URBAN PLANNING 1_TOPICS AND DEBATES

The texts collected below are a sample of the topics for study and debate that have been part of the Urban Planning 1 subject in the second year of the Bachelor Degree in Architecture during the academic year 2014-2015.

These notes have been prepared by students as part of exercises of debate and presentation. The main aim of these exercises is to raise different questions about topics that have formed part of the discipline of Urban Studies for years.

Items and articles which have been used for the discussion and preparation of presentations are some of those collected in the book "The city reader".

Stout, F (2003) *The city reader.* Urban Reader Series. Routledge. London and New York.

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EBENEZER HOWARD – Author's Introduction and **The Town-Country Magnet** from **"GARDEN CITIES OF TO-MORROW" (1898)**

By Sofía Ruíz

"Why do people stream into over-crowded cities?
How these urban attractions do overcome?
How can the countryside be made more attractive?"

INTRODUCTION:
Ebenezer Howard was born in London in 1850 and died in 1928. He was a stenographer by trade. He experienced the pollution, the congestion and the social dislocations of the modern industrial metropolis.
He published To-morrow: a Peaceful Path to Real Reform in 1898 (now known under the title Garden Cities of To-morrow). He wanted to convince people of the advantages of "The Garden City idea".
He defended the urban decentralisation, the zoning for different uses, the integration of nature into cities and the development of communities outside crowded central cities.
He tries to explain why people stream into over-crowded cities by investigating the causes and summarises them all as "attractions" and called it "the town magnet". Against this urban magnetic force is "the country magnet", referring to rural districts. However, how can these urban attractions be overcome by the creation of new ones? How can the countryside be made more attractive to the people that live in a town?
The Howard's desire was to create a community based on "the town-country magnet", which is the best of both worlds. So he defended this third alternative, in which all the advantages of the most energetic and active life are mixed with the beauty and delight of the country. The two magnets must be made one.

THE TOWN MAGNET:
Advantages: high wages, employment opportunities, the prospects of progress, the social opportunities and the leisure places.
Disadvantages: high rent and prices, excessive hours of toil, distance from work.

THE COUNTRY MAGNET:
Advantages: beautiful views, lordly parks, fresh air. The low rent.
Disadvantages: lack of society, lack of capital, one industry: agriculture, which suffers from excessive rainfalls; the natural healthiness of the countryside is largely lost due to the lack of proper drainage and other sanitary conditions.
So the purpose is to create a Town-Country in which opportunities of social exchange may be enjoyed, beauties of nature enfold each inhabitant, higher wages are compatible with reduced rent and capital may be attracted and wealth created. Sanitary conditions may be ensured, gardens and beautiful homes seen, etc. (mixture of the features of both magnets).

THE TOWN-COUNTRY MAGNET

-This estate embraces an area of 6,000 acres that have been obtained by purchase in the open market at a cost of £40 an acre. The purchase money is supposed to have been raised on mortgage debentures.

-Four men are responsible for the estate. All ground rent shall be paid to the trustees that will give it to the Central Council to be used to create and maintained all necessary public works.

-A lot of employment will be offered and farmers will be able to open a new market for their produce close to their houses and manage it in their own way. The objective is to raise the standard of health and comfort of all true workers of whatever grade.

-The Garden City built near to the centre covers an area of 1,000 acres and might be of circular form.

- Six wonderful boulevards, each one of 120 feet wide, traverse the city from the centre to the outskirts, dividing it into 6 equal parts.

-In the centre there is a circular space containing about 5.3 acres, which is the garden. Surrounding this garden there are larger public buildings (town hall, main concert and lecture hall, theatre, library, museum, hospital). The rest of the space is a central park (145 acres). All around it is a wide glass arcade called the Crystal Palace, a ring full of stores. The space enclosed by the Crystal Palace has a big part used as a winter garden.

-Walking by the Crystal Palace, we cross Fifth Avenue, which has plenty of trees.

-There is a belt—a stretch of greenery—, the Grand Avenue. It is 420 feet wide. It divides that part of the town which lies outside Central Park into to belts.

