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# Moving Targets: Practice, Architecture and Urban Shrinkage

**Adam Evans**

**INTRODUCTION**

Students studying on courses central to the various fields connected to spatial practice almost exclusively envision their future as designers and creators of spaces and places; but what about places that are shrinking? The aim of this chapter is to locate a particular future spatial pedagogic/andragogic and practice-based agenda within the context of the shrinking city, by discussing the challenges of spatial practice within the realm of the shrinking city from two positions. Firstly, it introduces and critically outlines the issues facing practitioners that might work within the context of urban shrinkage. Secondly, and in more depth, the chapter addresses the teaching and learning of architectural practice in terms of shrinkage, and proposes a system to reimagine the shrinking city in the context of academia. From both positions these issues are more than purely spatial and pragmatic; somewhat of a shift in approach is required whether teacher, student, or practitioner, to undertake a different kind of spatial practice.

In recent years, the phenomenon of urban shrinkage has more presence within architecture, planning and urban design discourse. As people relocate—often from smaller, quieter towns and cities to larger, growing and expanding urban areas in search of better prospects—spatial practitioners, urban designers, planners, and architects are repeatedly provided with opportunities to rethink place and space in order to deal with this growth and shrinkage. So closely linked to these forms of spatial practice is the notion of urban growth and shrinkage that patterns of economy are often indicated within industries linked to construction and the built environment. Unsurprisingly then, the issues of growth and urban expansion are clear themes introduced into design studio within the academy as vehicles for student design projects, to equip aspiring architects and designers with the critical skills for them to develop into their future lives as spatial practitioners. Complementary to this, dealing with themes of urban growth and expansion enables the design teacher to assess the student's ability to think, develop, design and ultimately build, whilst the themes of urban shrinkage are avoided by many. Drawing on *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 1991) and investigating comparable issues in practice and academia, this chapter aims to provide a set of propositions for a kind of practice, where a shrinking context can act as agency to empower graduates with the confidence and ability to deal with urban shrinkage.

**MOVING TARGETS**

In order to theoretically explore and help substantiate the positions outlined in the introduction, this section will primarily draw upon Henri Lefebvre's theories surrounding the production of space. Production, as the term suggests, deals with making, manufacture, and creation through particular processes, which in turn result in product that adds to the physical world and

contributes to life. Lefebvre's model for three moments of space defines spatial production as (a) spatial practice; (b) representations of; and (c) representational; or (a) the perceived; (b) the conceived; and (c) the lived (Lefebvre, 1991). By considering Lefebvre's spatial triad within the context of spatial praxis, and in particular a spatial praxis that dominates modes of spatial production within the expanding city, it can be assumed that conceived spatial moments define those moments within the design of space in terms of a traditional and conventional western approach to architecture. Conceived production of space is imagined by the professional practitioner and building projects are proposed via a series of drawn and modelled representations which once approved by the various authoritative bodies are executed in full-scale, as three-dimensional, physically constructed spatial interventions.

And how is this architecture perceived? The notion of the perceived is both predictive and reflective. The conceived moments of space are those moments when one might be reflecting on a place one has passed, occupied or experienced somehow in the physical realm, equally it may be some place which has not been experienced directly but experienced through a narrative, images or stories, some place where we have to interpret and form our own representation based on particular information. This perceiving is what we decide about a place; sometimes even before our direct experience we will have a clear representation in our mind about the value the place holds for us. Lived space, or social space, are those moments within which we carry out direct actions in space. We make autonomous and spontaneous spatial moves that might seem very insignificant; the everyday, mundane and ordinary practices and rituals carried out to operate within the built world. These moves are at times particular and bespoke and at others cyclic or rhythmic. These operations are social-spatial practices, which we carry out through our lives in the built world. Lefebvre's three moments of space of course do not act independently. There is hierarchy attached to these moments depending on context and situation, and they synergise and clash, complement and contradict, mix and separate.

In terms of urban expansion, it may be quite obvious how Lefebvre's spatial triad can be explored to understand the city. For example, throughout the rapid economic growth of the previous decade there remain the representations of these actions, their presence clearly apparent in the result of new corporate and public buildings together with different typologies of housing stock built to meet the demands of expanding city life. The Grand Canal Commercial Development in Dublin (Figure 1), with Daniel Libeskind's Bord Gais Energy Theatre as its central architectural piece, is a clear example of conceived urban design driven by economy. How we now perceive built projects such as this following the aftermath of the economic crisis may be for discussion elsewhere, but it is important to acknowledge the potential relationship between the success or failure of building projects in areas of economic and urban growth with the success or failure of shrinking cities. What further relates to this situation is the idea of social

space, and how the spaces of these completed projects are inhabited, used and occupied once the spatial practitioners have moved onto the next project. These dynamics of direct engagement with space and place are a form of spatial practice in its own right, and how one reacts, redefines and reorganises space may be variably informed by desire, need, use and perception of built representations. Furthermore, these actions may be intentional or passive to greater or lesser extents.



FIGURE 1. An architectural celebration of the economic boom represented in Grand Canal Commercial Development, Dublin. Source: Adam Evans

### Shifting Production, Shifting Perception

Lefebvre's spatial triad has previously been interrogated and framed by many scholars, in particular Borden (2001), Coleman (2011) and Stanek (2011) respectively in the context of spatio-economic and spatio-cultural production as well as architectural practice.[1] These interpretations have critically advanced the discourse surrounding spatial production, but what of the shrinking city, what of "unproduction"? By critically considering a shift in how Lefebvre's spatial triad is explored begins to inform ways in which the shrinking city can be reconsidered as a condition that demands and deserves a different kind of engagement. Within the context of the Bauhaus work, and in particular the study of objects in social space, Lefebvre (1991) discusses the notion of global space as "a void waiting to be filled, as a medium waiting to be colonised" (p. 125). He offers houses, the palace, and public buildings as potential objects for analysis as objects of representation, perceived in terms of a neo-capitalist political structure. When objective study becomes fuelled by government driven capitalist investment—and here a direct parallel can be drawn with the practice of the developer-led architectural projects of the past twenty years—the voids that one might consider through social engagement become consumed by buildings produced for further acts of economic consumption, additionally and more perverse, the production of buildings results in leftover spaces and voids which rather than give back to the city for some social use, become private, secured, out of bounds spaces fenced off to protect from public invasion. These spaces are rarely used, and become urban no person's lands and achieve nothing more than to become spatial metaphors for an increasing divide between ownership and authority and everyday urban inhabitation. The result of these of actions devalues, for the majority, social representations of the city. Ironically, the construction of purely economically driven architecture will socially devalue its own

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1. The three moments of space underpin much socio-spatial dialogue, and Iain Borden's *Skateboarding, Space and the City* (2001) is of particular value when considering the shrinking city as the text explores the qualities of existing redundant, unused and undervalued urban space.

context, and then, in turn, devalue itself. Drake Circus, Plymouth, UK is one such project, completed 2006 and now owned by British Land, the once open public space is closed up at night, turning its back on the city outside (Figure 2). Since its completion, more than sixteen shops have become vacant in the west end, mixed-use residential and retail area, between Cornwall Street and St. George Street.

## No Person is an Island

Bellevue, Islandbridge is a large, medium-rise private developer-led housing project in Dublin, Ireland built in the last economic boom and illustrates the above argument clearly. The estate comprises a mixture of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments, arranged in five blocks around a man-made pond with an underground car park sandwiched between Phoenix Park and Memorial Park to the west of the city's edge. The steel frame, brick clad blocks range between four and five storeys high, and whilst not enormous are large enough in the context of suburban Dublin. All apartments are occupied, although this is not evident as there is no public space within which to socialise, or even to meet. No benches overlooking the man-made lake, no walls to lean on, nowhere to talk to neighbours. To the east of the complex of buildings is a garden, and sits well by the side of where the canal and the River Liffey meet. Bizarrely, this green space is also unused, and furthermore only three apartments are afforded even a view of these gardens (Figure 3).

It is commonplace for estate agents to advertise these types of dwellings by promoting private parking and travel distance to amenities as selling points, diverting consumer interest away from their poor spatial design resolution. Whilst the young professionals that these kinds of property aim to attract is increasing in Dublin, there is much displaced growth, depopulation and out-migration in rural areas of Ireland (Daly & Kitchin, 2013) as well as relocation of inhabitants from the city to the suburbs. To the outside face of Islandbridge, the perception of Bellevue is a representation

of successful housing, accommodating an increasing population demand, but when one interrogates Bellevue through experience, the social life of the place is vacant. A consequence of the unsatisfactory space outside is the increase in warning signage and CCTV (Figure 4), which do nothing more than instil a false sense of insecurity and dissuade people from attempting to engage

in the space; and as a result inhabitants hurry into their apartments under the illusion that they are now safe from the outside world (Figure 5). This is further reinforced by the circulation strategy, which enables one to drive into the underground, hidden car park and enter an elevator straight to one's apartment without even having to use the front door of the building. One opposing position to the developer-led, economically driven large-scale housing complex is to embrace the small-scale, which can offer appropriate solutions within a shrinking context. Projects of small-scale are not restricted to the domestic, but can also address the problems of the public and urban realm. With reference to Guzmán de Yarza's latticed sports centre in Zaragoza and the adaption of Can Tacó Roman ruins by Toni Gironès in



FIGURE 4. Vast amounts of CCTV, privacy notices and railings protect every piece of private space. Source: Adam Evans

Barcelona (De Molina, 2014) suggests that a true change in attitude in what size and scale represents can allow practitioners to remain working in the urban environment. What begins to be clear from this discussion is that the lack of financial luxury leads to more spatio-culturally engaged projects.

## SHRINKING PRACTICE

What are the problems facing practitioners in cities that are shrinking? In a shrinking city, it may not be that the voids are waiting to be filled, but rather waiting to be consolidated, anxious to become dispersed, yearning for dissolution. In the UK, there is a very clear divide between the north and the south, where in terms of population the ten city regions that have grown the most are southern (Telford being the most northern, just to the north-west of Birmingham) and the ten that have decreased are all north of Stoke (which lies approximately thirty miles north of Telford). The major city regions of Liverpool, Tyneside and then Manchester have suffered shrinkage the most, Liverpool decreasing from a population of 1,200,900 in 1971 to 975,200 in 2009 (Webber, Larkin, Tochtermann, Varley-Winter, & Wilcox, 2010). The UK is not alone; other EU countries are experiencing urban shrinkage on a huge scale, particularly Germany and Romania largely due to deindustrialisation, reallocation and redistribution of industry (Popescu, 2014).

FIGURE 5. The extreme privacy implemented at Bellevue adorns each apartment block. Source: Adam Evans

Within shrinking contexts, architects and urban designers may migrate to growing cities, contribute to urban expansion programmes and lead build projects to accommodate the influx of visitors, commuters, and those who choose to relocate. Others might attempt to remain in the shrinking region and reduce both their practice and their ambition, gratefully accepting small

projects or offering to carry out feasibility studies for no fee or reward. What is critical here to note is that practitioners who remain in a shrinking region continue to operate as they would if they had relocated to a place of growth, which is to say that their attitude to praxis remains about adding to, building up, and enlarging the city. Whilst a domestic extension may add a small contribution to a local economy and is not to be dismissed, these projects are almost always exclusive and private, and rarely transparent. The main problem with practicing in a conventional manner in a shrinking city is that these small projects remain hidden away and uncelebrated; the majority of the cities inhabitants are unaware of the actions of making. In the projects discussed by De Molina (2014) and additionally the work of Assemble in the UK, Elemental in Chile and other lo-fi architecture (Till, 2009), a fundamental shift in practice approach is required for the shrinking city that includes an attitude to transparency, inclusion, contribution and socio-cultural practices and rituals.

## A Temporal Permanence of Design

A city struggling with its local economy, housing stock, commercial and social spaces might also be suffering an identity crisis. The traditional solution is to introduce a large project in a bid to primarily stimulate the economy, but also attempt to regain some form of spatio-cultural identity. However, it is rare that a large conventionally conceived building or engineering project of this nature would successfully address the city's issues as these types of initiatives lead to a deeper sense of confusion once the project fails (Schlappa & Neill, 2013, p. 13). At this point a broader, lateral, and pluralist form of engagement that might be alien to spatial practitioners, planners and local government parties is suggested.

The beauty of the shrinking city is its potential as a laboratory, a contextual test bed for new ideas and methods of spatial engagement which also affords time for reflective practice, which is rarely possible under the constraints of working in a growing city where the emphasis is on product rather than process. Schlappa and Neill (2013) discuss the importance of leadership through citizenship, and drawing from the reenvisioning initiatives in Detroit, set out in the *Detroit Future City Plan* (January 2013) and their own case study of Altena, Germany, make a series of strong recommendations based on critical perceptions and actions which can be polarised as denial and recreation, discussion and collaboration, and transparent small moves and engagements. Once the city comes to terms with the fact that to merely recreate its past periods of success and growth will not lead to a sustained future, inclusive dialogues must take place which involve all parties. These discussions, together with collaborative spatial and socio-spatial experiments, may result in small moves, which are transparent to all parties and support the physical enhancement of the urban fabric thus driving a positive shift for the city's identity and value over time.

Additionally, these small moves that end up marking the cyclic and linear rhythm of the city[2] could be directly linked to the notion of the dwelling, that familiar place where social practices and rituals are carried out.

## PEDAGOGIC STRUCTURES

Within the pedagogical structure of any spatially oriented design discipline, the design studio lies at the heart of study. To critically engage with designing—that is to critically, thoughtfully and reflectively generate and produce—is what academics, teachers and visiting critics advocate on almost a daily basis from day one of the first year. The urge to produce, to undertake a rigorous design process, and generate a finite and highly resolved spatial and material product at the end of the project belies almost every celebrated design portfolio, regardless of the studio agenda. It is natural to assume that this desire to create, to build, to make, is what drives many students to study spatial practice courses. Traditionally, such courses have successfully supported the direction of spatial practice in various guises since the inception of the design professions themselves. This paradigm, however effective as providing a series of markers for measuring achievement and evidencing validation, struggles with the important issues of urban shrinkage.

### Design and the Unprocessed

A typical pattern of design project is for students to comprehend and respond to the brief by: Carrying out site investigations, evaluating a series of design ideas and propositions, developing a reflective and positive design process, and producing a final set of drawn and model representations. Then, the question to be asked is, what happens when students attempt to undertake similar praxis in a shrinking city?

During discussions with third year architecture students over the past academic year, it was observed that when they were faced with dealing with a shrinking neighbourhood in Preston, UK, their immediate design approach was to introduce some kind of architectural landmark. Many ideas were vocalised on how these landmarks would be realised from proposing a sports centre to building sculptural gateways, and the one common denominator was that all these proposals would involve a great deal of building construction. When the students began to understand that the design proposals they were suggesting were strikingly similar to those executed by certain famous practitioners during the last economic boom (in particular Frank Gehry's Guggenheim at Bilbao and Rem Koolhaas's Casa da Musica at Porto), a sense of unfulfilment and dissatisfaction became

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2. Lefebvre discusses the phenomena of urban rhythms in great detail within *Rhythmanalysis* (2004).

FIGURE 6.
Frank O. Gehry's
Guggenheim,
Bilbao from
La Salve Bridge.
Source: Dorota
Moskal

evident after it was realised that "the search for a cultural or architectural fix following the now well-known model of the Frank Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or the dozens of repetitive projects by other 'starchitects'" (Soja, 2013, p. 281) was not going to work (Figure 6). The alternative ways of practicing which reflect on and draw from the small-scale, the vernacular, appropriation of methods, techniques and materials, understanding of cultural production and local people are what our young aspiring student architects should be equipped with.

## Teaching and Learning Studio Programme

In order to train students in these alternative approaches and attitudes, what is required is a design studio programme that supports these other ways of practice, and what follows below is an outline of how one might consider this. Within a complex architectural/urban/spatial design project, there are four common markers of measurable output: (a) Site Investigations; (b) Concept/Design Intention; (c) Scheme Design; and (d) Final Resolution. The success of each one of these common markers relies on the student generating insightful responses to the context of the project, driven by a series of accumulative investigations, research, analysis, experimentation and reflection. The overarching approach to a design studio programme dealing with a shrinking context might be one that investigates the cultural content of the existing and works with its inhabitants to embrace cultural production through action. One example that has evolved in the past fifteen years is connected to the developing agency context, championing a grass roots approach to spatial practice, working directly with communities to establish proposals driven by need rather than desire. San Vicente provides a thorough overview of an informal and rethought series of architectural techniques, and discusses diverse projects including Buckminster Fuller's Drop City in Colorado (1965), and various bamboo buildings by Simón Vélez in Colombia to the timber structures of Rural Studio as work with "'open source' cultural context" (San Vicente, 2014). In these examples, a reexamining of appropriated and vernacular materials and building techniques are investigated, leading to new forms of architectural space.

Other adaptions within the context of the design studio include a social approach advocating John Turner's work in Peru,[3] based on his "philosophy of aided-self help and dweller control of housing" (Bromley, 2003, p. 288) and the more theoretical work of Lefebvre and De Certeau's "ordinary

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[3.] John Turner worked extensively in the squatter settlements of Peru from 1957 to 1965, which informed his poignant texts *Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process* (1972) and *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments, Ideas in Progress* (1976). Within both texts Turner explicitly calls for a shift in spatial agency in how dwellings are procured.

practitioners of the city" (De Certeau, 1988, p. 93). Accepting these, and many other nuances within studio agendas, does provide a diverse accessibility for students to discuss spatial practice through their actions—yet these still remain very much in the realm of construction—which is not to purely contain the work within the physical construction of materials coming together to form space, enclosure and places, but also in constructing representations, identities and values linked to the physical building of architecture. If associations with value are linked to representations of physical intervention (architecture, urban or spatial design), the fruition of a project that is then assessed (through whatever process), can be determined by the quality and quantity of the student's made work.

Within the shrinking city, where from the early stages of student engagement it becomes evident that to physically construct, build or add to the urban fabric is perverse, alternative means and methods of learning, teaching and evaluation must continue to evolve and be delivered in mainstream courses. What is required is to take a lead from two existing attitudes to space—underprivileged architecture and the power of the small-scale—with an onus on cultural production. To focus attention on the concept of undesigning requires a revisiting and shift in the four common points of measured outputs outlined above. A parallel series of markers might comprise of: (a) Place Investigations and Dialogues; (b) Intention; (c) Scheme Development; and (d) Sustained Design. These proposals are explained in detail in the following subsections.

### Place Investigations and Dialogues

Within a shrinking city, the idea of the site investigation may not seem too dissimilar to that of a city experiencing growth. However, upon closer analysis, it can be seen that extraordinary phenomena are evident and require extensive exploration. The qualities of the broader context and the city as a whole are of primary concern to any place investigation. Conventional practice calls for intense study of a particular area to determine what might be required for the site, which although expects a broad reading of context, dissuades students from diversion tactics such as abandoning a particular site in favour of another, perhaps more forgiving, or, often through the eyes of the student, more appropriate to their reading of the project brief. What I suggest here is that employing a kind of diversion tactic may be, in fact, exactly what analyses of a site in a shrinking city deserves. A given site may act as a starting point, but to encourage diversion through close reading of a range of place qualities may reveal a deeper questioning of site and city. Furthermore, it is critical to discuss a range of issues with local citizens to reveal the hidden and expel assumptions. Paramount to the usefulness of this dialogue is to continue these conversations throughout the remainder of the process.

### Intention

Once a firm position is attained at the close of place investigations stage, a series of intentions should be cemented based on evidence from place investigations, continuing dialogue and any other relevant conceptual drivers (as one might expect, these will depend on the student/practitioner's own line of inquiry). These intentions, these desires to contribute in some way to the future of the shrinking city, is not a desire to build, to leave one's mark or to hand over a finished project, but rather a desire to support a socio-spatial, a spatio-political and a spatio-reductive strategy for the consolidation of space and place. The strategy may also contain a reimagining of identity. This consolidation strategy is paramount to the success of the project, requiring meticulous handling of the range of spatial qualities identified through site investigations. The strategy might demand categorization, prioritization and promotion of extremely fluid variables, and ultimate assiduousness and empathy in working with all stakeholders is fundamental.

### Scheme Development

Where under the common design paradigm the design development period is rich with sketch models, process drawings and refining spatial solutions, this is somewhat subverted here. The relationship between intents and process demands ultimate synergy, and there requires a constant reflective process to be undertaken as the strategy matures. Priorities may change, as might categories and stakeholders, although if these factors are experienced it may suggest to the student/practitioner that a revaluation of the core strategy is needed, and some constants are determined.[4] Establishing constants or strategic benchmarks could help inform the longer aims of the strategic intentions, and it is critical that these are carried out in participation with citizens and municipalities.

### Sustained Design

Finalisation or concluding a design project is clearly sought, attained and measured through completion of portfolio (in the case of the student) or in the completion of built work (in the case of the practitioner). The final stage when working within the shrinking city is trickier to assume, as no definitive concrete outputs are represented or constructed. Concluding a project of this kind demands working closely within the idea of the unproduction of space, insomuch that a conclusion which is not finite, but continual,

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4. In *Civic Housing: Empowering Dwellers to Shape their Living Environments* (Madrazo, Martin, & Robert, 2014), dwellers and students are engaged in discussion with the help of communication tools designed by students and used by dwellers, the results of which support a more insightful and reflective analysis and understanding of the dwellers needs and desires.

or initiates the continuation or indeed the start of a different kind of process is a success. Through this process, design means to make and produce through spatial actions and cultural production, which may lead to synergies between the present divide of *radical* and *conventional* practice.

