popular urban movement may once again find a significant *raison d'être*.

IV A new political framework for a different kind of urban planning

The death of General Franco, the installation of the monarchy, the national referendum for political reform and the general elections were decisive events in the history of Spain, giving rise to a new political situation very different from that which preceded it. This new situation made it possible to develop a different approach to urban planning, and reawakened the interest of many of those who had formerly been sceptical and disillusioned.

In the first place demands were different. The political parties, administrative bodies and society itself were pressing for immediate attention to the most acute problems. It was no longer possible to wait until a rational and all-encompassing master plan (which would in any case have been of dubious utility) was available.

Secondly, the possibilities for action had also changed, with the creation of legal channels for the expression of public opinion. Government could now enter into dialogue with the people. There followed, therefore, a reconsideration of the nature, objectives and methods of urban planning. This led to the recognition of the need to move towards the resolution of concrete problems and to respond directly to the actual population affected by them. New forms of planning were called for, directly related to the real needs and aspirations of the city's users. At the same time, the debate in leading professional and academic circles had revealed the groundless optimism of the past decade, with its belief in the possibility of immediate and total rationalization of the planning process using an irrefutable scientific methodology.

All this led to a new concept of planning as a very different kind of activity, facilitating interchange and collaboration between technical expertise and community aspirations as expressed by the users of the city themselves. The new social and political climate in the country exposed the nature of previous forms of planning; their strong technological base and lack of public intervention. Such an approach, with its supposedly scientific self-justification, in which sophisticated technology replaced social participation in decision-making, no longer made any sense. The planning process could now assume its full political dimension and reincorporate the task of articulating public participation. Technocrats were obliged to relinquish their role as visionary creators of a future divorced from real needs, and to accept their logical place as expert advisers in the service of the community, giving back to the community the power of choice in the future organization of its own environment.

Thus, a different kind of planning was made both necessary and possible. It was to be a realistic and participatory activity which left behind the abstract, formal and idealist concepts that had traditionally operated.

V A programme for democratic planning

After the first general elections in the summer of 1977, the Metropolitan Area Planning and Coordinating Commission of Madrid took on a new directive team and

entered a new phase.¹ One of its fundamental tasks was to reformulate the content of planning, since -- as has been indicated above -- the work that was being developed was misconceived and led nowhere.²

The new planning programme that was presented publicly in January 1978 reoriented the process and made new proposals. Chief among them was the offer of a totally open and non-technocratic relationship, which sought the full collaboration of the political and social forces and would stimulate public participation.³

Because of the undeniable need to rectify the unsatisfactory institutional framework of planning in Madrid, the programme was formulated in trial form, to parallel the evolution of the political system itself. This strategy rested on the supposition that political evolution would gradually facilitate and even demand the appearance of the conditions required. Subsequent events have shown that this was a sound diagnosis. Thus, there was no attempt to formulate a comprehensive, global plan which provided a definitive picture of the future to be realized within a definite time span; rather it represented a series of linked operations setting off a continuous process rooted in the social conscience. The programme can be briefly described as follows.

The combination of problems affecting the Madrid metropolitan district, and spreading to surrounding areas, demands a total strategy in which allocation of available resources can be ranked, and the siting of activities and preservation of certain valuable natural features can be ordered. This strategy must reflect an explicit conception of the process of urban development. Because of this, a key element of the programme is the formulation of a general plan of spatial organization, with the major objectives and terms of reference to be established by means of public discussion of successive reports and the acceptance of majority agreements by elected political representatives. This will provide a general framework within which to elaborate the new plan. This process incorporates the element of public debate for the first time in Spain.

At the same time, however, another aspect of the programme aims to deal without delay with urgent and divisive problems of daily life by means of the government's Immediate Action Programme. This programme, the PAI, is the cornerstone of the whole operation. It has been conceived with a dual purpose. On the one hand, it attempts to define, catalogue and evaluate the most pressing problems, in order of priority, with the help of the population chiefly affected, and to direct government

¹ This team, belonging to the government party (the Democratic Centre Union), asked for my collaboration in defining and directing the new phase of urban planning in Madrid, with no political strings attached. My acceptance of the task was conditional on the assurance that the programme should be non-partisan.

² As I have already indicated, COPLACO, the planning body, is poorly institutionalized, even after a recent reform. A new definition of its functions is vital. This should take account of the new decentralizing characteristics that have been introduced into Spanish administrative organization by the Constitution. However, the formulation of the planning programme cannot await this reorganization. Thus it has inevitably been based on the current unsatisfactory situation, the only one available.