-On the outer ring of the town there are factories, warehouses, dairies, markets and yards. All on the circle railway with encompasses the whole town. All the machinery is driven by electric energy, so pollution is lower and the cost of electricity is reduced.

-Beyond the circle railway we find the agricultural portions of the estate, held by various individuals in large farms, allotments and cow pastures.

-The population of this city is 30,000 inhabitants and about 2,000 more in the agricultural estate.

-There are 5,500 buildings and average size of 20 feet x 130 feet. Houses are built in concentric rings as the circular roads are called. The architecture and the design of the houses are varied.

-There is not an absolute monopoly (regarding water, lighting and telephone communication.

-There are various charitable and philanthropic institutions inside the estate supported and managed by public people. The people who migrate to the town have the right to enjoy the benefits of this city.

WILLIAM H. WHYTE – The design of spaces from "City: Rediscovering the Center" (1988)

By Eva Candela

"It takes a real work to create a lousy place"

William H. Whyte was an American town planner, organisational analyst, journalist and people-watcher. After his book about corporate culture *The Organization Man* (1956) which sold over two million copies, Whyte turned his attention to the study of human behaviour in urban settings. He published several books on the topic and even a film "Public Spaces, Human Spaces".

He was asked by the New York City Planning Commission to study the use of parks and plazas in the city in order to set some kind of guidelines for new developments seeking for a comprehensive design.

This project of urban research was called "The Street Life Project" and turned out to be an exceptional study of how people use urban spaces.

In order to carry out the project, Whyte set some hypotheses about the use people make of these kinds of spaces and, by means of analysing the time-lapse films of sixteen remarkable plazas and three small parks in New York as he tried to confirm or reject them.

Following this method, different factors were observed from a sociology point of view, because the main factor of study was people.

Space Rhythm

A public space like these one is strongly regulated by the time rhythm during the day, usually having the peaks at lunchtime. It is mainly during the off peak times, nevertheless the real character of the plaza is shown, and the preferences of the users can be clearly defined.

Gender

Whyte points out that women tend to be more fussy with space, more sensitive to what annoys them, so that this fact does not only form a way of recognising a well-managed space, but also tends to differenciate the space occupied by men and women within this plaza: women tend to sit in secluded spots while men tend to sit wherever they can be widely seen.

Meeting points

Some certain spots in these public spaces become meeting points as a result of a regular standing pattern. Some strategic spots are searched, for example near objects. There is also a shown tendency to stand with an inclination to the main flows of people.

By means of this pattern, we can observe that people movement give life and colour to the monochrome spaces.

Activity and Laziness

The best used plazas are sociable places, a great place not only for couples and groups of people, but also for individuals.

If the aim is to attract people to the place, a hard flow of people nearby is needed. So here the location is essential, like a prerequisite but never a guaranty of success. It was set that the ratio of distance of the people in the plazas was no more than three blocks, assuming that people walk, so we need a close strong pedestrian flow, as is usual down town.

From the same point of view, the importance of factors such as sun, aesthetic of the place, shape and amount of space were tested and revealed as not to be determining regarding the amount of people there.

Only the seating plan in the plaza was cleared as a strong are to draw people towards it, whatever the attractions of a space may be, it cannot call people to come and stay if there is no place to sit.

Now the different ways of sitting become the target of study.

Integral Seating

It is basic how the inherent features of the space become the most popular places to sit. Something as simple as designing ledges and other flat surfaces so that they can have a double function, hugely increasing the freedom of the users to sit at the front, at the back, to the side, in the sun, etc. It is sometimes a matter of preference than comfort.

The steps of the plaza are a great example as we can observe rows such as in a theatre in order to watch the spectacle of what happens on the streets.

Although only occurring in some public places, these inherent features are modified against human use with sharpened items to discourage people from sitting in them.

Sitting height

Related to the integral seating area, preference depends on the height of flat surfaces were studied, turning out to be just a matter of special conditions and even age.

It is important to make only take note this kind of surfaces adapted to the double use they will really have, but also it is essential to design the space to be comfortable and useful for everyone, even disabled people.

Benches and chairs

About what we said before about choices, there is the confrontation between benches and movable chairs.