## CONCLUSIONS

The future of the shrinking city is dependent on its present, rather than its past. The identity and purpose of a city, much dependent on economic cycles, must be prepared to depart from previous incarnations in order to enter a period of stability through a shifting nature. It is these shifts where spatial practitioners can have a positive effect in supporting the shrinking city to reclaim a set of values. These values must reimagine, reinvigorate and reestablish the shrinking city, which will only be successful when undertaken in collaboration with its citizens. In parallel, spatial practitioners also must reimagine three key moments connected to their own practice trajectory that echo Lefebvre's spatial triad: (a) the perceived; (b) the conceived, and (c) the lived. The image of the city perceived by spatial practitioners, their journey to and from site, place and city, is constructed of many perceived spaces resulting from the conceived spatial interventions of previous architects and urban designers which must be both reflective and projective, and must also be re-imaginative. This reimagining, reinterpreting and rethinking the values of the shrinking city must also be determined through the lived experience, that is, by the familiar and intimate realms that create "skillful space" (Hall, 2013, p. 96). By very definition of these actions and perceptions, spatial practitioners urgently need to engage in discourse and practice in a multidisciplinary and collaborative manner.

Although the visual evidence of the shrinking city may be apparent in voids, chasms and gaps in the urban fabric in terms of commodity and retail spaces, the key issue to reimagining the city is to champion the city's dwellings as agents for change. To consider dwellings as actors in a network of city stuff is to reintroduce life to the vacancy of public and semi-public space. These considerations, discussed within forums which include citizens, inhabitants, tenants, property owners, municipalities and policy makers from the micro to macro scale of neighbour, street, neighbourhood, district and city need to remain modest to sustain the future of the city.

In terms of academia and practice, there is much work to do. Whilst teachers rigorously and intensely test, interrogate and examine students to ensure that graduates are produced that satisfy all benchmarking criteria from the various professional and academic bodies, these criteria have been designed to suit conventional production of space. It seems perverse when one ruminates on this situation, that there is no clear agenda for students to develop forms of spatial responses appropriate to the shrinking city. Whether it is the responsibility of the teacher, the institution, or

the professional and academic bodies charged with benchmarking and determining assessment criteria, the process of reimagining education is paramount to the future success of the shrinking city. The story is much the same for practitioners. A transparent, almost anarchic form of practice may be required, which might result in strategies for occupying empty homes, commercial premises and public space. Disconnection, vacant space, urban deterioration, social displacement, loss of cohesion, loss of identity, loss of activity and action, loss of palimpsest, less public money—all of these negative attributes found within the shrinking city must be seen as opportunities to reinvent rather than to reestablish—.

Whilst the issue of shrinking cities is widely discussed in contemporary debate and there is important literature emerging about their future, spatial practitioners must engage wholly with these discussions; and equally there needs to be a cultural move away from the negative connotations a shrinking city carries. If one reflects on the description of Bellevue in Dublin, one of a vast amount of similarly built housing projects across many countries, one can see that the growing city is not always the successful place it seems, at least not in terms of architectonics. The shrinking city can and should empower spatial practitioners to make better spaces than those in the expanding city, and affords us the time and space to discuss, consider and reflect on our everyday and practice-based actions, rituals and events. When these reimagined spatial interventions begin to take shape through rhetoric and physical assemblage, society can begin to perceive and socially engage with the reinvigorated city. Then, students, educators and practitioners will need to think more pluralistically and inclusively, whilst continuing to build a slow revolution.

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# The Challenge of Change in Living Environments: Implications and Opportunities for Architectural Education

**Nadia Charalambous**

**INTRODUCTION**

Cities around the world have become radically altered in the past few decades as a result of globalization, increased mobility, massive internal movements of labour, technological developments, economic fluctuations and terrorism. These changes have had an impact on living environments—the built environment and the interwoven living patterns—and currently pose increasingly complex challenges including housing accessibility and affordability, homelessness, overcrowding, inequalities and social integration.

The changes affecting contemporary housing entail a respective transformation of architectural practice and questions the architects' ability to handle such complex challenges. This has direct implications on architectural education and on the profile of future graduates. Design studio culture and pedagogy need to be reviewed to proactively address these global changes in order to form architects who are able to effectively deal with complex, multi-layered and unstable living environments. The need to address contemporary living environments collaboratively, through a multidimensional and multiscale perspective encompassing all the factors which condition the various forms of dwelling in today's societies—architectural, urban, environmental, economic, political, cultural and social—emerges, and leads to an enormous increase in the complexity of the issues which housing actors in general and architects, in particular, have to deal with.

However, the dynamic and ubiquitous changes taking place in our time are not reflected in design studio pedagogy. In line with a number of studies on contemporary studio pedagogy one could argue that the housing studio is in many cases an isolated island in the middle of a complex reality. The need to overcome the insularity of the housing studio comes from the aspirations of the users and society at large, as well as from the need to bring the architectural profession up to date.

Alongside these reflections, a number of key issues concerning architectural education in the globalized society are explored in this chapter in an attempt to address the apparent gap between the traditional housing studio and the complex, dynamic world. The topics discussed include multidisciplinary approaches in studio pedagogy, going beyond disciplinary and academic boundaries, and cancelling out the tensions between global dynamics, cultural diversity and local realities. The chapter concludes with the identification of the need for housing studio practices to embrace a culture of "interfaces" between different disciplines; between academia, the profession and the community; and between global driving forces and local contexts in order to proactively address, adapt and respond to change.

## GLOBAL PATTERNS, SOCIAL CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION OF LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

Contemporary cities are complex entities in which demography, social structures and urban form are constantly changing. Over the past few decades, cities around the world have become radically altered in their scale, scope and complexity as a result of globalization, increased mobility, massive internal movements of labour, climate change, technological developments, economic fluctuations and terrorism (Marcuse & Van Kempen, 2000). Migration flows as well as internal population displacements and the movement of refugees have also had profound consequences on city life and have created an increasingly diverse urban society, opening up a discussion on how to deal with urban multiculturalism, diversity and coexistence between communities. Discussions on social inequalities, urban segregation, social justice and the right to the city as well as a strong critique of unfair development patterns have become prominent, fuelling debates over power relations in times of rapid urban and societal transformations, instability and crisis.

These changes entail a respective transformation of living environments, where the everyday life of the diverse groups living in cities unfolds and poses increasingly complex challenges. These include housing accessibility and affordability, homelessness, overcrowding, social integration and community building, among others. Questions of identity, voice, inclusion, access and opportunity have been negotiated in the context of globalization, changing forms of production, declining welfare and developing technologies. Patterns of residential segregation and unequal access to housing are discussed in the context of dynamic urban growth. Demographic, spatial and socio-cultural changes have a direct impact on everyday patterns of living, domestic activities and family structures (Fokkema & Liefbroer, 2008). Traditional concepts of housing in general and the dwelling in particular, are challenged and questioned. The experience of urban life in the 21st century—transient, fragmented, changeable and unpredictable—contrasts to concepts of dwelling based on stability, permanence, locality and a sense of belonging.

The current debate on the global dimension of housing focuses on issues such as gentrification, mobility, economic and social restructuring and sustainability. Interestingly enough, without denying the existence and the importance of global driving forces, researchers have illustrated that in cities around the world there are often alternative local contingencies which contrast with the globalized, abstract theoretical approaches (Maloutas & Fujita, 2012). Such studies argue that one-sided reasoning— leaning towards either global or local—fails to capture the inherent complexity of local socio-spatial realities.

The changes characterizing contemporary housing are closely linked with an emerging social responsibility, with digital technologies affecting the design, management and construction of the built environment, as well

as with a wide range of expanded services delivered by architectural firms and demanded by clients. Architectural practice is undertaking significant transformations and the architects' ability to handle such complexity is becoming a prominent issue.

Considerable challenges are thus posed to the architecture profession which can no longer be what it once was. This has direct implications on architectural education and the profile of future graduates. Since the design studio is still the backbone of architectural education, it is indeed imperative to encounter design studio pedagogy in its broadest sense. A number of studies argue that any ongoing changes in architecture education are not aligned with today's rapidly changing world, especially in the context of architectural practice (Koch, Shwennsen, Dutton, & Smith, 2002; Tzonis, 2014). Through it all, the cultural values and practices underpinning architecture studios seem to have largely withstood change. Despite the dynamic and ubiquitous changes taking place in our time, respective changes in architectural education and studio pedagogy have been rare,[1] apart from minor transformations which are not enough to address a rapidly changing world of unprecedented technological innovation, economic might, global accessibility but also cultural, social, economic and environmental crises (Tzonis, 2014).

According to a report prepared by The American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS), contemporary studio pedagogy cannot effectively cope with the changing nature of the built environment or the transformations undergone in architectural practice (Koch et al., 2002). In many cases, architectural educators continue designing and teaching the studio on the basis of what an architect currently is or was, focusing on what is considered to be the essential knowledge of architecture (often referred to as core knowledge) with the aim of developing individual skills and critical thinking abilities which together do not seem to respond to the transformed and expanded demands placed on the profession by society which will determine the future role of the architecture profession. As Tzonis (2014) points out, however, the challenge which architectural education faces today is not to enrich and adapt the core knowledge to the changing world, but to reformulate the studio framework.

Within this framework, we need to rethink the object of architecture studios in general and the housing studio in particular, as well as the very nature of the tools and methods studio education needs to create in order to meet current housing challenges (Dorst, 2008). The studio structure has its own culture, patterns and values which are passed on over the years, through generations of students, educators, and practitioners and are

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1. One needs to mention the important pedagogical experiments which played a crucial role in shaping architectural discourse and practice in the second half of the 20th century. According to Colomina, Choi, Galan, and Meister (2012), these radical practices paved the way to a new modus operandi for the discipline which could only be created if "traditions were questioned, destabilized, undermined or even destroyed". These initiatives challenged normative thinking in postwar architecture, but have been neglected in recent years.

highly influential in a student's education and future practice (Dutton, 1991). At its best, studio pedagogy has many strengths: It can promote and support critical, analytic and synthetic thinking through the exploration of the relationship between design and the cultural context, and it can convey, transmit or even transform the values of the design profession and society at large. At its worst, it may facilitate isolation from the real world, conserving, sustaining and reproducing existing preconceptions and stereotypes and resisting change.

A prevalent pedagogic approach based on theories of learning and established pedagogical models of design studio education detached from the reality of the built environment does not help to overcome the gap between academic education and our dynamic and complex world. Studio culture and pedagogy need to be questioned and revised to proactively address changes in the world and in the architectural practice and to produce engaging and well-formed graduate architects who are able to deal effectively with a complex, multi-layered and unstable built environment and profession (Koch et al., 2002).

Alongside these reflections, a number of key issues concerning architectural education in globalized society need to be explored. Addressing the apparent gap between the traditional housing studio and the complex, dynamic world involves going beyond disciplinary and academic boundaries, and cancelling out the tensions between global dynamics, cultural diversity and local realities.

## CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE HOUSING STUDIO

In line with a number of studies on contemporary studio pedagogy we could argue that the housing design studio is in many cases an isolated island in the middle of a complex reality (Koch et al., 2002; Boyer & Mitgang, 1996; Tzonis, 2014). The need to address the insularity of the housing studio and the architecture student from the needs and goals of the users and the society at large, as well as from advances in the profession itself, emerges. Boyer and Mitgang (1996) expressed such concerns in the 1990s pointing out a disconnection of the design studio from society as well as a sense of social, physical, and intellectual isolation of architecture schools on their own campuses. As Anthony (1991) pointed out, the studio has gradually acquired such a central role in students' social lives that it has reduced the importance of the world outside.

Tzonis (2014) traces the blame on top-down educational initiatives that still base their thinking on abstract theories of learning. Other scholars argue that studio pedagogy has placed emphasis on representationally based form-making for a rather long time, ignoring the reality of the professional practice as well as the reality of the world and the desires and aspirations of the dwellers. Schools of architecture around the world

need to choose between educating future star-architects by focusing on form-making or equipping architects with the skills to respond to ordinary life needs with efficiency and sensitiveness (Tzonis, 2014).

A call for change in all these studies indicates a general agreement on the need for the reorientation of the housing studio education towards an engaging approach that also considers the social responsibility of future architects. The need to instil a sense of involvement in the students emerges. This involvement refers to not only the community they will eventually serve but to their future professional activity, drawing on knowledge which supersedes the disciplinary boundaries and the academic limits.

### Overcoming Disciplinary Boundaries

The explosion of differentiation and specialization of architectural practice as a result of technological, epistemological, economic, and social forces gradually demands a corresponding change in the curriculum and the housing studio (Tzonis, 2014). The discipline of architecture needs to stake its claims amid a new territory by articulating its relationship with the technological, socio-political and cultural transformations of the time. Nevertheless, few schools make serious efforts to expose students to other disciplines. The current conception of housing design needs to move towards a discourse that uncovers latent possibilities within the complex and fluid interaction of a number of factors with the participation of a growing number of agents and stakeholders in the creation of living environments. New types of interdisciplinary knowledge arising from all these driving forces in different realms (sociological, political, economic, environmental and ecological, among others) are needed to revaluate and transform the way we create, preserve, and alter living environments in our time.

As Cunningham (2005) notes, design is an activity not a subject and its practice many times requires borrowing knowledge, theories, techniques and methodologies from other disciplines. At different stages of the design process it might be necessary to turn to "any information, knowledge, theory or technique from other disciplines which the designer may select as being relevant to the task on hand" (Cunningham, 2005, p. 424). Owing to its potential to gather a heterogeneous set of discourses and types of knowledge, the housing studio can then provide opportunities for an integrated approach from the early stages of the design process to explore the multidimensionality of living environments and thus to facilitate the merging of inputs coming through research, the profession and the community. Such a multidisciplinary design studio could intertwine research, profession and community to overcome the lack of connection between architecture and other disciplines as well as the inflexibility of the curriculum (Boyer & Mitgang, 1996).

Housing studios need to be scrutinized to find out whether students are indeed exposed to the complex set of issues that they will be asked to address once they graduate. For instance, a major challenge that the housing studio

faces today, is to expose students to the knowledge required to deal with rapid and complex demographic and socio-cultural changes which have a direct impact on everyday patterns of living, family structures and living arrangements. In the last forty years, large-scale demographic changes have occurred across and beyond Europe. People live longer, they have fewer children and there are more single parents; they live in multicultural environments and are much more transient than ever before (Billari, Kohler, Andersson, & Lundström, 2007; Bongaarts, 2006). The growth in the number of young adults who stay in the parental home and the decrease of men and women in their thirties and forties who live with a partner and have children seem to reflect the deteriorating financial position of young adults and the difficulties faced by couples to combine their aspirations for parenthood with a satisfying working life.

Furthermore, although these changes occur globally, the direction and extent of the changes varies by country, by age group and by gender. The differences in living arrangements across Europe are pronounced along geographical divides and might have grown larger in the last fifteen to twenty years. The changes undergone by living patterns and household types in different contexts are discussed in numerous sociological, economic and other studies. Conclusions from these studies should be conveyed to the housing studio in order to facilitate a more nuanced understanding of housing contexts in the real world. Similarly, a major challenge that architectural educators are confronting is to link the housing design studio with other subjects in the curriculum and with other disciplines, in novel ways.

## Overcoming Academic Boundaries

Besides breaking the isolation of the housing studio within the architectural curriculum, it is also necessary to overcome its distancing from the professional world and from local communities. Bridging these gaps through meaningful and constructive interaction with both the profession and the community should be a major objective of design studio educators.

### INTERACTING WITH THE PROFESSION

Housing studio education needs to instil in students a sense of involvement with their future profession, cutting across academic and disciplinary boundaries and engaging more effectively with the reality of architectural practice. Advanced digital technologies, globalization and the recent financial crisis among other factors, have affected the design, management and construction of housing. Housing studios can encourage projects in collaboration with the profession and thus enrich student learning, create new knowledge for the discipline, and strengthen ties with architectural practitioners through construction visits and participation of practitioners in studio crits, lectures and workshops (Koch et al., 2002).

Furthermore, in current professional practice, architects need to deal with complex collaborative processes, involving a number of actors representing a vast range of knowledge, experiences and agendas. It is gradually becoming acknowledged that the complexity of contemporary practice needs to be addressed through collaborative efforts and critical collaborative skills. The significance of contributions from all involved users, consultants and relevant stakeholders in the design process needs to inform housing design projects in the studio, fostering collaborative and team-building skills (Charalambous & Phocas, 2012; Charalambous, 2014). Therefore, a further challenge we face as educators is the development of a studio environment that promotes collaborative knowledge, skills and a set of shared values and practices.

### INTERACTING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Inextricably linked to the issues discussed in the previous sections is the need to focus on the everyday user and the society at large and reach out to the community. There is a growing awareness that the housing studio needs to recognize the aspirations and desires of people by facilitating their participation in the design process. The house is rightly considered as one of the most important means of exploring the social and experiential dimensions of architecture. Houses are a complex expression of the everyday life of their inhabitants and, of the different cultures, ethnicities and social groups; they are sociograms which reflect the activity of individuals and society (Hanson, 1998). Now, more than ever, societies are confronted with complex issues and future architects need to take responsibility and address them effectively and efficiently. The housing studio should be concerned with the responsibility of future architects towards the community, with the social and cultural implications of designing for the society.

Students can gain a valuable experience working with the communities they will eventually serve, learning first-hand about the social issues that need to be addressed. Community outreach activities, involving residents in the process, help to expose students to the real living conditions and provide hands-on and informal learning, collaboration and interaction with all actors involved. A number of housing studios have already undertaken such initiatives fostering a participatory design approach that engages students with communities and the respective users, agents and stakeholders. Such efforts need to also focus on educating the community involved. Education needs to be extended to all relevant actors in the community in order to facilitate an efficient and fruitful interaction between future architects and potential users. To achieve this goal, conversations among students, scholars, policy makers, practitioners, and community representatives can be initiated through participatory workshops and lifelong learning activities.

An efficient interaction with the community can foster an understanding of their needs by making their experiences, interests and their own efforts to improve their housing more salient to future architects. Such outreach activities have the potential to broaden the knowledge base of the housing studio beyond the academic boundaries on one hand and reveal the specific shape of local contexts, on the other hand.

### Addressing Global Forces and Local Socio-Spatial Realities

A further serious challenge that the housing studio faces today is the need to train future housing actors in dealing effectively with the increased tensions between global forces and distinct local contexts. Nowadays, the identification of dwelling with a permanent place of residence is being increasingly questioned. Theorists point out that the demands of mobility, the vast number of possible choices, and massive waves of refugees—resulting from political decisions such as the unification of Europe—, have undermined our inclination and abilities to form ties with a place (Lefas, 2009).

Although houses everywhere serve the same basic needs and activities, a glance at the architectural record reveals an astonishing variety in the ways in which these activities are accommodated in the houses of different cultures and places (Hanson, 1998). Cultural diversity and the significant differences observed in housing around the globe highlight the inherent complexity, context-bound nature of everyday environments. Therefore, we need to educate future practitioners to serve local communities drawing on essential "local" knowledge which needs to be taken into account in architectural education (Lefaivre & Tzonis, 2012). The ability to deal effectively with such tensions does not stem from either a balance between local and "core" knowledge or from merely gathering relevant information about a local context. It is rather about fostering appropriate design thinking skills which will facilitate students' ability to design housing taking into account the potentials and constraints of a particular context.

### Housing Design as a Process of Thinking

Therefore, the pedagogical challenge to renew housing education is not about adding more subjects to the programmes but on how to integrate them at different phases of the design process (Tzonis, 2014). The understanding of design as a process of thinking rather than as an outcome may facilitate this aim. Studio practices that promote the learning of process as a main objective rather than on form-making, may succeed in preparing students to effectively address rapidly changing and complex living environments in a context of collaboration and interaction with other subject-matters, disciplines and actors.

In an integrative and open design studio environment, architecture students can develop skills and abilities to integrate knowledge derived

from different fields, disciplines, and scales which will gradually inform their design proposals. They can also establish multiple lines of inquiry through a rich approach that draws on a variety of sources. Housing studio education can then address questions posed by society not as fixed and well-defined problems, but as a way to investigate how social and life patterns evolve, for then intervening with their designs.

## CONCLUSIONS

All the challenges that the housing studio faces today may not necessarily be a threat to the architecture profession but rather a positive evolution, an opportunity for reflection and renewal. The overwhelming changes undergoing both profession and academia create a common ground for experimentation. There is an obvious need for creative alternatives to current architectural education, for learning environments which can bridge across disciplinary and institutional boundaries and can facilitate an open, flexible and integrative design process which takes into consideration the diversity of factors, different types of knowledge, values and stakeholders involved in the creation of contemporary living environments (Charalambous, 2014).

Studio educators need to identify ways through which current housing studio practices can embrace a culture of "interfaces" to proactively address, adapt and respond to change. This way, the future generation of architects can acquire the design thinking skills needed to deal effectively with a complex, multi-layered and unstable living environment and profession. The housing studio needs to provide interfaces between the individual student and the team, between different disciplines, between academia, the profession and the community, and between global driving forces and local contexts. Emerging concerns on current educational approaches in the housing studio in particular, but also the studio culture in general, present new and exciting opportunities for educators and institutions to respond to the ongoing changes in the living environments and to contribute to the transformation of the architectural profession.

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# The Challenges of Social and Demographic Change for Urban Planning and Housing Design: Examples from Lisbon, Dublin, Paris Region and Saint-Étienne

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Sandra Marques Pereira

## INTRODUCTION

Demographic growth and decline, changes in household structure, and the lack of affordable housing rank among the most important challenges for public action on housing today. Problems arise especially in the disparities between demographic changes and the characteristics of the existing housing stock. In this chapter, we analyse some strategies adopted in four urban areas in Europe—Lisbon (Portugal), Dublin (Ireland), Paris Region and Saint-Étienne (France)—which exemplify different levels of involvement of public authorities in housing supply and urban renewal.

In the first part of the chapter, we will analyse the demographic trends in the four areas with regard to the evolution of the population in terms of average household size and the ageing phenomenon. In the second and third sections, we will discuss the various forms of interventions which are being undertaken by public authorities in the four areas to address the challenges derived from the current demographic trends.

A critical examination of the strategies adopted in the four urban areas will reveal the differences in the political and urban traditions in each country when it comes to finding solutions to common demographic changes. It is our premise that opening up the study of housing design in architectural and urban planning schools to social and demographic changes can help future architects and planners to better understand the social impact of their work as professionals.