³ The intrinsic validity of the programme, divorced from party politics, was apparent when it was presented to the press and parliamentarians in Madrid, 18 January 1978. It received unanimous support in principle from the representatives of all the parliamentary political parties: the Democratic Centre Union (centre), the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, the Spanish Communist Party, and the Popular Alliance (right).

action and investment towards them and offer short-term solutions. On the other hand, this itself provides a basis of detailed knowledge, which enables short-term planning to be put into practice at the local level. The incorporation of public participation in these studies made it necessary to divide the metropolitan district into smaller problem areas to make them more easily identifiable by the inhabitants, and to enable each unit to achieve a greater degree of social self-knowledge.

Thus, the proposed planning process is developed simultaneously by means of two converging approaches: one which operates from above down, and is concerned with the macro aspects of the spatial framework, and the other operating from below upwards, which begins by the identification of the most urgent conflicts at the local level. It is thus possible to begin to resolve them, through opportune corrective action, and at the same time to prepare a disaggregated planning strategy. The sum and synthesis, arrived at through a process of selection and reconciliation, will provide a total plan for the metropolitan area, drawn up on the basis of the concrete demands of the users of each area of the city.

VI The experience in action

The metropolitan area has been divided into 17 study zones. A working group collects information in each of these zones, analysing the situation, evaluating problems and studying proposals for their solution.

During the first stage, preceding the municipal elections, the management of public participation, in terms of the identification and evaluation of local problems and the formulation of proposals, was carried out directly by COPLACO, supported and coordinated by the area teams, and met with a generally positive response from the popular urban groups.

Following the elections, more structured forms of public participation have been developed, made possible because of the truly representative nature of the local councils. The new relationships that are being established between COPLACO and the new councils enable the municipal role, when desired, to be basic to the organization of participation. This has in fact occurred in the case of the Madrid council, and a means of organizing public participation has been arrived at which seems fully satisfactory.

Popular participation in analysis and in prior discussion of proposals takes place in the district municipal committees by means of a participation commission whose form is determined by the council, through the presiding councillor.

In the future an institutional study commission is planned, headed by the government representative, which will coordinate work, and in which organizations of central and local administration will be represented.

The result of the work being carried out in each area is a preliminary analytic document offering diagnosis and proposals for action. This document is in fact a report for each zone, detailing the relevant planning projects, the current state of vacant sites and public spaces, the state of urban services, infrastructures, facilities, housing, and all the aspects of the local problem in general, set against local popular demands and concluding with proposals for action.

Once these zonal studies are disseminated, discussed and complemented by the suggestions collected, a second phase will begin in which they will be reconciled, coordinated and assembled, to arrive at an overall view of the requirements for non-local structural action, as well as the adequate formulation of subsidiary problems. The selective ranking of proposals will also follow, to establish an order of priority in relation to the real possibilities for intervention by government investment bodies, thus definitively establishing the Programme of Immediate Action. A series of actions can therefore be initiated by government with the following fundamental objectives:

- 1 Attention to housing needs and demands, duly quantified and evaluated by zone.
- 2 Correction of the deficit of services and facilities in undersupplied areas.
- 3 Attention to problems of local infrastructure.
- 4 Decongestion of central areas, to reduce substitution of use and to preserve public areas and areas of environmental interest.

VII Provisional evaluation

The programme which has just been described can be evaluated on the basis of the following basic criteria:

- 1 It provides a series of studies which contain detailed information and are reliable and accurate as a description of reality.
- 2 This information facilitates a balanced and realistic diagnosis of the situation, detecting, evaluating and ranking the problems which demand immediate action.
- 3 Such a diagnosis leads to the formulation of a series of concrete proposals for the correction of problems and deficiencies, deduced from a rigorous local-level analysis and responding to the felt needs of the population, thus providing an ordered and ranked inventory of urban demands.
- 4 This series of proposals constitutes a complete table of reference to enable government programmes to be checked against actual conditions and carried out in accordance with a real scale of priorities, thus enabling the programmes themselves to be directed better.
- 5 The programme represents an experiment in social learning, the first to be carried out in the country on this scale, which aims to put into practice a real form of public participation in decision-making.
- 6 It is an experiment in sharpening a new kind of planning tool, which replaces or complements traditional approaches. As such, it does not represent an isolated occurrence but forms part of a broader line of thought and action developed on the basis of the experiences of other countries. It attempts to put into practice new forms of planning that are more effective than traditional ones.
- 7 It is a logical and appropriate step towards the preparation of a new plan for the metropolitan area of Madrid, superseding previous technocratic experiences, and reflecting current Spanish political conditions.