HOW DO BENCHES FILL UP VS WHERE DO I PUT MY CHAIR?

It is a matter of being content with the free space or moving functionally. Fixed choices or freedom. No decision, no message, chairs imply personal messages with few moves.

But one of the freest choice surfaces is grass, which also has an added psychological benefit.

Location and relation

As we mentioned before, location is a determining factor for and active public space, but it is also a factor that cannot be improved.

The relation between the street and the space itself is as determining as the location of the space. The surrounding space is vital for the life of the interior space. For a space to function really well is it necessary to avoid physical division and to offer visual accessibility.

A good space invites people in, and the progression from the street to the interior is critical. Ideally, there should be no transition, no decision to enter; it should be something instinctive.

To sum up, it could be said that applying these suggestions, which take into deep consideration the real use of spaces, makes it easier to design good spaces. On the contrary and as Whyte says, it is much more difficult to create uncomfortable and inconvenient spaces.

CAMILLO SITTE – Author's Introduction, The Relationship Between Buildings, Monuments And Public Squares, The Enclosed Character of The Public Square" from **The Art of Building Cities (1889)**

By David Martínez

Camillo Sitte was an architect who was born in Vienna in 1843 and died in 1903.
He was an opponent of the modern movement, not about how to build buildings but in the way that they see the city.

He travelled all over Europe with the intention of finding out which qualities of classical cities are the ones which make them so attractive. For this reason, he carried out an analysis of the urban character of buildings, monuments and public squares in European cities such as Athens (Greece) and Pompeii (Italy), and he compared the creative beauty of these public squares with the sterility of these public spaces of modern cities, where urbanism is not just a technical task without any reference to art.

He criticises the regular and obsessive order of the new positions, comparing it with the irregularity of the medieval city. "A square should be like a room, it should form a closed space." For Sitte, a public Square was the hub around which all public life revolved, so it was surrounded by monumental buildings that closed the square. However, in modern cities, the square is surrounded by big streets and it's just a thoroughfare and overlooks the open space in the midst of such building. Moreover, the monuments now are located in isolated places, decontextualised from the surrounding buildings, making them lose the value they had before.

Migel Angel's David Sitte is an excellent example of the absurdity of modern thinking in terms of positioning of statues and monuments.

This statue was located in the square of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, but it was moved to a museum and enclosed under a dome.
According to Sitte: "a chosen spiritual preparation is needed to overcome the accumulation of deplorable circumstances of this prison for the mortals of artistic and effect, and finally to the full enjoyment of this sublime work.
In my opinion, our public life is very different from life in ancient cities. Furthermore, today's cities are much larger, which means the architect and developer has to focus on a scale of millions of people, which means focusing more on functionality than on aesthetics.

LE CORBUSIER- A Contemporary City from "The City Of Tomorow and its Planing" (1929)

By Julia Ruhkamp

"*A city made for speed is made for success*"

Le Corbusier: born: 6.10.1887 in Switzerland.
Painter, architect, city planner, philosopher, author. Died in August 1965

Important works:
-Domino System
-La Roche
-Vila Stein
-Vila Savoye
-Modulor
-Unité d'Habitation

As a city planner: use of technical analysis and the architectural synthesis idea of new urban structures
Purpose: regulate the city, otherwise it cannot survive - geometry is very important

>Contemporary City: It is not the city of the future, it is the city of today.
Plan Voisin> specific plan for Paris. Results shown in November 192 in Paris > shocked with surprise

Contemporary City:
City for 3million inhabitants
No existing city, new plan in green area-functions as a prototype
City: well organized; compact, rapid, lively, concentrated
The city needs right angles and straight road axes > rigidly symmetrical grid pattern [Geometry]

Basic principles:

1. We must de-congest the centres of our cities
2. We must augment their density
3. We must increase the means for getting about
4. We must increase the number of parks and open spaces

3 areas> city area, industry, garden city
Classified inhabitants: citizens: they live in city and work in it suburban dwellers: they work in an industrial area, live in garden cities mixed sort: they work in the city's financial district and live in garden cities

Residential blocks: 60.000 inhabitants
Garden cites: 2.000.000 inhabitants or more

Between the zones: protective zone
>allows for extension, reserved zone of woods and fields-fresh air reserve

City constructed vertically to increase open space
Centre: 24 skyscrapers with 60 floors each, housing 10.000 to 50.000 employees
Accounts for 40.000-60.000 inhabitants
> Centre for trade and business
Buildings on *pilotis*: place for garages and green areas under the buildings

Central place: 240x150 m > the brains of the city, centre of all the axes and roads; the only station; aero-taxis> landing platform (aerodrome)
In the parks around the skyscraper: cafés, bars etc.