## CURRENT TRENDS OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN LISBON, DUBLIN, PARIS REGION AND SAINT-ÉTIENNE

An analysis of the statistical data in the four urban areas considered—Lisbon, Dublin, Paris Region and Saint-Étienne—reveals some common demographic trends. Firstly, as the statistics reflect, while the average population in the four areas has slightly increased or decreased (Table 1), in all of them the number of persons living in the same household has steadily decreased (Table 2). Likewise, the statistics show that the percentage of elderly people is increasing in the four areas considered (Figure 1), with Lisbon having the largest proportion of people over 65, Dublin the smallest, and Paris and Saint-Étienne being situated between the first two (Figure 2).

### Demographic and Social Changes in Portugal, and Lisbon

Deep differences distinguish the social, economic and demographic development of the Portuguese regions. The two metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto, which are the territories in which most of Portugal's economic development is concentrated, comprise a large part of the country's population. Unlike the rest of the country, at present both areas are witnessing

| | 1996 | 1999 | 2006 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PORTUGAL | | | 10,511,988 | 10,572,721 | 10,542,398 | 10,487,289 | 10,427,301 |
| GREATER LISBON | | | 1,801,940 | 1,863,069 | | 1,849,472 | |
| LISBON | | | 509,751 | 545,245 | | 524,282 | |
| FRANCE | | 60,122,665 | 63,235,742 | 64,932,339 | 65,241,241 | 65,525,420 | 65,800,694 |
| PARIS REGION | | 10,946,012 | | 11,852,851 | 11,898,502 | 11,952,061 | 12,005,077 |
| SAINT-ÉTIENNE | | 180,438 | 177,480 | | 174,587 | | |
| IRELAND | 3,626,087 | | 4,239,848 | 4,588,252 | 4,582,707 | 4,591,087 | 4,605,501 |
| GREATER DUBLIN | 1,058,264 | | 1,187,176 | 1,273,069 | | | |
| DUBLIN | 481,854 | | 506,211 | 527,612 | | | |

**TABLE 1.** Evolution of overall population in the areas of study. Sources: European Statistical System, Eurostat[1] estimations, Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques (INSEE[2]), Central Statistics Office (CSO 1996-2016[3]), and census by the Instituto Nacional de Estatistica (INE[4])

| | 1960 | 1968 | 1999 | 2001 | 2007 | 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PORTUGAL | 3.7 | | | 2.8 | | 2.6 |
| GREATER LISBON | 3.3 | | | 2.6 | | 2.4* |
| LISBON | 3.1 | | | 2.4 | | 2.2 |
| FRANCE | | 3.08 | 2.42 | | 2.30 | 2.26 |
| PARIS REGION | | | 2.38 | | 1.9 | 1.9 |
| SAINT-ÉTIENNE | | | | | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| IRELAND | 4* | 4* | 3.1* | 2.9* | 2.75* | 2.7 |
| GREATER DUBLIN | | | 2.65* | 2.6* | 2.48* | 2.4 |

**TABLE 2.** Evolution in the number of persons living in a household. Sources: Portadata/Portuguese Statistics, INSEE, CSO (1960–2011). *Approximation based on Duffy, Byrne, & Fitzgerald (2014)

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1. See ec.europa.eu/eurostat

2. See www.insee.fr

3. See www.cso.ie

4. See www.ine.pt

a slight growth in population. The Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) has almost 30% of Portugal's population, that is to say, 2,815,851 inhabitants according to the 2011 census. The city itself has 545,245, which equates to 19% of the LMA's population.

Representative of the ageing phenomenon affecting the European continent, Portugal is the fourth country in the European Union with the highest proportion of elderly people after Italy, Germany and Greece (INE, 2014). Almost 20% of the country's population are over 65 years old (Figure 1). However, in Lisbon, after an early phenomenon of population ageing and decrease in the 1980s and 1990s, the pace of ageing is slowing down. Ageing is especially affecting the inner city of Lisbon and to a lesser extent its suburbs.

As a result of the long-lasting right-wing dictatorship (1933–1974), the country experienced a late process of modernisation, mainly during the 1990s and 2000s, after becoming member of the European Union. In statistical terms, family life and household structures in Portugal are following the trends towards individualisation that we are witnessing in Europe (Nunes, 2014; Aboim, 2014; Wall, Cunha, & Ramos, 2014). Nowadays, the average household size is dropping more rapidly than in other western European countries, such as France. This phenomenon is concentrated mostly in the city of Lisbon, with a proportion of 35% one-person households, whereas the percentage is 26% in the rest of the LMA and 21% for the entire country. One-person households represent to a large extent elderly people, but also the young. In addition, the end of the dictatorship, during which time the majority of couples were married under the Catholic Church, saw a rise in the number of couples without children, single parents, blended families, and informal cohabitation. Nevertheless, traditional households, that is, couples with children, are still dominant in a country that preserves family ties as a support for daily life. For the same reasons, living nearby immediate family members remains a common practice among the Portuguese.

FIGURE 1. **Graph showing evolution of the percentage of people over 65 in the overall population (vertical axes) in the case study areas and countries, metropolitan areas and countries, as well as the EU average. Data source: Eurostat, 2006–2013**

**Demographic and Social Changes in Ireland, and Dublin**

Ireland has a population of about 4.6 million that is slowly but steadily increasing. Compared to other European countries, the country has a young population: Only 12.6 of the population is over 65 years old (Figure 1), and the median population age is
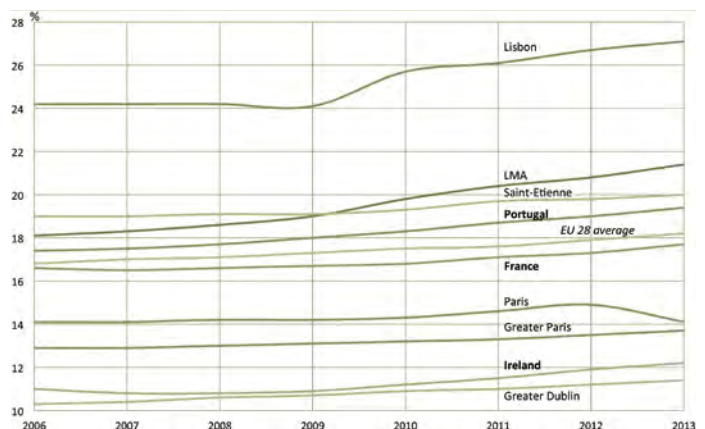
about 34 years old, compared to 41 in Portugal (Figure 2). However, this percentage is constantly increasing with predictions that by 2031 the number of people over 65 years old will have almost doubled in all regions (Skehan, 2015, p.25).

Just as in Portugal and most other European countries, marriage is not as prevalent in Ireland as it used to be and couples are older than in the past. Irish women thus have children later; the birth rate is falling and divorce rates are increasing. For all these reasons, the number of people living alone is growing rapidly and the average household size is decreasing. In 2011, one-person households represented 23.6 per cent of the total households in Ireland (CSO, 2015). As in other European contexts, higher rates of people living alone are observed from the 2011 censuses in the cities being considered here. In Dublin it is 30.5%, in Paris it is 51% and in Lisbon it is 35%. This is highlighted with a tendency for a denser concentration in the city cores (European Commission, 2007). As in the southern European countries, Ireland presents an extremely fast decline in household size, with estimates of nearly 60% of one and two-person households in Dublin by 2018 (Sirr, 2017).

Ireland witnessed an outward migration of 144,000 mainly young people in the period 2010 to 2014 (CSO, 2014). Arriving inward migrants are to a large extent young workers mainly in the IT sector who prefer short-term renting (Sirr, 2017), thus further highlighting the need for smaller dwellings, as well as for a sufficient stock of available housing and flexible tenure solutions.

## Demographic and Social Changes in the Paris Region, and Saint-Étienne

As in Ireland, a similar tendency of continuous population growth can be observed in France. In 2015, the country's population was 66.3 million inhabitants (64.2 in metropolitan France) and it is increasing by 0.4% each year (INSEE, 2015). The population is ageing at a similar pace. The percentage of the population aged 65 and over in 2015 is 18.4% and constantly increasing, thus approaching the European average (Figure 1). However, there are strong regional differences, especially between the Paris Region (Île-de-France) and the other French regions, as well as between the larger cities and medium-sized ones, such as Saint-Étienne.

The Paris Region has a population of about 12 million that is growing at a yearly rate of about 0.5%, due
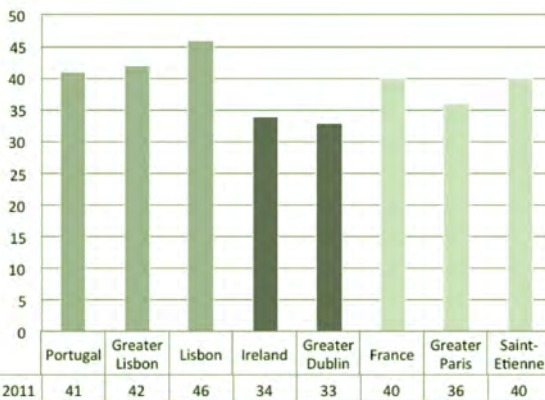
FIGURE 2. Median age of the total population in 2011 (i.e. half of the population is younger and half of the population is older). Data source: Eurostat



| | Portugal | Greater Lisbon | Lisbon | Ireland | Greater Dublin | France | Greater Paris | Saint-Étienne |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Median age in 2011 | 41 | 42 | 46 | 34 | 33 | 40 | 36 | 40 |

to natural increase (that is, the birth rate is higher than the death rate). Its population is rather young, with a median age of 36 years, and the number of births is high compared to other French regions (Figure 2). Indeed, the Paris Region is especially attractive for young people and for foreigners. This is noted as mostly older residents move out, mainly to other French regions (out migration accounts for a yearly decrease of about 0.4% of the population). Nevertheless, the inward migration and the high birth rate exceed the number of departures and this compensation gives the overall demographic growth trend.

The percentage of one-person households and of single-parent families is higher in Paris than in other French regions. However, the household size is decreasing at a slower pace than in the Irish case although it did witness a faster decrease in an earlier period, from the 1960s to the end of the 1990s. The average Parisian household size is smaller than the French average and important dissimilarities bear between the inner city (1.8 people average), the first suburban ring (2.4 average) and the second one (2.6 average).

Saint-Étienne presents an opposite demographic trend to the case of Paris and resembles Lisbon to some extent. In the last 40 years, the city has lost almost a quarter of its population and projections point to a further rise in the migration rate to about 1,800 people per year. With its 174,587 inhabitants in 2012, it is the second largest city in the Rhône-Alpes region, after Lyon and ahead of Grenoble (Agences d'Urbanisme Lyon et Saint-Étienne, 2015).

The decline of the population correlates with the phenomenon of population ageing. However, the percentage of people over 65 years old is higher than in other French regions and constantly increasing (Figure 1). Young people tend to leave the city, whereas the percentage of people over 60 grew by 0.5% from 1999 to 2006, reaching 25% of the population. Among them, persons over 75 years old account for 11% of the city population. These phenomena are due to a loss of economic and residential attractiveness of the city. With the disappearance of its industrial fabric and, in spite of its reconversion in the tertiary sector and the development of a new city brand as a "city of design", Saint-Étienne is still struggling to attract dwellers (Masboungi & De Gravelaine, 2006; Bonneville, 2008). These trends negatively affect the housing stock, which is increasingly vacant and constantly degrading.

From these demographic tendencies observed in the four European cities under scrutiny, two types of problems concerning housing emerge. First, in the cases of Lisbon and Saint-Étienne, there is a lack of attractiveness and an obsolete housing stock that does not suit the needs of the current population (for example, large apartments designed for families and now inhabited by one person). In these cases, the challenge for planners is to carry out initiatives to adapt the existing housing stock to the new needs. In the cases of Paris and Dublin, the main problem is the housing shortage related to demographic growth and to the increase in the number of households, closely connected to the general decrease in household size. In Paris, therefore, planning and policy efforts are mostly concentrating on building more housing rather than on adapting the existent stock, while in Dublin action

is taken in both areas. This brings us to the question of the role of public authorities in defining appropriate solutions to these housing challenges.

## STRATEGIES FOR HOUSING PROVISION IN RESPONSE TO SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Having observed the demographic trends in the four urban areas, we will further examine the implications for public authorities and planners. With this purpose, we will draw some correlations between the strategies put forward in comparable situations: firstly, the cases of Lisbon and Saint-Étienne, where the population is shrinking; and secondly, Dublin and the Paris Region, where it is growing.

### Possible and Actual Strategies for Housing in Lisbon and Saint-Étienne

Like in Ireland, in Portugal public initiatives for housing provision are very limited. Privately owned housing is the dominant tenure type. Since the 1980s, a neoliberal trend in public policies in European countries has reduced both public funding for housing and direct public intervention in housing projects (Whitehead & Scanlon, 2007; Houard, 2011). In this situation, adapting housing to the social and demographic trends becomes imperative. The example of Portela estate within the Lisbon Metropolitan Area shows the possibilities of intervention where there is reduced or non-existent public support. On the other hand, Saint-Étienne, in a political context where there is a higher public intervention on the housing market, provides an example of a public-private partnership involving public stakeholders, homeowners and landlords.

#### PORTELA HOUSING ESTATE WITHIN LISBON METROPOLITAN AREA

Portela is a suburban housing estate of about 11,000 inhabitants located in the northeast of the city of Lisbon. It is representative of the suburbanisation of the metropolitan area carried out from the 1960s to the 1980s. High-rise housing estates were built to cater for the masses of migrants coming from rural areas and the ex-colonies, and from Lisbon itself. The population increase was not always accompanied by a sufficient housing supply (Pereira, 2011). At that time the provision of social housing was insufficient and remains so today. Consequently, the private sector established itself as the major housing provider.

The master plan of Portela was developed in 1969, during the dictatorship. The construction of most of its almost 200 buildings in less than one square kilometre was completed during the second half of the 1970s. This was also the period when the majority of its inhabitants arrived, most of them from the upper middle class. At present, a large

part of the population (about 45%) was born in the housing estate.

Portela's architecture is characteristic of the 1960s mass housing typologies and construction techniques (Figure 3). Because of its distance to the centre of Lisbon and its architectural and urban design features, which no longer meet the current standards and demands, Portela has lost more of its attractiveness to new residents in comparison with other housing estates in the metropolitan area. These phenomena of symbolic or ideological ageing occur in parallel to the ageing of the population. However, since Portela is a middle-class area, built by the private sector and now in possession of private homeowners, it is not considered socially problematic by public authorities, unlike other housing estates and illegal settlements.



FIGURE 3. **Portela housing estate, 2013. Source: Jim Roche**

### RENEWING A HIGH-RISE ESTATE AT THE END OF ITS LIFE-CYCLE

The professional expertise of architects and planners can play a key role in adapting housing estates like Portela to the needs and lifestyles of its inhabitants and of the possible newcomers. This requires both the transformation of existing dwellings and the preservation of the social fabric and lifestyles that have become rooted in the physical structures. Therefore, designing housing adaptations requires an in-depth understanding of today's lifestyles. Existing living patterns need to be preserved and reinforced because they are important for the inhabitants' well-being, to support family ties and to foster social relationships.

Existing apartments could be redesigned maintaining the existing structural shells or slightly transforming them, in order to alleviate the rigidity and homogeneity of the original slab housing blocks. In this way, a morphological diversity of layouts and spaces could be furnished that can better adapt to the variety of household types. More versatile apartment layouts would help to accommodate dwellers of different age groups, especially the elderly, and to adapt to household changes (Figure 4). In the same vein, the social interaction between residents could be favoured by providing collective spaces, the use of which could be defined by the residents.

### A PUBLIC STRATEGY FOR URBAN RENEWAL
### IN THE CENTRE OF SAINT-ÉTIENNE

Unlike the example of Portela, in which the adaptation to the needs of the today's population is left in the hands of the private sector, in the French city of Saint-Étienne the public sector leads the urban renovation process
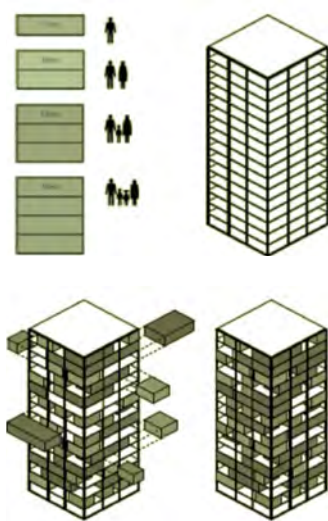
FIGURE 4. Students' proposals for transforming the Portela tower blocks by adapting them to residents' current needs. Source: OIKONET Lisbon Workshop. Students: Milos Jelisavcic, Lukas Kolb, Carlos Ochando Seva, Afonso Patinhas, Evi Stavraki, Bruno Trabut

to adapt housing to demographic shrinking. In line with the French tradition of an interventionist state, actions guided by public authorities aim to adapt urban areas to present social needs in order to attract new inhabitants.

In Saint-Étienne, population decrease and ageing is unequal in different areas of the city, although it is particularly visible in the urban core. Consequently, city centre housing suffers from a lack of maintenance by private owners and an increasing number of dwellings remain unoccupied, thus becoming dilapidated over time. In 2010, city authorities recorded 10,403 vacant housing units out of 95,706 which represents a vacancy rate of 10.87 % compared to the national average of 7% (INSEE, 2010).

In recent years, the city of Saint-Étienne has developed a policy of housing improvement and urban renewal, in order to respond to the demographic turnabout. In the 1980s and 1990s public interventions focused on the rehabilitation of old private rented housing and of social housing. From the middle of the 2000s, such area-based interventions consisted of replacing existing buildings with better quality new housing (Epures & Saint-Étienne Métropole, 2016).

As in other French cities, the model adopted for urban renewal in Saint-Étienne is a public-private partnership consisting of several public stakeholders, namely, the French state, the city of Saint-Étienne, and private companies; in this case housing home owners or landlords (Beal, Dormois, & Pinson, 2010). In order to accelerate social and urban transformations, an organisation for planning and project guidance was created in 2007: The Établissement Public d'Aménagement de Saint-Étienne (EPASE). The goal of this organisation, which is jointly financed and under the control of the local authority and of the French state, is to foster housing renewal in order to make the living environment more attractive by providing new services and activities.

## TOOLS FOR NEW HOUSING AND URBAN REGENERATION IN THE JACQUARD DISTRICT

The urban renewal led by EPASE concentrated on several old districts of Saint-Étienne, especially the Jacquard District. This district, which is now located at the centre of the city, developed throughout the 19th century as a suburban development of the former city core. At the end of the 2000s, an urban analysis led by EPASE and its partners (city of Saint-Étienne and the association PACT de la Loire) showed that the district had many derelict buildings, small housing and mostly vacant commercial premises on the ground floor of apartment buildings.

In order to increase the appeal of the area, in 2009 the city decided to restructure an urban block along with a square situated in the middle of the district (Figure 5). In the former urban block named Gachet,

situated next to Jacquard Square, a pub-
lic garden was planned to provide more
green space to inhabitants and to con-
solidate public facilities by demolishing
and then reconstructing some of them.
In addition, 190 new housing units were
built around the garden, one third of the
apartments being social housing.



FIGURE 5. Project for the Gachet Garden and housing in Saint-Étienne that replaces a former urban block. Source: Asylum, Architecture, Atelier de Ville en Ville et L'EPASE Saint-Étienne

Another form of multi-partnership
to improve buildings inside delim-
ited boundaries was developed after a
national policy for urban regeneration of old housing called *Opération
Programmée d'Amélioration de l'Habitat de Renouvellement Urbain*
(OPAH-RU). On the basis of a contract concerning the area covered by
the OPAH-RU programme, a total of 387 derelict or unfit housing units
were transformed or demolished and a total of 306 new units were built.
In the less degraded buildings, new and better apartments were built
by merging existing units. Apartments for the elderly were designed by
taking into account the particular needs of this age group, especially
in terms of physical accessibility. The newly refurbished buildings met
sustainability standards for energy efficiency. Besides, the renovation
of the buildings provided an opportunity to upgrade the adjacent public
spaces too.

This case suggests some implications for professional architects
and planners involved in the adaptation of housing to social evolutions.
Financing, managing and programming these interventions with the
stakeholders is an integral part of the project. Therefore, a capacity
to integrate these economic, social, and political aspects in an urban
renewal project should become an objective of the training of urban
planners and architects.

## Addressing Housing Shortage in Dublin and in the Paris Region

Dublin and the Paris Region, though of vastly different scales, are two urban
areas in which the needs for housing provision are growing as the population
increases. The specific needs of the new population further accentuate the
housing problem. Even though the two urban areas face similar problems
due to demographic growth, the strategies adopted to confront them differ.

### IRISH HOUSING PROVIDERS AND THE NEW DEMOGRAPHY

In Ireland, the housing market is seriously undermined by a deep crisis.
The delivery of both private and social housing is currently stagnated,
particularly in Dublin, as much vacant development land sits idle and
many buildings remain empty. After a difficult economic recession since

2008, property prices and rents are on the increase—the latter by 20% in a 4-year period to 2016—while homelessness grows at a rapid pace.

By December 2015, at least 90,000 households were on the social housing waiting lists nationwide (Focus Ireland, 2016) while by August 2016, there were over 6,600 people actually homeless, 2,360 of these being children and almost 3,800 (57%) of these in Dublin alone (PMV Trust, 2016). Many homeless people are in costly emergency hotel accommodation.

Meanwhile, there are over 200,000 empty dwellings (not including holiday homes) throughout Ireland (CSO, 2016) with over 38,500 of these in Dublin, representing a vacancy rate of 8% for the city (Skehan, 2016). In addition, though reduced from 3,000 between 2010 and 2015, almost 700 unfinished housing estates (commonly referred to as "ghost estates" because they are mostly empty) still pepper the countryside (Housing Agency, 2015), the result of the wrong housing typologies built in the wrong locations, in a context of unregulated market-driven policies.