As will be apparent from all that has been said, the programme is highly innovative in the country. Its novelty, and the absence of precedents for public participation in the planning process, even at international level, make it impossible to give any

kind of assurance about the way in which the task will be completed. What is clear is that traditional forms of urban planning have failed in Madrid, and that the new democratic situation of the country requires (and at the same time permits) an attempt to develop new models which correspond more closely to reality. Within this perspective, the programme which is being put forward is already rather more than wishful thinking. However, its further development will not be free from tension. The final definition of the Immediate Action Programme itself presents serious difficulties, given that a thorough attention to all demands at the same time is impossible. In order not to disillusion all those taking part in its design completely, it is clear that the programme must have a marked reformist character, and this will raise important problems at the implementation stage. Because of all this, the critical factor lies in the relationship between central government and the 23 metropolitan area councils (only seven of which are not on the political left). If an agreement is reached, the programme provides a list of things which need to be done. If no agreement is made, the programme provides a list of things to fight for.

Metropolitan Area Planning and Coordinating Commission, Madrid, Spain

VIII References

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La planification urbaine sous le régime de Franco n'a guère eu de succès en pratique. C'est ainsi qu'à Madrid le Plan structurel de 1964 ne s'est pas matérialisé, ayant été contredit par le type de croissance économique qui s'est produit. Durant la décennie 70, on a assisté à une très forte croissance des mouvements sociaux urbains qui a eu une importance considérable au niveau politique le plus large dans les années précédant et suivant immédiatement la mort de Franco.

Tel qu'il s'est développé historiquement, ce mouvement urbain ne constituait pas une base entièrement appropriée pour l'organisation d'une participation populaire à la gestion démocratique de la ville. Il s'agit aujourd'hui d'une question-clé après la restauration de la démocratie après les premières élections municipales depuis 1931. L'article décrit un nouveau programme de planification démocratique mis au point à Madrid et conclut par une évaluation provisoire de ces propositions. Ce programme est extrêmement innovateur, mais son avenir est encore assez incertain du point de vue politique.

Die Städteplanung unter dem Franco Regime hatte wenig praktischen Erfolg. So wurde zum Beispiel in Madrid der Strukturplan von 1964 nie realisiert, da ihm die Art des damaligen Wirtschaftswachstums zuwiderlief. In den 70er Jahren nahmen die Gesellschaftsbewegungen in den Städten gewaltig zu, die in den Jahren direkt vor und nach dem Tod Francos auf breiterer politischer Ebene von beträchtlicher Bedeutung waren.

Diese städtische Bewegung war in ihrer historischen Entwicklung keine hundertprozentig angemessene Grundlage für die Organisation der Beteiligung der Bevölkerung an der demokratischen Verwaltung der Stadt. Im Anschluss an die Wiederherstellung der Demokratie bei der ersten Stadtverwaltungswahl seit 1931 ist dies zu einem der Schlüsselthemen geworden. Die

Abhandlung beschreibt ein neues Programm für eine demokratische Planung, das in Madrid aufgestellt wurde, und schliesst mit einer vorläufigen Bewertung der darin enthaltenen Vorschläge. Das Programm ist ausserst innovativ, hinsichtlich seiner Zukunft besteht jedoch noch einige politische Unsicherheit.

La planificación urbana bajo el régimen de Franco tuvo poco éxito en la práctica. Por ejemplo, en Madrid, el Plan Estructural de 1964 falló al estar en oposición con el tipo de crecimiento económico en el cual ocurrió. En los años 70 hubo un crecimiento masivo de movimientos urbanos sociales que fueron de bastante importancia a un nivel político más amplio en los años anteriores a la muerte de Franco e inmediatamente después de ella.

Este movimiento urbano, en la forma cómo se desarrolló históricamente, no fue una base totalmente adecuada para la organización de una participación popular en la administración democrática de la ciudad. Esto es ahora un asunto clave, como consecuencia de la restauración de la democracia en las primeras elecciones municipales desde 1931. Esta ponencia describe un nuevo programa de planificación democrática que se ha desarrollado en Madrid, concluyendo con una evaluación provisional de estas propuestas. El programa es altamente innovativo pero su futuro aun es algo problemático políticamente.