Idea: more green areas for fresh air
In the city 95% of the ground area should be planted

Higher traffic for a fast life
Classify traffic: Heavy traffic, lighter traffic, fast traffic

> Roads: below-ground, ground-floor level, running north-south and east-west: two great axes

The "basement": here are the tubes which serve the city and the main arteries
The "sub-basement": here are the suburban lines running on a one-way loop
The "sub-sub-basement": here are the main lines (going north, south, east and west)

Crossroads are an enemy to traffic

All in all:
Le Corbusier analysed the city very accurately. He was ahead of his time> a city for a big population and high traffic. Plans were utopian but with important aspects for today's city planning.

FREDRICK L. OLMSTED – Public Parks and Enlargement of Towns from American Social Science Association. (1870)

By İrem Baş

Fredrick L. Olmsted (April 26, 1822 – August 28, 1903)
He was an American Landscape Architect, journalist, social critic and public administrator. He is popularly considered to be the father of American landscape architecture.

When the young Olmsted was almost ready to enter Yale College, as a graduate of Phillips Academy in 1838, sumac poisoning weakened his eyes so he gave up College plans. He worked as a seaman, a merchant, and a journalist.

In 1857, he was hired to make topographic discoveries for Egbert Viele's Central Park Project. After his project was rejected, he took part in the competition for Central Park with his architect partner Calvert Vaux, and their project won.
Olmsted's ideas were born from the anti-industrialist movement in this area.

Some of his projects:
-Central Park – New York City
-Prospect Park – Brooklyn (NYC)
-State Reservation – Niagara Falls
-Franklyn Park – Boston
-Planned Community – Atlanta
-Mount Royal Park – Quebec (Canada)

Public Parks and Enlargement of towns.

Social ills unique to urban places: disease, crime and general misery, the direct and indirect causes of which are pollution, narrowing of walkways, increasing vehicle traffic and removal of trees.

The "Walled city" is obsolete, towns can expand further out, pursuing more parks and density, and providing the "greatest possible contrast" from city life.

Trees had been planted along streets, Olmsted insists that the unnatural urban environment limits their health, and that separate plots of land should be set aside, especially on the edges of cities, where land is cheap and trees can grow without the risk of being destroyed.

When it comes to the creation of parks, he describes two types:

1) Exertive (sports, intellectual games like chess, etc.)
2) Receptive (passive leisure)
      2a) Gregarious (large crowds gathered where there is more anonymity)

2b) Neighbourly (smaller crowds that stimulate more interpersonal and intellectual activity)

To accommodate this, parks must be large, but this is not to diminish the importance of multiple smaller parks, which can make park access easier form any part of the city.

Olmsted also proposes the development of park extensions that radiate out, creating an interconnected network of urban greenery (or greenways). No resident would be further than a reasonable walk from one.

PETER HALL - The City of Theory from **"Cities of Tomorrow: an Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century". (2001) 3rd ed.**

By Carolina Sánchez

Peter Hall is a British Geographer and Town Planner who was born in London, England on March 19, 1932, and is still living today. He graduated from St. Catherine's with a Master's degree and doctorate. He went on to work as a lecturer at Birkbeck College and University of London. He devoted his life to analysing the economic, demographic, and cultural aspects of cities.

CITIES OF TOMORROW
Cities of Tomorrow (1988) is a critical history of the theory and practice of urban planning in the twentieth century, as well as an analysis of the social and economic problems and opportunities that gave rise to it. It also takes into account the abundant new literature published since it was first published, and views the 1990s from a historical perspective.