The National Asset Management Agency (NAMA), established by the Irish Government in 2008 to administer the bad loans of liquidated developers, including those related to ghost estates, slowly morphs into a proto-development agency, but prioritises collaborating with global financial firms to build offices rather than addressing the housing crisis. It controls 75% of the ghost sites in Dublin's Docklands and is planning four million square metres of commercial offices but only 2,000 homes, most of which will be high-end apartments (Byrne, 2015, October).

Local strategies for housing in Dublin thus need to be considered in this context of market-driven housing policies. Even in productive times, housing provision in Ireland is sporadic, relying primarily on an unregulated private sector market for the delivery of both private and social housing units with the government and local authorities providing only for the most vulnerable. Limited tenure options exist—you either own or rent—and there are very few professional landlords, with a high majority (90%) of them owning only three or fewer properties. Housing associations and related housing provider activity are not commonplace.

In the current housing crisis, private developers refuse to build the most needed housing types in the substantial numbers that are required, on the grounds of the increased prohibitive costs. In defiance of approved master plans, they regularly propose more profitable alternatives, usually the low density, three-bed semi-detached house, for example, as highlighted in a report on national television (Raidió Teilifís Éireann, 2015) on the new Adamstown outside Dublin, a solution destined to continue Dublin's characteristic suburban sprawl, lack of amenities and car dependency. Meanwhile the Dublin City Council (DCC) slowly builds temporary modular housing units on empty sites in futile attempts to ease the crisis.

In addition, in December 2015, the government issued new statutory regulations that reduce space standards considerably, (for example, a one-bedroom unit is reduced from 55 to 45 square metres and a new controversial 40 square metre studio unit is introduced). This incentive action claims to reduce construction costs and thus encourage developers to start building housing again. Other government agencies, such as the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), and many commentators meanwhile propose a site value tax on vacant undeveloped land. Housing charities and campaigners for the homeless such as Peter McVerry call for empty properties, both residential and commercial, to be utilised for social housing.

Recent research undertaken by the Housing Agency claims that 16,000 new housing units will be required annually across Ireland's urban settlements for the period 2014–2018, with 7,500 of these needed in the Dublin Region (Future Analytics, 2014). The building effort is considerable (about 3.5 new housing units for 1,000 inhabitants), and the needs increase monthly as previously set targets are not met. Following recently published statistics, in addition to accelerating housing provision, Irish government agencies and housing experts have noted that changes in the types of housing units are also needed, both to meet a rapidly increasing supply demand and accelerating demographic change.

The foreseen applicants for social housing in Dublin will predominantly be single people (at 42%) and single parents with one child or children (at 35%), thus giving a remarkable figure of 77% families with one single adult (Figure 6). Therefore, it is estimated that only 23% of all social housing will be for families of two or more adults with or without children (DOECLG, 2014; LGMA 2014). Given the Housing Agency predictions (Future Analytics, 2014), the challenge for Irish policy makers and housing providers should be to provide more single occupancy units, more flexible housing systems and varied tenure possibilities. However, many policy makers and providers are in denial about the need to revisit already approved planning applications in order to respond to the recent Housing Agency data.

The increased demand for more flexible tenure types, quicker and easier access to housing and increased residential mobility (that is, for divorced people, immigrants, etc.) represents another challenge for Irish policy makers and housing providers. Tenure patterns have changed in recent decades
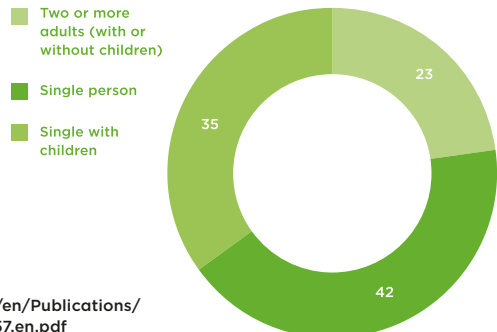
FIGURE 6. **Household Type in Dublin (% of total) Based on analysis of** *Summary of Social Housing Assessments. Key Findings 2013* [4]



Two or more adults (with or without children)

Single person

Single with children

23

35

42

4. See housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/migrated-files/en/Publications/
DevelopmentandHousing/Housing/FileDownLoad,34857,en.pdf

with home ownership now below 70%, which represents a liberal trend away from perceiving the dwelling as an icon of social stability (Sirr, 2015, October). Despite this change, an unregulated rental market means uncertainty and insecurity for renters. Buying is deeply constraining with the cost of a typical family home now six to ten times the average annual income. According to Sirr, "the increase in one-person households puts an extra demand on housing supply as well as limiting personal affordability where there will typically be one income applying for mortgage finance instead of two" (Sirr, 2015, October).

### ALTERNATIVE ANSWERS TO THE CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY
### AND HOUSING SHORTAGE IN DUBLIN

In short, despite useful work by the Housing Agency, there is no coherent Irish Governmental policy for either addressing housing supply or demographic change. In February 2016, in response to the crisis, the new Irish Government created a dedicated portfolio for housing within a newly aligned Department of Housing, Community and Local Government which subsequently published a five-pillar strategy to tackle the emergency (DoHCLG, 2016). Entitled *Rebuilding Ireland,* it focuses on addressing the lack of supply in the rental sector and although it promises much, it completely ignores changing demographics and the needs of the new housing typologies which have emerged.

In addition to building new housing by extending the city, urban renewal, existing housing adaptation, retrofitting and upgrading can be an answer to housing shortage situations. For such actions, the changing demographic trends which call for predominantly single-occupancy units and the regulatory compliance with the maximum surface allowed per apartment should inform architectural design. However, the pedagogy of housing needs to respond to actual, real-world challenges while also exploring alternative new housing systems that are not determined solely by current political and economic prerogatives (such as fluctuating housing regulations) or by stereotypical preconceptions about how we might dwell in the future.

### PUBLIC STRATEGIES FOR ANSWERING SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC
### CHALLENGES IN PARIS REGION

Traditionally, in the Paris Region public authorities have played a key role in housing provision (Dumont, 1991; Butler & Noisette, 1977). The most recent general spatial planning document for the Paris Region was adopted in 2013: The *Schéma Directeur de la Région Île-de-France* (SDRIF), which will guide the development of Île-de-France up to 2030. At present, the main aim of spatial planning in the region, as is generally the case in France, is the alignment of urban planning with sustainable development. Furthermore, mobility and transport networks are reinforced at the regional level to continue supporting economic and social development.

Housing provision plays an important part in this strategy, since housing availability is scarce and prices rise continuously in the region, thus making the housing stock on the free market highly inaccessible for a large part of the population. The main objective of the SDRIF is to build 70,000 new housing units in the region, which means doubling the present construction pace. According to the SDRIF, densification should bring a diversity of housing types (different size, individual and collective, etc.), housing tenures (for rent and owner occupied) and financing systems (from social to controlled and free market prices). From this perspective, a diverse offer could allow inhabitants to change residences in accordance with their evolving needs and preferences. It would also bring in a sufficient supply in order to diminish rents and prices and to overcome housing crises.



FIGURE 7. Excerpt from the SDRIF that shows priority densification areas from a regional perspective (big dots). These are mainly situated around suburban train stations (large white circles). Architects and planners working for suburban municipalities in the Paris Region use this guidance plan as a starting point for an in-depth morphological analysis of the urban fabric and of its evolution potential. Source: SDRIF (2013)

However, following sustainable development incentives, one of the main objectives is to limit the footprint of new urbanisation in the growth process. Therefore, the scheme aims to densify the existing urbanised areas in order to preserve agricultural land and natural reserves from urban sprawl. Further contradictions make the task of urban planners and architects particularly complex. Local authorities in municipalities have the responsibility to drive and coordinate the densification process. However, public opinion in many municipalities is reticent, if not actually in opposition to, densification, seeing it as a threat to the present quality of life. Densification is often associated with high-rise development and seen as contrary to the ideal of a village-like environment; an environment the bourgeoisie followed by the working and the middle class had been seeking in Paris suburbs, since the end of the nineteenth century.

Moreover, many residents of more affluent municipalities also perceive densification as a gateway for introducing social problems and poverty on their territory. The negative experience of the high-rise housing estates built from the end of the 1950s to the 1970s, that have become areas of poverty, unemployment and sometimes delinquency, is often evoked in the debates about densification. Because of such negative mental representations, a national policy that imposes a minimum of 20% social housing in all towns of more than 2,000 inhabitants encounters a lot of resistance.

## DENSIFICATION STRATEGIES AND CHALLENGES FOR HOUSING DESIGN
### AT THE MACRO SCALE

In order to overcome this strong resistance to densification, regional public authorities and municipalities use new provisions or upgrades

FIGURE 8. An example of densification carried out by the municipality of Bagneux and SEMABA. Excerpt from the impact study of the project ZAC Ecoquartier Victor Hugo. Source: Arte Charpentier Architects/CODRA

of existing public transport systems as a lever to increase density. Deriving its inspiration from the principles of New Urbanism (Calthorpe & Fulton, 2001), densification around public transport hubs and along main transportation axes became a core principle of the SDRIF (Figure 7), thus making densification a driver to improve public space in suburban areas, favour the mixing of activities and intensify the use of space. Therefore, urban designers and architects are expected to focus on the areas around the train, metro and tram stations in order to nourish local debates with design proposals to foster densification in connection to public space redesign. Concrete design proposals help residents to better understand the impact of densification on the city's evolution and on their daily lives. Furthermore, such prospective designs can contribute to engage local communities in spatial planning decision-making processes.

Architects and urban designers are called to play an important role in preparing and implementing strategies and plans to densify and renew existing urban areas. This requires an in-depth analysis of existing housing typologies, of unused and underused urban plots, and of land tenure. Furthermore, these local strategies could entail innovative architectural solutions to build low-rise housing to be integrated in the suburban towns, thus preserving their image and the qualities of single-family housing (IAU, 2013). In more heterogeneous areas, new housing units could be built as part of mixed-use developments, particularly along the transport routes and nodes as part of the strategies to foster densification (Figure 8).

As in the Irish case, building regulations at national and regional levels have recently been modified to promote the construction of new housing. In 2014, the building legislation in France suppressed the use of the floor-area ratio as well as the requirement for a minimum size of a buildable plot. Such measures are meant to allow more building within the same built footprint, to encourage initiatives such as Build In My Back Yard (BIMBY) and to favour a smooth densification that is better integrated into the existing urban or suburban fabric. This legislative change also aims at encouraging private homeowners and small developers to contribute to alleviate the housing shortage.

## CONCLUSIONS

The initiatives undertaken by public authorities to adapt the housing and urban environments to the current demographic trends suggest that architects and planners will need to play new roles in the design and implementation of plans and projects which take into account the integration of

multiple spatial dimensions (building, public space, regional transport). Furthermore, future professionals should acquire the necessary skills to analyse the social, economic and demographic trends in order to extract the issues for which they have to provide spatial and formal solutions.

Planning regulations along with the role of urban planners and of architects who implement them, have become crucial for steering and monitoring densification and land consumption for urbanisation. As in the Paris Region example, it appears that these professionals acquire new roles in understanding existent urban forms and housing typologies and their potential for evolution, including the possibilities of small-scale densification strategies involving local stakeholders to achieve a balanced development. For this reason, a multiscale approach to the design of new interventions in the existing urban fabric becomes essential to envision an urban coherence through densification that can ultimately benefit the common good.

Moreover, by integrating both demographic trends and challenges that arise from social and political drivers, urban planners and architects can play the role of mediators between the planners, communities and decision-makers at different administration levels and development and housing agencies, by proposing visionary prospective design solutions. Their contribution becomes essential not only to provide ideas and visions about urban renewal, but through concrete design solutions for retrofitting and adapting buildings to evolving social needs, as the examples of Lisbon, Saint-Étienne and Dublin show.

The role of planning and design professionals increasingly evolves beyond their traditional areas of expertise to embrace building management and urban transformation processes involving different stakeholders (as in the example from Saint-Étienne), the study and monitoring of mutable properties and of derelict or underused areas that allow for urban growth and the improvement of public space (as in the Paris Region).

The opening up of architectural and planning practices to the demographic and social studies, as well as to policy and decision-making for planning, can eventually help to find innovative solutions for the housing provision in sustainable social and physical environments.

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Intertwining
Community
and Academy

WORKSHOPS

PEDAGOGY

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PARTICIPATION

LEARNING SPACES

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# Community Participation in the Design and Construction of the Built Environment in Puerto Rico and Chile: Intertwining Community and Academia

**Omayra Rivera, Viviana Fernández**

## INTRODUCTION

As stated in the *Draft New Urban Agenda* which un-Habitat prepared for the habitat iii Conference in Quito, cities are "places that strive to guarantee a decent and full life for all inhabitants" (un-Habitat, 2016, p. 1). We inhabit a city not only when we perform our daily activities, but when we have the capacity to transform it, that is, when we exercise our *right to the city*. This right has been defined by Brown and Kristiansen as:

> A vehicle for urban change, in which *all urban dwellers* are urban citizens; it creates space in which citizens can define their needs but, in order to appropriate substantive citizenship, citizens must claim rights of participation, and allow others the same rights. (Brown & Kristiansen, 2009, p. 7)

Consequently, our main goal as academics is to teach architecture students the importance of shared responsibility in the design and construction of the city. This is necessary to foster a participatory culture and to reinforce the idea that a city is the product of those who live in it. Therefore, it is important for architecture students to learn how to communicate with the people for whom they design, and help them to convey their ideas and needs so that they can contribute to shaping their living environment. In this context, citizen participation becomes another element of the design process. To contribute as professionals to this participatory environment, students should not only acquire the skills to perform site analysis, but also develop the capacity to communicate with people and to learn from their experiences about the spaces they inhabit.

Participatory processes to transform the living environment—both in refurbishing and new projects—can be initiated in a number of ways. For example, residents organized in boards or associations can take the initiative to make improvements in their community and then look for technicians, designers, and mediators who will help to carry them out. Alternatively, experts can help residents to shape a project by acting as mediators and facilitators who define priorities and find ways to obtain governmental support. Participatory processes may also be started by non-profit or non-governmental organizations or by academia. Another form of launching participatory processes is through local administrations, as in the case of participatory budgeting. One more form of participation involves the collaboration of different actors at specific stages of the process. An example of this might be an organization or a governmental unit taking over a process started by residents, by another organization or by higher education institutions.

The collaboration between various governmental and non-governmental organizations, residents, technicians and mediators is necessary because each group has expertise in a specific area of knowledge or control over the resources that are needed to improve the city. According to McCarty:

> What is now required is an enlarged design perspective that involves
> questions of land security, affordable economics, clean water and
> sanitation, overall site design, energy use, and climate change on
> the one hand; and healthcare, education, and community organiza-
> tion on the other. Citizens cannot achieve this vision on their own. It
> requires the contributions of design specialists educated not only in
> the theory and practice of the economically endowed cities of the
> world, but also in the experience, ingenuity, and lessons of the cities
> of the Global South. (McCarty, 2011, p. 9)

In sum, residents of communities know the space they inhabit, their needs
and aspirations, but they need experts to help them find design solutions.

## EXPERIENCES FROM ACADEMIA: DESIGNING
## AND BUILDING WITH COMMUNITIES

A university cannot be an isolated institution; it should be part of the com-
munity. Through community development projects, residents and students
can exchange knowledge, thus enriching the education of future architects
and benefiting the community. Universities can bring their research meth-
ods and tools to these projects. Besides, students can learn that as architects
they will have an ethical and social responsibility in the transformation of
the built environment.

Many schools of architecture and urban planning in Latin American
countries offer programmes and courses for students to work directly with
communities in the task of improving their built environment. This can
occur through the design and/or construction of architectural projects or
by means of interventions and events which take place in the communities.

In this chapter, we will present some experiences with community plan-
ning projects carried out as collaboration between academia and commu-
nities in Puerto Rico and Chile.

### Experiences from Puerto Rico

In the late 1960s, architect Edwin Quiles and urban planner Lucilla
Marvell started to work with community design projects at the School of
Architecture of the University of Puerto Rico. However, it was not until the
mid-1990s when these projects became part of the academic programme.
Currently, there are two courses being offered at the two schools of archi-
tecture in Puerto Rico in which students work with communities and help
them to develop projects to improve the built environment. These are the
*Community Design Studio* (Taller de Diseño Comunitario) that started
in 1997 in the University of Puerto Rico and the *Collaborative Design
Studio and Evolutionary Habitat* (Taller de Diseño Colaborativo y Hábitat
Evolutivo) which started in 2013 in the Polytechnic University of Puerto

Rico. In addition to this, students and former students of architecture of the University of Puerto Rico in San Juan, Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico in San Juan and the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico in Ponce collaborated in the development of schematic designs for a participatory budgeting project for the municipality of San Juan, carried out in 2015.

### THE COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATIVE DESIGN STUDIOS

The *Community Design Studio*, founded by the architect and professor Edwin Quiles in the University of Puerto Rico, provides assistance to residents of low-income communities who turned to the school for support, as they needed architects— in this case, students of architecture—, to help them design projects of collective spaces or housing. Indeed, they looked for students because they could not afford to pay an architect. Students designed the plans and discussed them with the members of the community.

Inspired by this model, the *Collaborative Design Studio and Evolutionary Habitat* was set up in 2013. Unlike in the previous *Community Design Studio*, students are expected to outline a communication plan which will help dwellers to describe their needs and aspirations before starting to design a project. The plan includes the methods and tools to be used in the meetings, interviews, surveys, games, or other participatory activities. Besides, students can take part in the execution of the works together with the inhabitants. In this way, students and dwellers can learn from each other: students can learn from the skills of the residents with experience in construction, who in turn receive some technical knowledge from students.

The *Collaborative Design Studio* was created with volunteers and as part of a university curriculum in the Polytechnic University. The course focuses on the design of collective spaces in collaboration with inhabitants. Students learn from the experience of the dwellers and take into account their needs, aspirations and expertise when elaborating a proposal to transform the existing places. At the same time, community members receive some technical knowledge from the students, and this knowledge helps them to continue maintaining and developing the spaces in which they reside.

The specific objectives of this course are:

- to bridge the gap that often exists between academia and practice, as well as that which happens between the academic knowledge of the architects and the experience of the inhabitants;
- to create an environment in which experts and dwellers collaborate in the process to shape the built environment;
- to train students to work as counsellors and mediators in collaborative planning;
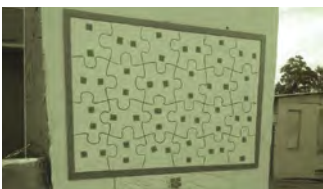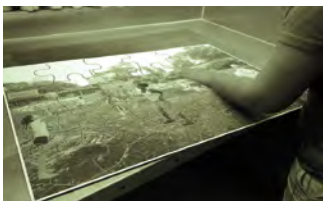
• to empower the inhabitants to become aware of the space they inhabit so that they can take care of the maintenance and continuous improvement of their living spaces; and
• to encourage students to design spaces that can evolve over time and adapt to the changing needs of the inhabitants.

Before students start a dialogue with the inhabitants, they are required to observe how spaces are inhabited, to find out user behavioural patterns and to derive spatial qualities from them. The term *collaboration* is used for this studio because, unlike *participation*, it suggests equal conditions in the work to be performed by all involved. Therefore, a project is not just *for* the community but is done *with* the community. Keeping this in mind, students design the procedures to interact with residents. This process should be interactive and inclusive so that the largest number of people are involved. After processing the inputs from the residents, students design and build a project together with the community. This methodology based on observing and discussing, designing and building with the community helps to bridge the gap between academy and practice.

In the year 2012, a first project of the studio was conducted outside the university in conjunction with a public-private entity that helps residents of the eight neighbourhoods that surround the Caño Martín Peña in San Juan, Puerto Rico, to improve their living conditions. Volunteers from different fields of study—such as design, graphic design, urban planning, architecture, landscape architecture, engineering or sociology—, mostly college students, developed a participatory process (using photomontages, images, clue words and questions) to help neighbours of Buena Vista, in Santurce, to communicate their needs (Figure 1). At the end of the project, the residents and volunteers painted all the houses of a street—with the colours they chose—, built urban furniture and a garden in an underground landfill using recycled materials.

The second project in the studio was an initiative of the School of Architecture at the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico carried out in 2013. Students helped residents of Alto del Cabro neighbourhood, also in San Juan, to improve unused and depraved spaces. In this case, there was no support from other organizations. Students also designed a participatory process to obtain ideas from the neighbours. In this process they used a blackboard on which people could write their aspirations regarding the neighbourhood and a puzzle with which they could describe the potential for development that an abandoned space could have (Figure 2).

The third project took place in 2014. It was an initiative of the municipality of San Juan to renew an abandoned bridge in the Tras Talleres neighbourhood, a place where the trains that once crossed the island with goods and passengers used to get repaired. Students devised an interactive timeline in which residents of nearby neighbourhoods could post their memories of the train (oral history) on a map based on the elements of Kevin Lynch (paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks) which was put up near the bridge. With this information, students made a preliminary design, using the bridge as landmark, portal and meeting place (Figure 3).



The initiative to carry out the three projects described above did not come from community residents, but from an organization (public-private entity, university, and municipality). In the first two projects, in Buena Vista and Alto del Cabro neighbourhoods, residents were involved in the whole process, from the design to the construction of the proposals.

**FIGURE 3.** Participatory process in Tras Talleres, San Juan. Source: Omayra Rivera

A fourth project carried out in 2015 emerged from an initiative of the community association Machuchal Revive in San Juan. One of the main purposes of this association was to rescue an abandoned house, called Casa Taft 169, in order to convert it into a civic centre. Students created four game booths, which residents visited to express their ideas for the development of the civic centre. Then, they made an architectural model of the house with interchangeable parts that could be combined in different ways by the participants (Figure 4). Finally, students built two of the proposed interventions with the help of community members: A wall in the backyard, which separates the neighbouring yard, and a door that facilitates access to the backyard.

These four projects were completed with a small budget and limited time, typically, a quarter, a semester or an academic year. Their results can be considered an example of the *tactical urbanism* that is characterized as:

> A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change; the offering of local solutions for local planning challenges; short-term commitment and realistic expectations; low-risks, with possibly a high reward; and the development of social capital between citizens and the building of organizational capacity between public-private institutions, non-profits and their constituents. (Lydon, 2015, pp. 1–2)

The interventions proposed by the students, although small in scale, helped residents of communities to rediscover the value of their living environments. In addition, these projects have helped to establish links

**FIGURE 4.**
**Participatory process in Casa Taft 169, San Juan. Source: Omayra Rivera**

between academia and the public and private sectors and to create a collaboration space to which everyone can contribute with their knowledge and resources. Some of the benefits of these collaborative projects involving academia and communities have been the mutual trust developed between teachers and students of architecture and residents, and the establishment of social networks for future collaboration. Residents' confidence grew when they realized that the students had discovered and designed both with and for the community, and even more when they saw how the deprived spaces had improved.

### THE PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING PROJECT

Participatory budgeting is a process of consultation and dialogue between citizens and local governments whose aim is to decide the priorities of community investment. With participatory budgeting, the residents of a community can decide how to use a part of the municipal budget to improve their living environment. The city administration determines which communities are given the opportunity to participate in this initiative.

Typically, a participatory budget is organized in several stages. First, there are assemblies in which all residents are invited to make proposals. Then, community delegates are chosen to further develop the proposed projects in several meetings with experts from the municipality and mediators of a non-governmental organization. Finally, the residents can vote for their favourite projects. Participatory budgeting was first carried out in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989. Since then, it has been implemented worldwide. The participatory budgeting in San Juan is inspired in the model adopted by New York city.

The first communities in San Juan in which this process was implemented in 2014 are very diverse: A residential neighbourhood, a suburb, a rural area and a self-constructed district. The reactions and participation of residents in each community were also diverse. In the self-constructed district, for example, residents were more inclined to take decisions based on a consensus while in the residential neighbourhood they argued that decisions should only be taken by the government. It is necessary to take into account that the needs were different in each case. In the rural context, for instance, the residents demanded the construction of bridges and roads while in the suburban area they were more concerned with creating recreational facilities. However, all the communities coincided in the need to make more spaces available for sports and community gardening.

Students of the three schools of architecture in the country, the University of Puerto Rico, the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico and the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico, helped in one of the

most important stages of the first Participatory budgeting process held in San Juan in 2014. This involved architecture professors and mediators of the municipality and the non-governmental organization Cumbre Social who helped the delegates to spread information about the projects by means of posters describing the project location, objectives, benefits, challenges, users and activities (Figure 5).

The last participatory budgeting process performed in San Juan in 2015 counted on the collaboration of a team of young architecture and engineering graduates who helped the delegates of the communities to convey their ideas. The inclusion of the young professionals was very effective given that in the previous processes the delegates had experienced difficulties imagining how the projects would look, which in turn hindered decision-making. They also found it difficult to estimate the costs of the projects. The architects developed a participatory process to help residents to codesign using basic tools such as cut-and-paste drawings and images. Finally, they produced computer graphics, schematic drawings and cost estimates for each project. Thanks to their work, the delegates could visualize future designs and meetings became simpler, faster and more effective.



**FIGURE 5.** Preparation of posters for participatory budgeting in San Juan. Sources: Pedro Ortiz, R. J. Muñoz

### Experiences from Chile

There are currently more than forty faculties or schools of architecture in Chile and each of them has a different academic structure. Participatory design is part of the academic programmes in some of these schools. As an example, we will refer to the course *Multiscale Participatory Processes: Housing, Neighbourhood and City* (Procesos Participativos en la Multiescalaridad: Vivienda, Barrio y Ciudad) which is taught at the Department of Urban Planning of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of Chile.

The participation of citizens in the interventions aimed at transforming the territory at its various scales is considered a basic condition of a democratic society, a mechanism to support social integration and inclusion. As a matter of fact, citizen participation strengthens the identity of people with the places they live in and reinforces their ties with the members of the community. Participatory processes offer community members the opportunity to exercise their rights to influence the development of the places they live in, and also to take control of their responsibilities with the neighbourhood contributing to the solution of the problems.

We think that one of our goals as academics and researchers is to make students aware of the importance of shared responsibility in the design and construction of the city. This in turn contributes to promoting and

enhancing participatory culture in the future with the involvement of citizens, authorities, civic organizations, private companies and professionals.

### MULTISCALE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES: HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOOD AND CITY

This urban planning course, which started in 2013, is offered to third-year students on a five-year architectural programme. The aim of the course is to review and analyse the institutional and legal frameworks in order to foster effective citizen participation in urban development at its various scales. The main objective of the course is to identify the key factors that condition the success or failure of participatory processes, to understand and assess the interactions among the different actors involved and to apply participatory methods based on local and foreign experiences.

The course runs for one semester (18 weeks). Two exercises are carried out during that period:

1.  WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS. The first six weeks of the course are dedicated to the implementation of a participatory design in a space within the campus. Each team of students (maximum four) chooses a space which is deteriorated or unused and then develops a participatory process to recover, improve or intensify the uses of that space. The team describes the problems to be solved in a particular space, identifies the stakeholders who will take part in the participatory process and prepares a participatory strategy. This strategy includes processes to gather information which are discussed with invited participants. As a result of this process, designs for a project idea should arise. In order to introduce the students to the different participatory processes we asked them to read some handbooks (Romero & Mesías, 2004; MOP, 2008) to then summarize the main ideas in a short paper which was distributed to the rest of the class.

2.  WITH THE COMMUNITY. As in the first exercise, in the second one each team of students plans a participatory process. This implies developing a strategy that takes into account the scale, the actors that will be invited to participate, the person(s) who will be leading the process, the level of involvement that can be expected from the participants taking into consideration the time they have available and, finally, the participatory mechanisms to be put into action.

    Unlike the first exercise, this second exercise deals with a real problem in the community. The teaching staff propose a case study every semester which enables students to collaborate with communities and municipalities and involves multiple stakeholders in a community planning process. As an example, during the second semester of 2014 we worked in the city of Valparaíso, with the community of Cerro Merced, and in the second semester of 2015 in Santiago, with the community of Madrid Street.

PROJECT 1: "REHABITAR EL CERRO", CITY OF VALPARAÍSO, 2014

In April 2014, a fire devastated some of the hills of Valparaíso, one of them being Cerro Merced. The purpose of our collaborative project was to facilitate a reconstruction process of the neighbourhood, not just of the physical spaces but also of social and cultural fabric in order to strengthen the sense of identity and belonging of the neighbours.



FIGURE 6.
Participatory
process in
Cerro Merced,
Valparaíso.
Source: Viviana
Fernández

The tasks performed by students were the following:

- to collect graphic and written testimonies that will be displayed to the residents of Cerro Merced in an exhibition;
- to recognize the relevant facts from the history of the place and their permanence throughout time from the information collected, as well as what needs to be improved today and what could be built in the future; and
- to identify spaces which have symbolic significance for the community.

These tasks were conducted in three steps:

1. CREATING A MEMORY REGISTER. In this first stage, students explored different ways to create a memory register. They considered different techniques and methods of narrative research and looked at the documents produced within the *Neighbourhood Recovery Programme* for which:

> The neighbourhood stories are part of the process of improving neighbourhoods and quality of life of its inhabitants. They described what they were, are and intend to be. They are neighbourhoods located throughout the country, with different characteristics that are inherent with disparate developments, but with the common pride to relate fragments of individual and collective histories that have cemented the building of their living spaces.[1]

Students also consulted documents produced by other organisations that worked with communities as Fundación Proyecta Memoria[2] and Iconoclasistas.[3] Based on all the information they gathered and their own interest on the issues, students produced different kinds of registers to record the memories of the places: An audiovisual with testimonies from neighbours, a memory album, a story competition

1. See www.minvu.cl/opensite_20110324155731.aspx

2. See proyectamemoria.cl

3. See iconoclasistas.net

for children (Figure 6), a mapping of the major milestones identified by residents and a walk around with the neighbours to identify the paths people use to move around.

2. RECOGNIZING THE PLACE: CERRO MERCED AND SURROUNDINGS, IN THE CITY OF VALPARAÍSO. At this stage, students analysed all the information provided by the municipality of Valparaíso, specifically, the diagnosis for the reconstruction of the city[4] and the municipal plan for rebuilding it.[5] After this analysis, the students and teachers met the community leaders to walk around the neighbourhood. They explained the issues that concerned the neighbours and the situation of the neighbourhood, in particular the situation of the people after the fire. This first visit to Cerro Merced in Valparaíso gave the students the opportunity to affirm their initial perceptions of the community, their residents and their concerns.

3. APPLYING TECHNIQUES FOR REGISTERING MEMORIES. First, the students reviewed different techniques of recording memories of a place, and then they proposed an action plan. Then, the proposed actions were put into practice. Each group produced graphics and written and audiovisual documents to record their findings. Coinciding with the visit to Valparaíso, they socialized and shared some recreational activities with the community (Figure 7). For example, a group of neighbours painted a mural in the Club Deportivo Pajonal. The director of the club received the results of the students' work with the community: Audio-visuals, stories, and maps. Finally, the students presented one of the pieces which had been best received by the community: An audiovisual with interviews and testimonies from neighbours and residents of Cerro Merced.

The work done in this project was very significant for both the community and students. Neighbours were very grateful to the students for the work they had done. They appreciated the opportunity of becoming actors of a process. They all contributed to helping the community to recover part of their memories of the area before the fire, and to finding out what should be preserved. Building a feeling of trust was fundamental for students to get feedback from the residents. On the other hand, students had to overcome the inconveniences that working with a distant community involves: Travelling to the place, participating in the meetings with the neighbours, identifying the key persons in the community, spending time to create the feeling of mutual trust which is necessary to get their support.

**FIGURE 7.**
**Participatory process in Cerro Merced, Valparaíso. Source: Viviana Fernández**



4. See issuu.com/unadeuno/docs/dagnostico_reconstruccion_valpara__

5. See issuu.com/unadeuno/docs/plan_municipal_reconstruccion_valpa

**PROJECT 2: "PARTICIPATORY DESIGN PROCESS IN MADRID STREET",
MATTA NEIGHBOURHOOD, SANTIAGO, 2015**

This project was developed during the second semester of the academic year 2014–2015 and was carried out in collaboration with the municipality of Santiago.

The programme *Revitaliza Santiago* is part of a comprehensive neighbourhood rehabilitation and infrastructure programme initiated by the municipality of Santiago in 2015 with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank. The objective of this programme is to revitalize selected neighbourhoods and prevent urban deterioration by encouraging a social mix that promotes socio-cultural integration and the economic recovery of the area.[6] To achieve these goals, the team in charge of in the municipality proposed five lines of action: Recuperation of public spaces, rehabilitation of old buildings, rebuilding of the local economy, strengthening of the governmental institutions and fostering citizen participation.

In order to promote citizen participation, a multi-actors table—the Programme's Participation Unit—was set up with the purpose of facilitating the implementation of the programme. This table was composed of four groups:

• citizens and social organizations of the neighbourhood;
• public sector at regional and local levels and other public services;
• private sector, entrepreneurs, investors and trade unions; and
• universities and research centres.

The members of the table suggested that students undertook some of the tasks of the programme, in particular those related to the recovery of public spaces and citizen participation. Before the course started, the municipality had already developed a master plan which had been approved by the community. One of the projects included in this plan was the upgrading of two streets: Cuevas and Madrid. We decided to concentrate on the development of a participatory design process to renovate Madrid Street since the works in Cuevas Street were on the point of completion.

The field work started with a preliminary survey of the area to initiate contact with the community. The municipality team in charge of the programme presented the history of the neighbourhood and the master plan to the students. Afterwards, three workshops were conducted:

WORKSHOP 1. "PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT". The first workshop was held in a place near to Madrid Street. Its main purpose was to discuss with residents the positive and negative aspects of their daily life in the neighbourhood and to identify places and buildings which were meaningful for them.

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6. See youtube.com/watch?v=GMrf-X3bJTc

**FIGURE 8.**
Participatory
design process
in Madrid Street,
Santiago.
Source: Viviana
Fernández

The workshop started with a presentation of both the municipal team and the course. The work to be done by students was agreed on with the representatives of the city. Afterwards, we organized the neighbours in three groups. A team of students worked with a group of neighbours to find out what were the most significant issues in the neighbourhood while another team recorded the conversation. This work culminated with a presentation of the findings in each discussion group. The main issues identified by the residents were lack of security, deterioration of public walkways, and scarcity of street lighting and trees (Figure 8).

WORKSHOP 2. "MAKING PROPOSALS". The second workshop followed a similar methodology as the previous one. Citizens proposed various solutions to the problems identified in the previous session, using stickers and other materials to pinpoint them in a map.



**FIGURE 9.**
Participatory
design process
in Madrid Street,
Santiago.
Source: Viviana
Fernández

WORKSHOP 3. "ANALYSIS OF DESIGNS". Finally, in the third workshop the student teams presented the preliminary designs they had developed for the public space of Madrid Street. These designs had been elaborated considering the contributions that the community had made in the previous two workshops. As this was the last activity, we decided to hold it in the public space, in a more festive atmosphere (Figure 9). The four teams set up tables in the middle of the street and explained to the residents how they had interpreted their ideas and transformed them into design proposals.

In one team, there was a conflict with some of the neighbours who had not been in the previous workshops and who disagreed with the proposals. The neighbours did not understand that the proposals were the result of a collective reflection and that their aim was to benefit the community as a whole rather than each particular person. Although this generated some tensions between the students and the neighbours, the situation helped students to realise that working with the community is not always as easy as it seems, and that it is always possible to learn something even from conflictive situations.

As in the project in Valparaíso, students felt that it was a very positive experience. They had the chance to create and work through a participatory process in real conditions, with all the difficulties and complexities that this brings. However, they also recognized the value of incorporating the community in the physical and social construction of the spaces they inhabit. In fact, they learned the difference between making a design as an individual and working with the community to find solutions to the problems which they had helped bring to the surface.

In these two projects, we realized that time plays a crucial role. Planning a participatory process requires time to build confidence among the actors and to consolidate the teams of students and neighbours. In both projects, we would have needed more time to complete the participatory processes properly. The academic schedule affords little flexibility to adapt to the more flexible timetables of the community; the interactions with the residents run at their own pace, without pre-established timetables.

Through these two projects, we could confirm certain hypotheses regarding citizen participation in urban planning and design. First, there is not an established methodology to develop a participatory process with a community. Each process depends on of the motivation and commitment of the neighbours and their leaders, the level of organisation of the community, the role of the municipal team, and the social conditions of the neighbourhood, among other factors.

In the next collaborative projects to be developed as part of our courses, we plan to introduce the techniques of tactical urbanism (Lydon, 2015) applied in the projects of Puerto Rico, to carry out actions in a short period of time which give rise to long-term changes.

**CONCLUSIONS**

By working together with citizens, listening to their needs and problems, architecture students can better understand the implications of the design decisions they make. However, there are some challenges which need to be faced to carry out community development projects within academic programmes: The limited time of an academic programme which makes it difficult to continue with the initiated works, obstacles that need to be overcome to find funding to implement the projects, and the distances to the communities. Participatory processes generally take time, the time which is necessary to get inside a community and live with their members, to share their problems and hopes. Many of the projects stop because the time for the course has run out, even though the dynamics of the initiated process would require prolonging the activities. Funding is important because it gives students the opportunity to build the projects—an important part of their learning process—, even using recycled materials incurs some expenses. Similarly, the residents, after seeing something built or renovated have more confidence on the process and are encouraged to continue working to improve their community. Finally, many communities are not accessible by public transport making it difficult to visit them frequently. One way to overcome this problem is to connect courses, in a way that the work initiated in one course is continued by the next.

The exchange of knowledge between students and citizens is one of the many valuable outcomes of these collaborative community projects.
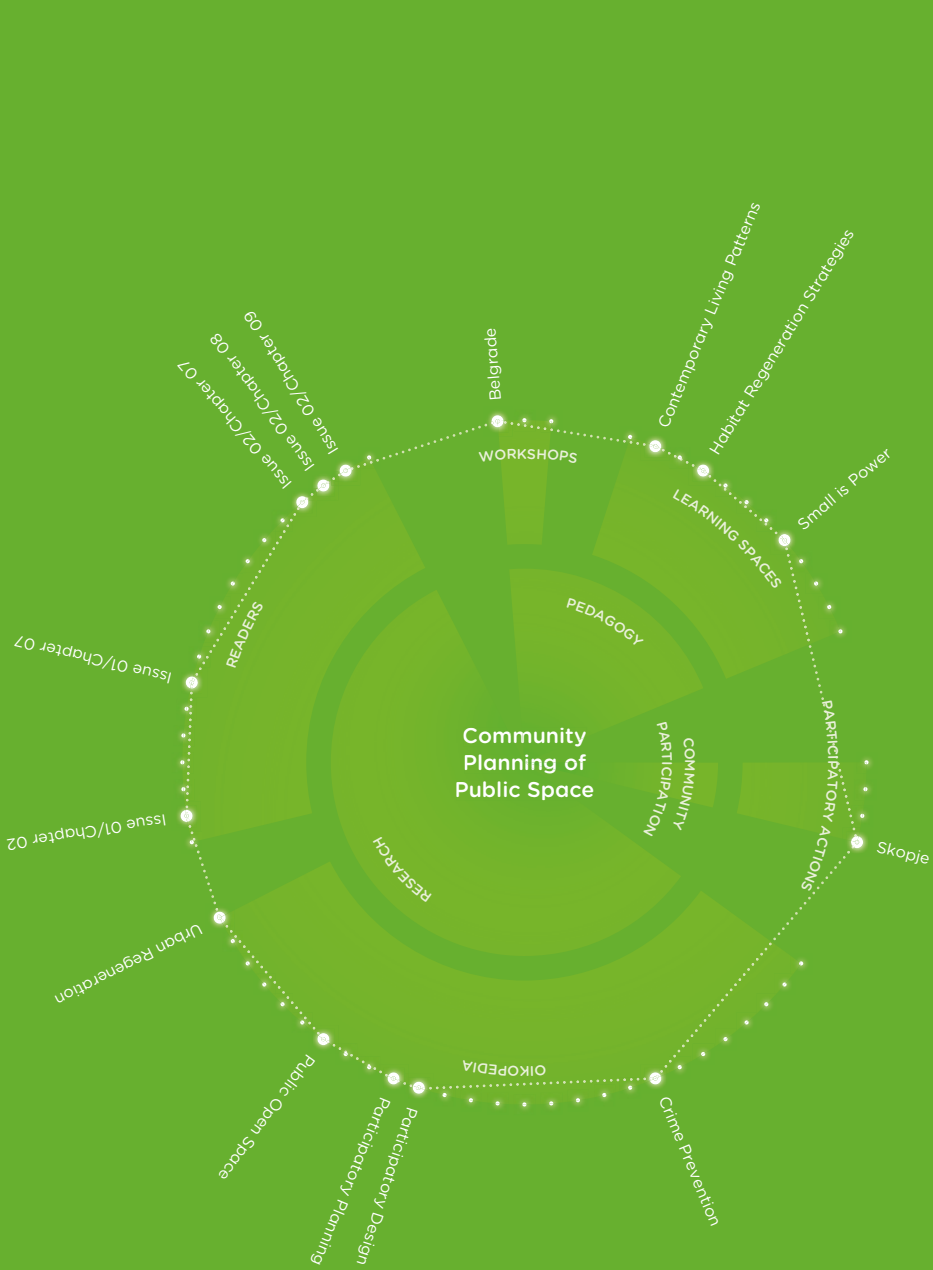
Students learn about the history of the place through the stories the inhabitants tell them. Conversely, students pass on their knowledge about site analysis—for example, introducing to the residents the terms used by Kevin Lynch—so that they could name the elements of their environment as landmarks and nodes. Neighbours also passed on their experience to students telling them, for example, about successful spaces in the neighbourhood, and explaining why some of them work well while others do not.

In the courses carried out in both countries, Puerto Rico and Chile, the aim has been to encourage students to work as counsellors and mediators in collaborative design processes. Students have played the role of designers, but they have also been able to develop communication skills in order to talk and get close to people, to learn from their knowledge and experience, to take into account their needs, demands, aspirations and dreams and to help to make them reality.

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# Community Planning of Public Space

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# Integrating the Community in the Planning and Design of Public Space in the Balkan Region

**Dorina Papa, Joana Dhiamandi, Divna Pencic**

## INTRODUCTION

Community participation in the planning and designing of public space implies the direct involvement of community members or representatives in local planning and governance to improve and enhance decision-making processes. According to Creighton (2005) and Sanoff (2000), public involvement in planning would reduce citizen scepticism toward local governments and help to build larger consensus on government actions. Public participation can be seen as a logical extension of the democratic process, albeit in a more local, direct, and deliberative way (Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001). Participatory planning is an integral part of sustainable development and an essential component of good governance, especially in western countries, where there is a consolidated culture of participation of the civil society in decision-making processes affecting common interest.

In contrast to western countries, the nations of Eastern Europe under the rule of communism, such as those in the Balkan countries, did not have a civil society, this means, a society in which "individuals and groups are free to form organizations that function independently of the state and that can mediate between citizens and the state" (Wedel, 1995, p. 323). Such a civil society could only be gradually built following the advent of the democratic system. In the transition period to democracy, the planning and design of public spaces in the Balkans were usually reduced to performative political gestures confined to the most representative public spaces of the city. During that period, these public spaces were accepted without contestation by citizens. After the advent of democracy and the free-market economy that came with it, public space started to be perceived as nobody's space thus favouring its gradual degradation and decline. Citizens were not interested in participating in the decision-making processes to renovate and reuse these public spaces because they felt they were not "theirs". On the other hand, local and central governments were only interested in representative public spaces, those which conveyed a symbolic value.

Over the past few years, however, and as a result of the gradual empowerment of the civil society, people have become more aware of the need for a qualitative public space. As a result, they have begun to express their opposition to top-down planning and claim their right to be heard when it comes to deciding on public space. In a way, what citizens are claiming is their *right to the city* (Lefebvre, 1986), this means, their share of the power to make decisions which concern the spaces they live in.

In order to have an inclusive and sustainable planning of public space, new practices to involving citizens and communities are being developed both in Albania and in the Republic of Macedonia. The planning legislation of both countries has recently recognised the right of the communities to be informed, to participate and to interact in planning and design processes. As a result, local administrations are now obliged to inform citizens about projects that are being drafted. Nowadays, in the Balkans, citizens

are increasingly better informed about the urban development initiatives in their communities. They receive information from public gazettes and the web page of the municipality. However, residents are not surveyed to find out their needs, wishes and visions for the future development of the public spaces they inhabit. It is assumed that the government officials involved—politicians, planners, and other experts—know better about the wishes of the citizens and the planning and design options to satisfy them (Pencic, 2015). Besides, there is mistrust of the civil society regarding the value of participatory processes. Consequently, citizens show little interest in taking part in them and in contributing to public consultations. Furthermore, the fact that citizens' proposals are rarely materialized contributes to the lack of public confidence in community action (Toto et al., 2013).

However, in recent years, non-governmental organisations and universities, in collaboration with local governments, have undertaken some initiatives with the aim of taking community involvement beyond the informing and consultation stages. In view of the particular historical, social and cultural context of spatial planning in the Balkans and the current retrenchment of public space, these initiatives are contributing to enhancing community interest and to raising awareness and fostering the engagement of citizens in the process of transforming public spaces.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE PLANNING AND DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACE

In this section we will present a summary of the historical conditions of the planning and design of public space in the Balkan Region—Albania and the Republic of Macedonia—in order to understand the specific social and political conditions and the cultural background that influence the involvement of the community in the planning and design processes.

### The Involvement of the Community in the Planning Processes in Albania

Community participation in the design of public spaces in Albania is a relatively recent endeavour. The National State Institute of Town Planning and Construction (ZUP) was the only institution in Albania during the communist and socialist system responsible for producing urban plans and architectural projects. In this period, urban plans and architectural designs were mainly influenced by ideological, social and economic values. In fact, since the movement of the population was controlled, transformations in the cities were easily predictable. Consequently, the central government as part of the national programme established the community facilities in advance. In this political context, architects and urban planners of the Institute had a free hand in transforming and designing public spaces (Aliaj, Lulo, &

Myftiu, 2003). Moreover, given that private property ownership was banned in the communist regime everything was considered state property. Under these circumstances, community participation in the design of urban spaces was not an option.

In the newly planned residential areas—such as Partizani, Laprak, Allias, Vasil Shanto and Ali Demi—public spaces were designed following some technical and spatial regulations. Spaces between housing blocks were well-designed but usually poorly equipped. Likewise, at the end of 1970s, municipal funds for public space maintenance were cut. This gave rise to a gradual degradation of the public spaces. In response to this situation, the inhabitants, who had developed a strong sense of community during the recent communist period, voluntarily participated in the maintenance of the spaces in their neighbourhood.



FIGURE 1. Informal housing inside a residential block in Tirana, legalised after 2000, now a hotel. Source: Xhoana Kristo



FIGURE 2. Sheshi Shtraus (Xhamlliku), a public space in Tirana, designed in 2009. A rehabilitation of the surrounding facades was carried out as part of the project. Source: Sotir Dhamo

After the collapse of the communist regime in the 1990s, the most significant urban transformations that took place in Albania until the early 2000s were predominantly informal, that is, they did not take into account the regulatory plans of the time. During this period, the design of public space was entirely neglected by local authorities. The few interventions to improve public space had a minimal cost and were limited to upgrading streets and public lighting. Due to the political and ideological changes, public space was no longer seen as shared space, but as ownerless space. In these conditions of dereliction and poor administration, public space underwent a process of degradation which in turn favoured illegal occupations (Figure 1).

However, a turnaround occurred in the city of Tirana at the beginning of the 2000s when the mayor in office, Edi Rama, led a plan to improve the capital's image by transforming the spaces that had been illegally occupied into new public spaces (Figure 2).

The plans for renewing the city mainly consisted in enlivening the public spaces by painting the dull residential buildings of the communist period in vibrant colours. In addition, small public spaces and parks were created in the city centre and in the neighbourhoods. Although these actions seemed very effective at the time, bringing about a new positive image of the city and helping the mayor to gain international recognition, there was no comprehensive approach to planning and design. In fact, the renovation plans were led by independent foreign artists commissioned by the city planning office, a top-down approach that overrode the consultations with the community. As a result, these renovation actions had a short-term impact as they

**FIGURE 3.** Revitalization of Lushnja city centre, a large-scale urban intervention which was part of the *Urban Renewal* programme (2014–2015). Source: Dea Studio, Elkeda Kalaci



**FIGURE 4.** Iliria Square in Durrës is considered the centre of the city by the citizens. It holds the Town Hall, the Palace of Culture, the Prefecture and a mosque. The rehabilitation was part of the *Urban Renewal* programme (2014–2015). Source: Xhoana Kristo

were limited to enhancing the city image, rather than addressing the aspirations of the community.

In recent years, the most representative public spaces in the main cities in Albania have undergone a process of renovation thanks to central government subsidies through the governmental programme *Urban Renewal* (Rilindja Urbane, in Albanian), whose goal is to renew the most representative public space in the main cities of Albania. Projects to renovate public squares were usually selected through international competitions (Figures 3, 4). However, despite attempts to develop an open, transparent informative and participatory process, there was no real involvement of the community. Moreover, even in the preliminary phase of the competition calls, there were no preparatory meetings or discussions involving community members.

Small public spaces in the neighbourhoods have been excluded from this renewal programme. There is no political will to positively intervene in the neighbourhoods to deal with conflictive situations by fostering the collaboration between local administrations and communities. In the representative public spaces in which political influence in the design process is higher, some initial efforts to involve communities in the design have been made without significant results. As a result, local communities are becoming more sensitive and open to active participation in the planning, reorganisation and design of their living space. In this endeavour, they are usually guided by civic organisations, universities and research centres that help to activate bottom-up urban planning and design processes at the neighbourhood level.

## The Changes in Public Space Policies in the Republic of Macedonia

The involvement of the citizens in urban planning and design has a long tradition in the Balkans, although it is not necessarily an example of community participation as we know it today. Even since the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Socialist Republic of Macedonia, the state has taken responsibility for the decision-making processes concerning public space. Even though citizen participation was postulated, it was still the socialist state which directed all the planning and design policies on behalf of the citizens. Namely, the provision of public spaces, the preparation of urban plans, as well as the design and construction of residential areas were entirely undertaken by the state-led

urban planning offices. The design of these spaces was regulated by standards. Accordingly, all residential areas were equipped with open spaces, mostly children's playgrounds, parks and squares. In urban plans at a neighbourhood scale, citizens could exercise their right to participate in decision-making through public debates. They acted as representatives of local communities, which were at the core of the socialist state.

Hence, the cities of the Republic of Macedonia and, in particular the capital Skopje, have a significant number of well-developed public spaces, at community, city and regional levels. The state, proclaimed as "socialist" and as a "state concerned with the socialist worker", strove to provide adequate living conditions to citizens—particularly in the large residential complexes built by the state—which included resting places, and areas for recreation and for socializing (Figure 5). These spaces had to be developed and later maintained. For this purpose, cities counted on the Public Communal Enterprises that were responsible for their maintenance, a task which requires significant financial means, work force, and organisation. Unfortunately, a large number of the planned public spaces have been left unfinished, and with the shrinking of the state, the resources to take care of them have also been reduced.



FIGURE 5. Residential blocks in Karpos 2, Skopje. Source: Wikipedia[1]

After the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the Republic of Macedonia like all the other republics of the former socialist state, faced a painful transformation into a democratic society based on market economy. The Constitution of 1991 endorsed individual ownership. As the land was denationalised it then became harder to implement state-led urban planning regulations and to secure the stock of well-maintained public spaces. This represented the end of the system upon which the cities were functioning. Thus, the shift towards a market economy contributed to the decline of the well-established framework of urban planning and design which had been founded on the nationalised city-owned public land.

On the other hand, the expectations raised after the advent of the democratic system concerning the active participation of citizens in the planning of public spaces have not been fulfilled. Even today, the only way for the citizens to be engaged in the planning process is during public presentations and public surveys organised in the early phases of an urban plan. There are no other possibilities. There used to be a participatory body to facilitate the participation of citizens, but it was withdrawn. Mayors used to have meetings with citizens to discuss their needs and aspirations. However, in most cases this was done more for appearances' sake rather than to foster efficient participation.

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1. See upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/mk/3/39/Karposh_2.jpg

Today, in the Republic of Macedonia the development and maintenance of public spaces are managed by the local governments through their annual programmes. Given the positive image that these initiatives transmit to the inhabitants, they are often considered as an effective tool for the promotion of political interests (Figure 6). Thus, mayors seem more and more interested in providing the neighbours (and potential voters) with squares, parks, children's playgrounds, sports fields and so on. Nevertheless, these types of actions are sometimes only for show; in fact, they are often inappropriate and sometimes entirely wrong. The citizens are not truly involved in this process, even though they are obliged to be present in public hearings.

## URBAN PHENOMENA CHARACTERISING THE DECLINE OF PUBLIC SPACE IN ALBANIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

In recent years, due to the lack of power, the lack of will of the public administration and the downturn in public engagement in both Albania and the Republic of Macedonia, a process of degradation and shrinking of the public space is taking place which is characterized by the following phenomena:

1.  **LACK OF PUBLIC SPACES WITHIN THE NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS/RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS.** Nowadays, in the new neighbourhoods that are undergoing intensive processes of construction, public spaces do not comply with current regulations: their surface has been reduced, they are not properly designed, and they are poorly equipped. In fact, developers are not willing to invest in public space, even though it may contribute to increasing the market value of their property. On the other hand, municipalities do not play an active role in reinforcing the obligation of private investors to contribute to the provision of public space or even in raising awareness of the benefits that quality public space would have on the property value.

2.  **LACK OF MAINTENANCE AND SECURITY; INCREASE OF VANDALISM IN PUBLIC SPACES.** The public spaces in both old and new neighbourhoods, and even in public buildings such as schools, cultural or health centres, are under constant threat because the community and the local governments are losing interest in maintaining them.

    Due to the loss of expert staff and financial support, the public communal enterprises cannot allocate resources to public spaces and hence no longer feel responsible for their maintenance. On the other hand, the municipality is predominantly investing in large representative public spaces. Thus, due to the absence of maintenance and the lack of adequate urban furniture and greenery, people are no longer using them. Moreover, there are concerns about insufficient street lighting in spaces

surrounded by high-rise buildings which makes these spaces appear unsafe and dangerous, particularly during the night. This increases the chances of vandalism, which in turn accelerates decay.

3.   CHANGING THE USE OF PUBLIC SPACES. A common trend in all cities is the change in the use of public spaces, from recreational to residential. This makes these areas susceptible to commercial development.

In the Republic of Macedonia, most of the public spaces are owned by the state and can be easily transferred to private owners with the excuse that the municipalities and the state need the money for other activities. Thus, there are cases in which green areas within residential complexes, so-called urban greenery, become parking spaces or building plots. This situation is repeated in many public residential complexes in which new buildings and parking areas have been inexplicably added. The streets, which were once attractive public spaces, have now been transformed into traffic lanes, which has meant an increase in the surface dedicated to vehicles at the expense of the pedestrian areas.

In Albania, the change of use of the public spaces can be explained in two ways. Firstly, due to the change from the communist to the democratic system, many public spaces are now privately owned. In light of the inability of public administrations to preserve public spaces via expropriations, and because of the emergent need to fulfil increasing housing demands, the owners exercise pressure to change the land use. The result is the gradual occupation and shrinking of public space. Secondly, during the transition years, many residential buildings were illegally built on public space. Most of them are still subject to a regularisation process and cannot be demolished without expropriation. Therefore, a long bureaucratic process is necessary to recover the occupied public spaces. Simultaneously, the free market has conquered public space, particularly in Tirana (Stiller, 2010) and many private activities such as shops, bars, and retailers have been placed along the roads, in public spaces or inside the neighbourhoods. In recent years, a gradual process of reappropriation of public space can be observed. One of the first successful attempts in this direction was the revitalisation of the area next to the Lana River, where a series of illegal buildings were removed so that public space could be regained for the community.

4.   FENCING OF THE PUBLIC SPACES. A large number of public spaces are being fenced and, with that, they are losing their public character. Kindergartens and schools are often surrounded by high fences, which are usually locked after working hours. Once, they were the centre of the neighbourhood activity in the afternoon and evening hours. Understandably the biggest concern is safety. University campuses as well as other public buildings such as religious and cultural centres, are

also fenced, even though they were meant to be free and open public spaces. Rather than being open spaces, these fenced public buildings appear as enclosed enclaves.

5. POOR DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES. Nowadays, public areas are being constantly refurbished. Changing the pavement, adding light fixtures and water fountains are easy ways to make everyone see that the public space has been improved. However, mistakes are often made: Soft green areas in residential areas have been replaced by hard concrete surfaces; playgrounds have been rebuilt by placing soft rubber plates over a concrete base, and then filled with equipment that is inappropriate for the age of the most frequent visitors. In many cases, they have been replaced by parking lots.

6. LACK OF SECURITY AND ACCESS DUE TO THE WALLS SEPARATING PRIVATE PROPERTIES. A large number of private houses, especially within self-constructed areas, are protected with high surrounding walls. This physical separation has a significant impact on the access and safety of public space, in particular in neighbourhoods characterised by narrow, irregular street patterns.

7. ILLEGAL OCCUPATION OF PUBLIC SPACE. Because of the lack of control from the local authorities, public spaces have been illegally occupied by private residential buildings (new ones or additions to existing ones) or by commercial activities. Recently, they are being used as improvised parking areas. Thus, their original recreational purpose has been lost. As a result of the recent regulatory process, some buildings have been legalised, while others have been demolished, thus recovering part of the public space. In some neighbourhoods, particularly in the city centre, municipalities have carried out revitalisation projects which usually help to change the image of the city, rather than responding to community needs. The involvement of the community in these projects could bring about a more substantial transformation, subsequently attracting a broader support.

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CASES IN THE BALKANS

Over the past eighteen years, our universities have been involved in community development projects in Albania and in the Republic of Macedonia which have been carried out within the framework of academic programmes and applied research projects. These initiatives have contributed to raising awareness of the importance of protecting public space and the need to count with the community to achieve this goal. It has been our belief that architects, academia, and civil society should not act in isolation, excluding community from decision-making. Rather, we believe the active participation of citizens is necessary to respond to the challenges of sustainable urban development.

### Community Participatory Actions and Projects in Albania

In Albania, Co-plan,[2] a non-governmental organisation, has initiated a programme to protect the urban environment and green spaces. Co-plan is a strategic partner of Polis University. It helps the University in its commitment to involve students in applied research work in the field of community participation. Staff and experts of Co-plan, together with students and teachers, carry out initiatives with the purpose of bringing the concerns of the community to the political agendas: Organising public performances, "urban provocations", open workshops, and debates with the participation of experts, governmental representatives and local communities.

An early experience of community participation in Albania was undertaken by Co-plan between 1995 and 1997 in Breglumasi, an informal and chaotic neighbourhood near the north-western part of Tirana. This neighbourhood was part of an informal settlement which arose as a result of the massive inner migration in the early 1990s. Actions needed to be taken because of the difficulty to access the area due to ownership conflicts. Through the contribution of Co-plan, along with other actors working with the community, the neighbourhood became a liveable place. This was achieved by involving neighbours in small-scale actions such as moving fences or straightening walls; actions which were adopted following a bottom-up decision-making process. Later on, in 1998, this early experience of community participation was acknowledged by the *United Nations Development Programme* (undp) and the World Bank for being a positive example of the integration of an informal area into the urban structure of Tirana; an integration which was intended to comply with the requirements of infrastructure, water supply, and public services provision. The Breglumasi pilot project became a reference model of urbanisation for other informal areas of Tirana.

### Community Participatory Actions and Projects in the Republic of Macedonia

In the Republic of Macedonia, the local authorities are undertaking a series of actions related to the planning and construction of public spaces. For example, the municipality of Karposh in Skopje has created a department specifically dedicated to the design of public spaces. The Municipality Centre of Skopje, with the authorisation of the department for land regulation, construction and environmental protection, is

2. Co-PLAN is a non-profit organisation that has contributed to sustainable development since 1995 by enabling good urban and regional governance, tackling key environmental issues and influencing policies, while promoting community participation. Based in Tirana, Albania, it has developed a network at a national, regional, and international level, including many of the local government units in Albania, as well as numerous organisations in the Western Balkans Region, in Europe, and beyond.

building playgrounds and small squares, among other facilities. Aerodrom is one of the most active municipalities in furnishing squares, fountains, playgrounds, and so on. Similarly, other cities, such as Makedonska Kamenica, Pehchevo, Delchevo, Ohrid, Kichevo, and Gostivar, have developed programmes aimed at increasing the quality of the public spaces. With this purpose, municipalities have organised public competitions, have launched public procurements, or have conducted the design directly by themselves. However, communities are not being involved in this transformation process.

Universities and civil society groups are sensitive to the ongoing urban transformations that might undermine the quality of public spaces. To prevent this risk, they are collaborating with the municipalities in projects aimed at involving the community in the transformation processes. One such example is the cooperation between the municipality of Gjorche Petrovand and the Faculty of Architecture from Skopje. Students carry out designs for the public spaces as part of the curriculum. A number of designs have been prepared within the "Urban Design Studio" in cooperation with the municipal centre Public Spaces in Skopje. An increasing number of workshops[3] are being organised on the topic of public spaces, as part of international research platforms with the participation of citizens, students, and NGOs. It can be contended that, in the Republic of Macedonia, academia is playing a key role in involving citizens in the urban transformation processes.

## Stages of Participatory Processes

These positive experiences of community involvement in Albania and in the Republic of Macedonia show a way to foster civic engagement in the revitalisation of public spaces. Based on our experience, this engagement can be achieved along this sequence:

1.  MAKING PEOPLE TAKE THE INITIATIVE. It is important that the community itself points out the places that need urgent requalification. As mentioned above, in Albania and in the Republic of Macedonia there are only two levels of community participation, that is, at the informing

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3. Those workshops were carried out as part of the following projects: *Revival of City Squares in Balkan Cities*, which was carried out by the Coalition for Sustainable Development (CSD) from Skopje (Macedonia), Co-PLAN and the University Polis from Tirana (Albania) and Expeditio—Centre for Sustainable Spatial Development from Kotor (Montenegro); *NAUTILUS CONSTRUCT: Building An Open Stage In Skopje*, led by the City Creative Network (CCN) from Skopje together with TEN Zurich; *The Initiator, the Artist, his Advocate, and the Urbanist (IAAU)*, a collaborative project funded by the Balkan Arts and Culture Fund (BAC) and supported by the European Cultural Foundation (EFC) which was implemented by the Coalition for Sustainable Development (CSD) from Skopje, Co-PLAN, the Institute for Habitat Development, from Albania, Urbego, a platform for Young Planning Professionals (IFHP) from Denmark, School of Urban Practices (SoUP), from Serbia, and Blok 74, from The Netherlands.

and consultation phases. To start these bottom-up processes, urban provocations can play a role in the creation of a culture of participation. Urban activism performed by students served to awaken the community from their passive state, showing that with modest actions—for instance, cleaning green spaces, greening unused spaces, and improvising sitting areas—they can enhance the quality of their environment. Such provocations can also help to motivate citizens to collaborate on the solution of particular problems. Once the initiative has started, then the next levels of interaction with the community—consultation, inclusion, cooperation, and strengthening—can follow. At the core of these participatory actions lies the need of the community to claim its role and responsibility in the city-making processes (Ciro & Dajko, 2014).

2.  UNDERSTANDING THE LOCALITY. It is necessary to observe the existing conditions of a community to find out its transformative potential. Local habits, needs, and opportunities can be identified using different techniques: Open discussions with the inhabitants, surveys, observations, interviews, and conceptual maps. Residents can best define the characteristics and possibilities of the spaces they inhabit. They need to be actively involved in this stage, working together with students and experts in the process to identify the needs of the community.

3.  ENGAGING PEOPLE. In order to foster citizen participation, it is important to create a formal structure of the community. This can be achieved by creating residents' groups with their respective community leaders, and by bringing respected stakeholders such as educators, health care providers and parents to these groups. Through group actions, a community could develop strategic plans which can serve to facilitate the dialogue between the different stakeholders.

    Increasing the sense of belonging of the different actors involved in a participatory process helps to improve the results. This can be achieved by assigning tasks to suit each participant. For example, assigning a leading role to young members might be helpful since they embody an energy that can be used in benefit of the community. The engagement of the young residents in open forums, seminars and round tables could also be a good way to attract more participants. Furthermore, involving the media, either mass or social media, helps to extend the scope of the community's initiatives.

4.  DEFINING A SHARED VISION AND AGREEING ON A COMMON PLAN. After ensuring community engagement, a common programme can provide a joint vision furnished by the participating actors: Community, local or central governance, civil society, academia, and professional experts, among others. Such a programme would be the outcome of a long, complex, technical process of data collection (including images, documentation, interviews, and so on), which helps the involved parties to

discuss ideas and make proposals. Probably, this is the most difficult stage of the process since not all participants, including people living in the area, have the same ideas, interests, and background.

5.  IMPLEMENTING THE ACTIONS. During the preparation of the design, citizens can give their comments and feedback in public hearings. After this phase, they can also engage in the execution of the project. It may even be the case that a part of the community offers financial support.

    Following the aforementioned stages, it is possible to accomplish a transformation of shared spaces in dialogue with the community. A transparent step-by-step process prevents the unfortunate cases of potential manipulation, bribery, and passiveness likely to happen in a participatory process.
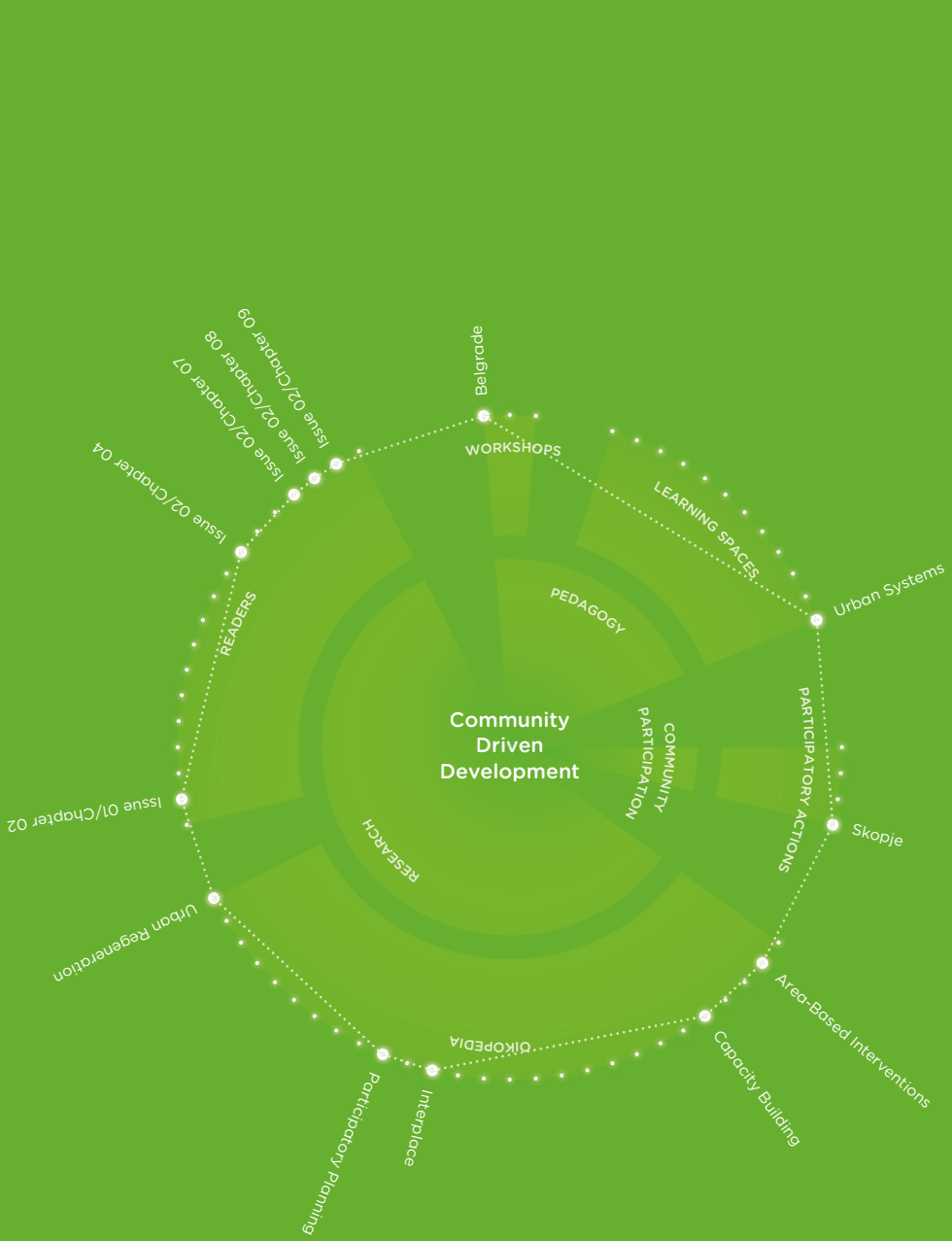
## CONCLUSIONS

Public space in post-communist countries has undergone many changes. Decades of deprivation of private property have given rise to an individualistic society, which perceives public spaces as areas to be used for private purposes. A way to oppose this trend in the privatisation of public space is by encouraging community participation. Successful experiences have demonstrated the value of participatory actions that promote civic engagement in the design of public space by acknowledging and devising a role for citizens. The citizens can be key players in policy and decision-making processes concerning the planning, building and management of public spaces. As a matter of fact, citizens do not just have the right to be part of these processes, but they also have the responsibility and obligation to participate.

In the context of the Balkans, despite several attempts to create links between community and decision-makers, there is still a gap which professional organizations, higher-education institutions and civil society can help to bridge. Besides being responsible for designing plans, architects and planners are expected to assume a leading role in the process that brings together the different actors involved in community development projects. Universities can play a catalytic role to supersede the self-regulated system inherited after the fall of the communist regime, by being involved in community planning projects that bring together multiple actors, fields and interests.

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# Can Top-Down Policy Meet Local Diversity in Urban Transformation Processes?

**Jenny Stenberg, Maria Zwanenburg, Lasse Fryk**

**INTRODUCTION**

Since the 1990s, participation has become part of mainstream policy for urban transformation in Europe and developing countries. National governments have adopted community participation as part of their urban transformation strategies, both in renovation and densification processes. Participation is high on the agenda because politicians and public administrators consider it to be of great value when citizens serve as key actors in governance processes aimed at developing the city (Swyngedouw, 2005; Faga, 2006). The aim of these participatory policies is to facilitate the direct inclusion of the voice and knowledge of citizens in public policy. The process of changing the balance of power in the relationships between governments and citizens with greater participation is often referred to as *community empowerment* (Andrews, Cowell, Downe, & Martin, 2006).

 In this chapter, we will reflect on two community participation models which can unlock the transformative potential of participation in urban development processes. In this context, transformative refers to the potential a participatory process has to shift the existing power balance between citizens and authorities, that is, the capacity to empower. First, the *Community Driven Development* model, a large-scale, national government-led participatory development policy that is implemented by an increasing number of governments throughout the world. Second, a locally based, small-scale model being implemented in a stigmatised suburb in Gothenburg called Hammarkullen, whose objective is to develop new types of relationships between city institutions and inhabitants.

**TRANSFORMATIVE PARTICIPATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE**

There is extensive academic debate on the purposes and the outcomes of citizen and community participation. In this section, we will introduce *transformative participation* within this debate.

 In her classical text *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*, Arnstein (1969) ranked the different degrees of citizen participation in a ladder to show when and by who decisions in planning processes are made. The lowest level is *manipulation*; the highest, *citizen control*. At the lowest level, power and decision-making remain with the authorities, while at the highest level a power shift between citizens and authorities takes place in favour of the citizen.

 Dalal-Clayton and Bass (2002) developed a similar classification where *interactive participation* is seen as the second highest level of participation and *self-mobilisation* is the highest. Interactive participation takes place when:

> People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation or strengthening of local groups or institutions that

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> determine how available resources are used. Learning methods are
> used to seek multiple viewpoints. (Dalal-Clayton & Bass, 2002, p. 180)

Finally, White (1996) classifies the forms of participation according
to the interest of the initiators (authorities) in the process. She identifies
four types of participation: (a) *nominal participation* to legitimise decisions
already taken, (b) *instrumental participation* to increase efficiency in pro-
ject implementation, (c) *representative participation* to create sustainability
and avoid dependency, and (d) *transformative participation* to promote
empowerment which in turn enables people to make their own decisions,
work out what to do and take action (White, 1996, pp. 8-9).

On comparison of the three identified classifications, we can concur
that White's *transformative participation* is similar to *interactive partic-
ipation* as defined by Dalal-Clayton and Bass, insofar as empowerment
leads citizens to take actions, and that both would correspond to the high-
est level in Arnstein's ladder, that is, citizen control. Among the three,
we have chosen White's transformative participation to describe the
process of power shift between local government and citizens, since the
term "transformative" best describes the changing relationship between
citizens and government.

Another way of approaching transformative participation is to distin-
guish between first and second order change, as introduced by Petit and
Olson (2013). First order change is suitable for ordinary and well-known
problem solving situations while second order change is more appropri-
ate for complex problems. These concepts stem from Bateson (1972) who
argued that reality is a semantic and social construction and there is no
neutral and objective world outside to be observed. Petit and Olson con-
tend that when observing, describing and acting in the world we are at the
same time creating it, making sense and meaning of it through our precon-
ceived concepts, experiences and knowledge. When this social construc-
tion is undertaken collaboratively, as in a participatory process, developing
and promoting trust and confidence among participants is paramount.
Moreover, this construction process should encompass all participant's
perspectives and should assure that these are taken into account.

In the debate about the transformative character of participation, some
argue that strengthening participatory processes would be sufficient to
unlock its transformative potential. Others argue that institutional change
towards more responsive and accountable government institutions is a pre-
condition for transformation to take place (Gaventa, 2004). Cornwall (2008)
points out that the intentions of the initiators of participatory processes do
not always determine the outcomes. The activities of *informing* or *consulta-
tion* (both assigned to "tokenism" in Arnstein's ladder) could be the spark
for self-mobilisation. On the other hand, transformative participation may
fail to fulfil the expectations citizens have about the obligations that the state
has to them. As Cornwall contends: "When 'empowerment' boils down to

'do-it-yourself', and where the state abnegates its responsibilities, then resistance rather than enthusiastic enrolment might well be the result of efforts to engage citizens" (Cornwall, 2008, pp. 272–273).

An important agent in institutional change may be the opening of *black boxes* (Callon & Latour, 1981). A black box refers to modes of thoughts, habits, forces and objects, which are present in the relationships between institutions, organizations, social classes and states (macro-actors) and the individuals and groups (micro-actors) that interact with them. The difference between macro-actors and micro-actors lies in the capacity each one has to build power relations. A macro-actor operating under the premises contained in a black box does not need to renegotiate its content with the micro-actors, rather it takes for granted the assumptions hidden in it. Callon and Latour (1981, p. 286) conclude then that "macro-actors are micro-actors seated on top of many (leaky) black boxes."

If institutions (macro-actors) follow a strategy of openness and transparency, that is, of opening the black boxes, this can be an important step in enabling the citizens (micro-actors) to change usual procedures, for example in planning, and thus make a real contribution in the search for solutions to serious contemporary social problems.

In the following comparison between the top-down, national government-led *Community Driven Development* and the locally initiated participatory experience in Hammarkullen, we will discuss the extent to which each approach contributes to the opening of black boxes.

## COMMUNITY DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT: A NATIONAL GOVERNMENT-LED APPROACH

For decades now, community participation has figured in development policies and studies. For a long time, it was propagated and implemented by non-governmental organisations as an alternative to the common state-led centralised policies. During the 1990s, the neoliberal development paradigm moved from a market-oriented towards a more people-centred philosophy. The *World Development Report of 2000/2001* (World Bank, 2001) mentioned community participation and empowerment for the first time, besides the usual call for economic growth. The most recent development in this line is *Community Driven Development* (CDD), promoted by the World Bank and several other donor organisations and adopted by the national government of several countries. CDD has been defined in the following terms:

> **CDD gives control of decisions and resources to community groups. These groups often work in partnership with demand-responsive support organizations and service providers, including elected local governments, the private sector, NGOs, and central government agencies. CDD is a way to provide social and infrastructure services,**

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**organize economic activity and resource management, empower poor people, improve governance, and enhance security of the poorest. (Dongier et al., 2002, pp. 303-304)**

CDD supports transformative participatory process through the transfer of financial recourses and decision-making power to community organisations in low-income settlements. Bennett and D'Onofrio (2014, p. 29) state that "Community-driven development aims to bring about change at the individual, group, institutional and systemic levels". CDD projects are expected to lead to the empowerment of the poor and to increase their social capital. The question is whether returning to  these population segments the decision-making power and control over public resources leads to a transformation in the power relation between authorities and less favoured urban citizens. Moreover, there is no evidence that the support organisations that Dongier et al. (2002) refer to (NGOs or the private sector) in their definition of CDD are *demand-responsive*. We will further address this question in the following discussion about institutional change and the notion of community.

**Institutional Change**

The issue of power differences in participatory processes is complex. Power differences occur not only between government institutions and communities, but also within each of them. Community development projects have often been criticised for this neglect, however addressing this issue in policy design proves to be difficult. For a long time, the debate on community participation has very much focused on methodology, that is to say, on how to implement participation (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). Guidelines and sourcebooks are important instruments in the implementation of participation policies. Guidelines exist on a national level but international organisations also produce manuals and recommendations. *The World Bank Participation Sourcebook* (The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 1996) is one example. However, by focusing on the "how to", the "what for" is often neglected. Cleaver (2001, pp. 38–39), referring to Biggs (1995), observes that traditional participatory methods fail "to address issues of power and control of information and other resources and provides an inadequate framework for developing a critical reflective understanding of the deeper determinants of technical and social change."

Once they have experience with CDD, communities themselves demand a more responsive government (Bennett & D'Onofrio, 2014). Gaventa (2004) is of the opinion that waiting for community exigency to occur is not sufficient. Direct intervention in institutional change is also required in order to reach a stage of transformative participation. Given this, the earlier mentioned black boxes (Callon & Latour, 1981) have now to be reconsidered.

A signal of the opening of a black box could be a change in position of those government officials that actually work at the interface with local communities. Their role is crucial, since they inform and interact with citizens and facilitate the participatory process. For local communities, they are the face of the government. When institutional change takes place within governments, favouring interaction with local communities, it is then reflected in the position and authority of these facilitators. In general, little attention has been paid to what happens at the interface between community and government institutions or to the civil servants that operate at this interface. As Vasan (2002, p. 4125) observes "development literature has surprisingly neglected the characteristics, social conditions, perceptions and attitudes of field-level implementers of policy."

According to Mansuri and Rao, this neglect is also apparent in the implementation of CDD projects:

> **Frontline staff who work directly with beneficiary groups are especially critical actors in building participatory processes. They are expected to mobilize communities, build the capacity for collective action, ensure adequate representation and participation, and, where necessary, break through elite domination. They must be culturally and politically sensitive, charismatic leaders, trainers, anthropologists, engineers, economists, and accountants. Despite their centrality, however, there is virtually no generalizable evidence on their role. (Mansuri and Rao, 2004, p. 24)**

### The Notion of Community

Many participatory development projects see the community as a homogeneous, egalitarian group, whose members make use of their social capital to collectively express their views and needs. This concept of a community is one that has much been criticised on frequent occasions. Cleaver shows how this assumption of commonality of interest among individuals obscures the complex reality of a community "as the site of both solidarity and conflict, shifting alliances, power and social structures" (Cleaver, 2001, p. 45). In another study, Cleaver (2005) also shows that the assumption that poor families have equal stocks of social capital might be erroneous. Power differences between individuals and households often create relations of dependency. Similarly, Mansuri and Rao (2004) note that dependency on powerful groups prevent people from genuine participation. They may consider that the insecure outcome of a participatory process is not worth the cost of losing a proven beneficial relationship.

In their study on *Community Driven Development* in Indonesia, Dasgupta and Beard (2007) show that the internal dynamics of communities lead to very diverse outcomes. In situations of unequal distribution of power, decisions may be dominated by elites. This can lead to elite

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capture, where elites use their position to benefit their own interests. An alternative is elite control, whereby elites decide on projects that benefit a majority, or even the poorest. However, these authors additionally note that more democratic decision-making does not always lead to inclusion of the poorest.

Community participation is often associated with decentralised decision-making and with the elicitation of local knowledge. In theory, local knowledge is rooted in a specific social, cultural and historical milieu. As circumstances are diverse, so is the local knowledge and the ways in which it may contribute to decision-making. However, when the CDD programme was implemented in Indonesia, we saw that the community organisational structure—a structure that each community should be able to benefit from—had to be elected following rather uniform guidelines. One could ask to what extent a uniform organisational structure that has to be applied in a similar way in all communities can actually reflect the existing local variations in culture and knowledge. The reason for approaching communities in a uniform way may rest with the practical capacity of a national government to deal with diversity. There is a trade-off between the efficient implementation of a nation-wide participatory programme and the inclusion of local diversity in this programme. The difference in organisational culture between community and government bureaucracy may also play a role. Establishing "community structures that most clearly mirror bureaucratic structures" (Cleaver, 2001, p. 40) is therefore the best solution. Finally, one could also question how the community can contribute to innovative development, when it cannot take advantage of its own potential because the prevailing power structures end up determining their local needs and corresponding actions.

## Conclusion and Points for Discussion

The analysis undertaken in the previous sections is based on a limited review of texts on community participation and particularly on CDD. Is CDD a form of transformative participation? If indeed this were the case, we could have expected to know more about the opening of the black box. Thus, the question remains: What happens at the interface between government and communities and within communities in the process of CDD implementation? In fact, we could contend that the dynamics at the interface between government and communities are unknown in a government initiated participatory programme, like CDD.

On the other hand, we know more about the effect that more democracy and empowerment have on communities. CDD programmes, as described by Dasgupta and Beard (2007), present a variety of outcomes, not all of which have a transformative character. On the contrary, given the heterogeneous nature of communities and the power differences that

exist within them, often—although not always—the poorest and most vulnerable among the population become excluded. Elite dominance and elite capture is a recurrent phenomenon in community participation. Therefore, we can say that CDD does not necessarily imply transformative participation, nor does it necessarily lead to a second order change. This brings us to the following point for discussion: How can government and institutions that deal with community participation actually take in consideration local needs and circumstances?

In the next section, we will describe a planning experience in Sweden—*Urban Empowerment in Hammarkullen*—which turns the issue of community participation in planning upside down: What if citizen participation is the starting point instead of the end point?

## URBAN EMPOWERMENT IN HAMMARKULLEN:
## A BOTTOM-UP, EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

Contrary to CDD, the experiences in Hammarkullen represent a bottom-up approach to community participation and empowerment. This is not a drawing table prescription, like CDD, but an organically grown action research project.

The Hammarkullen initiative started as a response to the need to change renovation practices in Sweden, most specifically, those concerning the existing housing stock built in the 1960s and 70s. Currently, in Sweden, the work to renovate the 800,000 apartments which date back to this period is pending and will commence soon. At the outset, neglected maintenance has led to the need for renovation. There is also a considerable need to improve energy performance in order to meeting the climate objectives set up in global agreements. However, there are no resources set aside in renovation funds to upgrade the apartments. Whether this is because profits have been either incorrectly distributed or misspent because of bad administration is a matter which is still debated among scholars.

The renovation of these apartments is often also exposed to other problems. There are many areas like Hammarkullen, which suffer from a general lack of democracy and therefore pose a risk for gentrification and may even accentuate existing levels of social exclusion. Neglected maintenance has led to these areas being inhabited by socially excluded segments of the population. Consequently, these neighbourhoods often carry a stigma, significantly undermining the potential of the inhabitants to become community builders. With these issues in mind, the following considerations are needed to move forward: What must be put in place in order to adapt planning procedures to this reality? And, how can planning include these people in a dialogue about how the city should be developed? These are some of the challenges our society faces today.

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In response to this situation, in 2010 the University of Gothenburg together with Chalmers University of Technology established a centre[1] in the suburb of Hammarkullen (8,100 inhabitants) with the purpose of facilitating access to higher education to residents with a foreign background and less economic resources. By intertwining research, education and civil society through community outreach,[2] the centre wanted to enable inhabitants to become knowledge producers in academic work. Simultaneously, their activities aimed at helping involved teachers develop higher education to better adapt it to the needs of the local society (Stenberg & Fryk, 2015). This discussion of how local work can influence norms, laws and regulations is particularly relevant. Top-down structures give rise to a society with a serious lack of democracy and this does not encourage citizens to act or take responsibility. Systemic change driven by co-creation and co-planning can be a clear indication that the authorities involved really have been responsive to the dialogue they invited citizens to (Stenberg, 2013). A changed balance of power namely implies new relationships between local stakeholders. It is not self-evident that municipal representatives really want to be part of this change of relationships, even if they may be obliged to do so in the policy documents. Then, they may choose to keep black boxes sealed (first order change), as it is faster and easier (not forgetting that if all tasks were seen as challenges to power, it would be too much of a waste of energy and financial resources). However, as research projects fundamentally exist to foster the development of society, we found it appropriate to investigate the circumstances which facilitate this kind of learning process, in which the balance of power between inhabitants and professionals develops in the direction of changing the balance of power.

**Learning Lab Hammarkullen: Codesigning Renovation**

The experiences in Hammarkullen show the importance of approaching a local area with a genuine desire to share power. In the case of housing and the regeneration of housing areas, in particular, there is an increased awareness of the need to develop more participative renovation policies. In our current research, we investigate how this may be carried out. Precisely, the purpose of the programme *Sustainable Integrated Renovation*, funded by the Swedish research programme *Formas* (2014–2018), is to help the community by developing knowledge and awareness of sustainability in order to

1. See urban.gu.se, chalmers.se/urban

2. See urbanempower.se for a description of the first experience of such an integration since the centre started. Hammarkullen was chosen to start a common higher education centre in 2010 because teachers and students from the Department of Social Work, Gothenburg University, had been successfully collaborating with the municipality for the last 25 years. Chalmers University joined with an annual place-based Master course in 2008 as well as other courses taking place in the area on temporary basis.

radically change building renovation practice at the national level through collaboration and participation. The programme involves researchers from different fields and its final aim is to propose innovative renovation models that can be widely used on a large scale.

One of the Living Labs in the programme—*Learning Lab Hammarkullen: Codesigning Renovation*—is carried out in the suburb of Hammarkullen where buildings with 900 rented apartments will soon be renovated.[3] The goals of this Learning Lab are: (a) developing methods for integration of knowledge from the tenants early in the renovation process; (b) discussing the different lifestyles involved in the context of sustainable renovation with all the actors, and (c) finding forms for tenants to participate in the decision-making process in renovation. Subsequently, the programme aims at bringing about a power shift through a collaborative learning process. The involved actors are academics, property owners (Bostadsbolaget, a municipal housing company) and The Swedish Union of Tenants. All actors meet on a regular basis to plan, implement and to learn one from another through these experiences.

One obvious way forward for a transdisciplinary[4] research project like the *Learning Lab Hammarkullen*, is gathering participants in a room managed by the local actors, taking advantage of the experience accumulated by several of the participants in previous area-based development projects. Still, these activities have to be financed and scheduled in a shared time plan. A partnership between the local community and higher education institutions has made it possible that every year, approximately 25 full-time master students participate in the Learning Lab over a three-month period. Their assigned task is to create design proposals for the area, based on dialogues with the inhabitants.[5] The tasks for these students have been collaboratively devised by teachers, researchers, and local actors so that their outcomes could be useful both for the community and for academic purposes. In the context of these learning process, every year students dedicate time to communicating with inhabitants in a structured way, with supervision, and on themes which are valuable for ongoing research projects.

## Transformative Participation and Systemic Change

A learning process in which employees from the local housing company and the tenant organisation participate together with academics, empowers inhabitants to understand and to challenge the content of the black boxes. An example of such a black box is the dialogue between tenants and property owners in the course of a building renovation process. When

3. See learninglabhammarkullen.se

4. In short, this means to develop academic knowledge in collaboration with actors from different disciplines and from various stakeholders in society. See Hadorn et al. (2008).

5. See suburbsdesign.wordpress.com

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that black box is opened it reveals what happens when tenants, despite their legal rights, are ignored (which is often the case). Rent prices have increased by as much as 65% due to the renovations of the apartments, even though most of the tenants do not want them. Furthermore, as part of the research project, tenants are empowered to reconsider other black boxes. For example, the rent negotiation process is not as transparent as tenants would like it to be. It is also based on a utility value system, a system which compares nearby rent levels, which is a black box in itself. Additionally, it is a black box that measures which levels are considered to raise the living standard and subsequently the rent. There are some factors which always influence the rent (e.g., security door to the stairwell) while other amenities do not (e.g., replacement of pipes). On many occasions, the owner does not acknowledge this black box and keeps it sealed in order to make as much money as possible.

With help from these learning processes, the actors involved in the research project are then able to access a second order change transformation. This involves identifying the institutions or organisations and the systems with which they operate, in the building renovation process. In Hammarkullen, we have discovered three systems:

1. THE MODEL FOR LEGAL TENANT DIALOGUE. This national model has been developed by The Swedish Union of Tenants which signs contracts with property owners before each renovation. We have had such a dialogue model for a long time and it has recently been updated. After the last changes, it delegates significantly more power to the tenants. Even so, there is still considerable room for improvement. As an active participant of the research project, the Union participates in the learning process and drives the development of the new model at the same time as they are applying it.

2. THE PROCESS OF LEGAL TENANT DIALOGUE IN HAMMARKULLEN. The Swedish Union of Tenants and the property owner Bostadsbolaget will soon start a dialogue with the tenants of the 900 apartments to be renovated, using the above mentioned dialogue model. As both are partners in the research project, they have the possibility to bring about a second order change while carrying out this process (developing the process while working on it). Thus, we await the future outcomes of the project to assess the results.

3. SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT. Public organisations in Sweden are obliged to make market-oriented procurements when building. As Bostadsbolaget is a partner of the research project, they have the possibility to contribute to a second order change while designing the new procurement conditions for the renovation in Hammarkullen (e.g., including the obligation to employ people from the area). Again, we are waiting for the results of this project to learn from them.

Hence, these are three examples that show that second order change can take place thanks to the transformative participation of the actors involved in community planning. It is important to note that this kind of participation requires learning processes which include the relevant local actors (civil servants, professionals, employees). In order to carry out a true transformative process, interaction between local inhabitants is not enough. They also need to have clear communication channels and proactive dialogues with relevant local actors so that the knowledge they possess contributes to transforming the existing systems.

Additionally, there is a fourth system amenable to be changed which was revealed as a result of the activities in the *Learning Lab*, thanks to transformative participation:

4.    INNOVATIVE RENOVATION MODELS. The research programme will result in renovation models covering all aspects of sustainability. The actors in the *Learning Lab Hammarkullen* will contribute to second order change in the research programme: Researchers from various disciplines will help to bring the experience of the actors involved into a renovation model, and will facilitate its implementation in society.

In sum, the *Learning Lab Hammarkullen*, with its transdisciplinary approach, will contribute to the creation of a new national policy for building renovation projects. Without a transformative participation, the research project would probably have concluded with the renovation of these housing areas built during the 1960s and 70s, and thus the actors involved in the participatory process would not have been aware that the rent increases contributed to the social exclusion of vulnerable people. The strategy of opening up black boxes to give rise to second order changes implies a real transfer of power from authorities to inhabitants while placing the emphasis on shared learning. Altogether, the outcomes of the research project will propitiate a systemic change in the existing power relations governing the building renovation processes.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In this chapter, we have discussed the relevance of *Community Driven Development* programmes and their limitations to foster a shift of power from institutions and organizations to individuals and groups due to their lack of transparency and openness. Therefore, CDD programmes may actually be described as a type of black box. Nevertheless, CDD is usually presented as the obvious best solution in community development projects, and inhabitants and other local actors are not given the opportunity to question it.

A lack of interface between government and community is also noticeable in CDD programmes. The creation of this interface, a task which relies

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on government employees, requires considerable skills and creativity (Mansuri & Rao, 2004, p. 24). Giving more attention to these frontline workers, helping them to improve their skills, labour conditions and authority, would be a first step towards opening the CDD black box.

A consequent application of the principles of transformative participation could lead to systemic changes in national policies aimed at supporting participation in urban transformation. However, we still do not know if a widely accepted national policy—for example, about housing renovation—would actually favour sustainable building renewal everywhere, as intended. In this regard, some questions remain to be answered, such as: Can detailed top-down policies really meet local diversity in urban transformation processes? Is it not in the very nature of top-down policies and strategies to be challenged and changed for the sake of diversity? Additionally, we pose this question: Can governments produce a set of guidelines that will facilitate a collaborative learning process in urban transformation instead of designing an explicit and detailed participatory policy?

We believe that with this way of thinking it may be possible for governments to formulate top-down policies and, at the same time, initiate fruitful strategies which will lead to increased citizen participation in urban transformation processes, for example, in the renovation and densification of housing areas. A greater engagement of citizens will help to face current serious societal problems, and to continue developing new top-down policies and strategies on urban transformation. With this said, there is a great need for a similar approach in other European countries where there are areas in need of investment and renovation, which suffer from a general lack of democracy, a risk of gentrification and increased social exclusion, like the case of Hammarkullen.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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# Public Participation in the Regeneration of Large-Scale Housing Estates

**Sandra Treija, Uģis Bratuškins, Edgars Bondars**

## INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the participation of residents has become an indispensable instrument to facilitate a sustainable bottom-up implementation of housing regeneration initiatives. Participatory processes are expected to contribute to identifying the needs of the people, empowering local groups, integrating local knowledge systems in the design and planning, reinforcing a variform learning process and to ensuring political support. The list of possible objectives to achieve with these participatory processes (such as generating ideas, identifying attitudes, disseminating information, reviewing and implementing design proposals) can differ at every place and time. Once the objectives of community participation are stated, it then becomes possible to determine the type of participatory process and the people involved (Sanoff, 2005).

Participatory actions in the regeneration of residential areas are of special importance because they strengthen community spirit and consequently intensify the sense of place. The engagement of inhabitants can significantly enhance the efficiency of planning proposals and facilitate other viewpoints that are normally not considered in a formal planning process. If sustainable development is a main objective, then it should include participatory processes to organise and manage the continued demand for effective solutions to housing regeneration (Laws, Scholz, Shiroyama, Susskind, Suzuki, & Weber, 2004).

After the Second World War, large-scale housing estates were built in many countries in Europe. Small-size apartments were integrated into large-scale blocks surrounded by vast green areas. A large part of the population lives in these housing estates which constitutes up to 40 or 50 percent out of the total housing in some of the former communist countries. However, this kind of habitation has become unattractive among residents. Besides, the attitude towards "saving-of-energy-resources" has changed. Nowadays, the challenge is to improve the spatial attractiveness of these areas through urban regeneration programmes which usually have two goals: Firstly, to improve the conditions of buildings; secondly, to increase the quality of the surrounding space.

In post-communist Eastern Europe, participatory planning is mandatory and it is regulated by the planning legislation. However, due to the relatively little experience in participatory planning, its implementation has become a major challenge. Community-driven initiatives, NGO-led actions, as well as pedagogic activities can bring together the different actors involved in housing regeneration processes. Several case studies collected in this chapter exemplify a variety of collaboration models for participatory planning, design and implementation.

## HOUSING REGENERATION AS INTEGRAL PART
## OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Urban regeneration is typically carried out in urban areas undergoing economic development, deindustrialisation, demographic changes,

underinvestment, structural or cyclical employment, political disenfranchisement, racial or social tensions and physical deterioration (Czischke, Moloney, & Turcu, 2015). As part of a sustainable urban development programme, housing regeneration is a complex system of actions embracing spatial and economic development, social and physical improvements, environmental plans, as well as training and education programmes. Since a major issue of sustainable development is the purposeful use of resources, urban and housing regeneration through the reorganization and upgrading existing places is an alternative to planning new urbanisations (Coach & Dennemann, 2000; Turcu, 2012; Balaban & Puppim de Oliveira, 2013).

In many western European cities, housing regeneration takes place in large-scale housing estates, usually publically owned, which are perceived as degraded territories generally inhabited by deprived social groups. Such districts face a range of problems such as poverty and high-crime rates, among others. To avoid the complete degradation of those areas, the responsible authorities have to invest resources not only in the renovation of buildings, but also in the revitalisation of the public open space. In Eastern Europe, where large-scale housing accounts for the majority of the housing market, these large-scale housing states attract a more diverse population. In the communist era, these housing estates were built to differentiate the East from the West (MacArthur, 2001). While in western countries, centrally planned suburbs often began as welfare projects for low-income families, in the eastern countries large-scale housing was more egalitarian since it was also built for the middle-class and educated citizens. However, as these estates deteriorated and a new richer middle class emerged, wealthier families started to move away, subsequently starting the cycle of decline.

## PARTICIPATORY PLANNING: FROM TOP-DOWN TO BOTTOM-UP

Public participation has not always played a key role in urban planning as it does today. A broader discussion on public participation, both among the scientific community and the public began only in the second half of the twentieth century, becoming more intense at the end of the 1980s. Nowadays, planning implies the involvement of inhabitants at various stages, from early conception to the implementation of the measures (Treija, Bondars, & Bratuškins, 2014)

Two basic trends in the urban planning theory and practice of the second half of the twentieth century can be observed with regard to participatory planning (Healey, 1992). One of them advocated the centralised planning practice, entrusting all planning decisions to experts. A second one postulated a greater public participation in planning. These two mutually contrasting trends are characterised as top-down and bottom-up planning (Murray, Greer, Houston, McKay, & Murtagh, 2009).

Public participation in urban planning became more urgent in the second half of the twentieth century as a reaction to the rational planning theories that were prevalent in the late 1950s and 1960s. Rational planning was distinguished by functional and aesthetic uniformity, the application of a mono-functional zoning principle, and large-scale buildings laid out in an open grid that ignored existing urban structures. Planning decisions were based on scientific facts and comprehensive data analysis, thus excluding the participation of inhabitants. This top-down planning increasingly received criticism from professionals and organisations, as well as from the population at large. Critics of the rational comprehensive planning argued that the analytical methods used in the preparation of plans were based on incomplete information. One of the recommendations to deal with the lack of information was to involve diverse interest groups in the planning process. Arguments for the involvement of inhabitants in the urban development were formulated by several authors (Arnstein, 1969; Pateman, 1970; Macpherson, 1973). The impact of public participation on the planning process was reflected in Arnstein's seminal work, *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*, published in 1969. In this paper, she contended that there is a fundamental difference if participation happens as a formally organised routine procedure, or if it aims at transforming the planning process.

Communicative planning appeared in the 1980s and was influenced by the work of various theorists, mainly by Jürgen Habermas (1981). Communicative planning was comparable to the pluralistic urban planning concept that promoted the idea of the inclusion of various interest groups in planning (Davidoff, 1965). One of the participatory planning objectives is to understand the needs of the inhabitants. With this purpose, the authorities can invite representatives of the inhabitants to take part in a decision-making process. This public participation can bring new points of view that the authorities had not considered; it can facilitate equality and help to reach more effective decisions. Additionally, the discussion and advocacy can help to build trust among the players, which in turn helps to reach a consensus (Sakakibara & Genkai, 2005). Nowadays, public participation in housing and urban development is actively promoted by international agencies, as well as from a variety of state and local government authorities.

According to top-down planning practice, the planner is the person who provides a vision of the future built environment. In a bottom-up planning process, on the contrary, a planner is not the only one who plans and designs. The role of professionals in the bottom-up or participatory planning is to coordinate the overall process including the negotiation with residents (Innes, 1998). This requires a capacity to interact with the inhabitants and an ability to explain to them the strengths and weaknesses of a project (Forester, 1989).

Information on decisions related to community-oriented design must be presented to the public in an easily understandable and appealing way.

Therefore, efforts should be made to go beyond the traditional format of public meetings and to find alternative ways to promote inhabitants' involvement. Various activities and types of communication (open discussions, city games, arrangement of exhibitions, etc.) and the involvement of third parties (universities, NGOs etc.) can contribute to attracting the interest of citizens.

One of the possibilities is the involvement of university students in projects in some short-term or small-scale urban regeneration activities. In this way, architecture schools can contribute to the knowledge creation and sharing between all the parties involved. This offers a unique learning opportunity for students, who are given the chance to learn new skills which can be applied later when they, as qualified professionals, facilitate participatory processes.

In some cases, participatory processes can be performed for purely formal reasons only. For example, if the funding of a project is granted on the condition of the involvement of inhabitants, public participation tends to be implemented only formally (Burgers, 2004). Under certain conditions, residents might refuse to participate as they might think that their opinion will not be taken into account (Gustavsson & Elander, 2016).

## PARTICIPATORY DESIGN: PERSONALISATION OF SPACE

In contemporary planning practice, the fields of design and social studies are getting closer to each other. An important goal of the cooperation in development projects is to reach a common understanding of the role of each of the stakeholders in the overall process. The views held by urban planning professionals might differ from those of the residents. For example, the owners of a car might want to park as close as possible to their apartment block, a wish which in many cases is not shared by professionals. At the same time, professionals need to take into account the needs of local residents who know their living spaces much better than they do, and in this vein, they can help them to take better informed decisions. In addition, residents might contribute with their ideas and with their actions to endow their environment with a personal touch.

Cooperation among various stakeholders is particularly important for housing projects. Housing is the built expression of a civilisation, a way of being in the world; it is the manifestation of the relationship between people and their environment. People contribute to giving form to the built environment by constructing, decorating, furnishing, maintaining and restoring their homes. This way, they identify themselves with the places they inhabit. The identification is based on the desire to be the creators of their living space, to live in a personalised environment (Habraken, 1999). During the pre-industrial period, communities and individuals were actively participating in the processes to give form to their living spaces. However, their role has diminished in today's large-scale housing estates. After the Second World War, in most European countries, a significant part of the housing stock was

designed according to similar architectural, spatial and construction principles. The dwellings in these housing estates were once appreciated as modern, spacious, luxurious, and egalitarian. Nowadays, they are often seen as monotonous, uniform, dull, and small (Wassenberg, 2013). Because of this negative image, these districts have not become popular among residents (Dekker & Van Kempen, 2005; Van Kempen, Dekker, Hall, & Tosics, 2005).

Some renovation projects carried out in the former Eastern Germany have attempted to solve the problems caused by uniformity and repetition in these large housing estates, with the participation of inhabitants. Hellersdorf is one of the large estates in Berlin where cooperation with the residents played a key role in the regeneration strategy (Figures 1, 2). In order to meet the needs of the residents, public open space has been transformed into a controlled semi-public open space excluding car traffic. Residents have been involved in the design, development and construction of courtyard utilities. Moreover, on the initiative of residents, private open spaces were created in the ground level of housing blocks, as extensions of the apartments. These spaces improved the level of privacy and gave a personal touch to the homes. This kind of intervention strengthens the sense of belonging to the place, creating ties between members of the community, and protecting dwellings from intruders. In this way, a high-density housing estate was turned into a sustainable part of the viable city with satisfied people, who are actively involved in all stages of participatory design (Williams, 2009).

There are different types of public participation, at different stages and with different levels of involvement. Public participation is not limited to the planning and design phases. The public also have an opportunity to undertake responsibilities when the ideas are put into practice, and even afterwards, when they inhabit the spaces. An optimal participation process would be one which engages the people in the definition of the problem, seeking the solutions, and collaborating in the realisation of the proposals. In the future, we could envisage residents taking a more active role in the maintenance of their living spaces because they will devote more time and material resources to their development. This would lead to greater independence from the housing managers, increase their desire to get involved in the development of their housing and strengthen the ties among the neighbours.



FIGURES 1, 2. Personalised open space in Hellersdorf, Berlin. Source: U. Bratuškins

## PARTICIPATORY IMPLEMENTATION: REDEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Public open spaces are an essential component of a home (Madanipour, 2003; Belanger, 2007). In large housing estates, public spaces give inhabitants

an opportunity to expand their homes beyond the domestic realm, by carrying out some of their daily activities outdoors. However, in most of today's large-scale housing estates it is difficult to make public spaces part of the living space due to social and economic reasons (Treija, Bondars, & Bratuškins, 2012). It may generally be observed that in most of these estates public spaces have been poorly maintained. As a result, they are seen as unsafe places and have a negative image (Sendi, Aalbers, & Trigueiro, 2009). Different initiatives have been adopted to improve the quality of open spaces and thus enhance the image of neighbourhoods, such as involving inhabitants in the furnishing and greening of open public spaces.

Generally speaking, the implementation of housing regeneration projects is a multilateral process involving parties with differing or conflicting interests. For the participants the implementation process should create the confidence that the plans will be introduced since they have been involved in the decision-making process. This ultimately means that the participants are responsible for the decisions taken. During the implementation phase the efficiency and adequacy of solutions can be tested, something that is not possible at the design stage.

One of the ways to engage residents in the transformation of open spaces is gardening. In urban garden projects, inhabitants can participate in different ways. It can be a small-scale garden such as a community kitchen to fill wasted spaces, or a rooftop to foster mutual communication and community education. Urban gardening facilitates the creation of emotional connections between people and their environment (Turner, Henryks, & Pearson, 2011). Community gardens bring residents together in common activities and can contribute to their environmental education (Comstock et al., 2010). For example, in Malmö, Sweden, community gardens facilitated the revitalisation of public open spaces (Figures 3, 4). Although urban gardening has enjoyed a long tradition in the city, community gardening is a recent trend. Malmö's experience confirms that urban gardening might have a positive impact in the revitalisation of residential areas through the promotion of social engagement and an intensification of the usages of open space (Koroļova, 2015).

**FIGURES 3, 4.**
**Urban gardens in open space of the neighbourhood in Malmö.**
**Source: A. Koroļova**





## PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT: BUILDING RENOVATION

In recent decades, housing policies in European countries have undergone significant changes with the purpose of facilitating the liberalisation of the housing market and the privatisation of the housing stock. Overall, these changes have given rise to a substantial increase of apartment owners. However, the property management system has failed to

respond to these rapid reforms. Therefore, housing privatisation has created new challenges for housing management (Gruis, Tsenkova, & Nieboer, 2009).

As a result of the privatisation of the apartments, residents are responsible for the building maintenance, and for getting the financial resources to undertake the reforms of their dwellings. In order to ensure an efficient management of the housing buildings and also to meet the quality standards required nowadays, local authorities need to find ways to have positive, clear and open dialogue with the apartment owners to encourage them to cooperate in the renovation of the buildings. This is not a task that can be done in a short time, but rather a long-term programme (Turkington, Van Kempen, & Wassenberg, 2004; Nieboer, Gruis, Van Hal, & Tsenkova, 2011).

To facilitate the renovation of the building stock, many countries have started to adapt their legal frameworks to the current socioeconomic conditions (Palacin & Shelburne, 2005). Therefore, some countries have abandoned their previous structures and created new ones, while in other countries the new institutional structures coexist alongside the previous ones. For example, in Riga, Latvia, the current property management system is unable to facilitate the necessary improvement in the quality of the living environment (Figures 5, 6). Most of the buildings consume large amounts of energy and have poor thermal insulation. Building renovation has become an urgent matter; otherwise, a considerable part of the housing stock is going to be at risk of degradation. One of the reasons for this situation is that the individual ownership structure hinders the adoption of measures to protect the common interests. State institutions have adopted a legislation aimed at promoting the renovation of buildings and the real estate management process improvement. With this purpose, the Ministry of Economy and other institutions have carried out awareness campaigns. In addition, there has been funding available for building renovation (Slava & Geipele, 2012). However, the number of renovated apartments is still very small. Despite all of the above, the engagement of apartment owners in the renovation processes remains low. Furthermore, they still do not understand their roles and responsibilities in those processes.



**FIGURES 5, 6.**
Renovated buildings in Riga. Source: S. Treija

## CONCLUSIONS

Public participation is an essential part of sustainable development, and it spans over the stages of planning, design, implementation, and also management. Participatory planning plays a fundamental role in the sustainable regeneration process of large-scale housing estates which needs to

bring together multiple interests of a large number of involved parties. The extent to which the residents are aware of the importance of their participation affects the result of the regeneration process.

Quality of communication between the various actors involved in the urban regeneration projects is crucial to make participants aware of the value of their participation at each stage of development. A developer, a planner or any other specialist in charge of a public participation process should have the skills to communicate with the various groups of people involved in the process in a language understandable to them, particularly with those who do not know the technicalities used to describe projects.

The uniformity of the large-scale housing states does not promote a sense of belonging among residents. Thus, a housing regeneration process is easier to implement in smaller-scale urban structures like neighbourhoods or residential estates. The urban regeneration of small-scale areas, in which inhabitants can participate not only during the planning but also in the implementation phase, contributes to the formation of a sense of belonging and identity. In small-scale settings, people have a better perception of the problems and feel more motivated to participate in their solution. Smaller projects require fewer resources, they can be carried out in a shorter time and their outcomes can be quickly perceived. Besides, these small interventions can serve as a springboard to foster public involvement in large-scale projects, and to give value to participation in urban regeneration processes.

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