CITY OF THEORY
This article talks about Peter Hall's theory of the evolution of city planning, focusing on Europe and the USA. Planning has been consistently broken into three aspects: design excellence, mathematical modelling, and practical application. The struggle between these aspects has defined city planning for centuries, and it has been strongly influenced by the baby boom of the 1950s. The 1960s, however, was home to the idea that planning could no longer occur without talking to the people. The struggle between these aspects is still present today.

INTRODUCTION
Hall points out that before World War II, city planning was defined as the craft of physical planning.
Professors who had been educated as architects and other design professionals both taught and wrote. They taught students to prepare physical plans, architectural drawing extended to a city scale. Once a plan was complete on paper, the early planning theorists believed that a city could be built just as a house is built from architectural drawings.

PLANNING AND THE ACADEMY: PHILADELPHIA, MANCHESTER, CALIFORNIA, PARIS, 1955-1987
So city planning was divided into two fields: schools of planning, obsessed with the theory of the subject, and the offices of local authorities and consultants, concerned with the everyday business of planning in the real world. This division at first was linked, but then in time it began to separate.

LET US GO BACK IN TIME TO THE PREHISTORY OF ACADEMIC CITY PLANNING (1930-1955)

In Britain, William Hesketh endowed his local University of Liverpool with a Department of Civic Design, and the first professor Stanley Adshead created a new journal called Town Planning review, in which theory and good practice joined. The Town Planning Institute was founded in 1914.

The important point about these was that they started from professional need, so they were covered with the professional styles of these design-based professions. The job of the planners was to make plans, and to develop codes to enforce these plans…

Planners acquired a synthetic ability not through abstract thinking, but by doing real jobs (by intuition, and then by reflection). The whole process was very direct, based on a single-shot approach survey, analysis, and then design.

So there was a need for a spatial hierarchy of related plans from regional to local.

It was a good age of planning because the planner was free from political interference, and sure of his technical capacities. However, planning had to deal with the outside world (change of population, depressed economy), and planning interventions seldom appeared(except for example if there was a war).

THE SYSTEMS REVOLUTION

During the 1950s, in every industrial country there was an unexpected baby boom. It created instant demands for maternity wards and child-care clinics, as well as needs for schools and playgrounds.

There was also a great post-war economic boom, which brought new investment in factories and offices. The boom generated affluence; these countries became high mass-consumption societies, with demands for durable consumer goods.

So the result everywhere was that the pace of urban development and urban change began to accelerate extremely fast.

These demands in themselves would force the system to change. In the mid-1950s, an intellectual revolution in urban and regional social studies took place, providing planners with intellectual baggage.

Some geographers and industrial economists discovered the works of German theorists of location, and got influences from them, starting to defend the dogma of logical positivism (it was a movement in Western philosophy that defended verificationism, and the empirical and verifiable sources were meaningful, valid statements were the ones supported by empiric sources).

Between 1953 and 1957, an almost instant revolution occurred in human geography: a new academic discipline uniting the new geography was created and began to enter the curricula of planning schools.

The subject changed from a kind of craft, based on the teachers' personal knowledge of a rudimentary collection of concepts about the city, into amounts of precise information which was processed, monitored and modified. So cities and regions were viewed as complex systems. Planning was seen as a continuous process of control and monitoring, derived from the new science of cybernetics.

Therefore, systems analysts who had been educated as economists felt planners could and should use quantitative and exact methodologies to plan urban transportation,

utility, or other 'systems' on an ongoing basis. Computers at this time were quite new and hard to use, so they were pioneers. System theorists thought plans should be mathematical models rather than end-state architectural drawings.

This heavily engineering-based approach took a standardised sequence: first, explicit goals and objectives were set, then inventories were taken of the state of the system, from this, models were derived to establish these relation in precise mathematical form, then, forecast were made based on the relationships obtained from the models, then alternative solution could be designed and evaluated to choose an option, and finally the network was implemented so it could be continually monitored and the system could be modified as necessary.

So for the first time, the engineering-based approach invaded the traditional land-use planner.

Spatial interaction models could generate a resulting pattern of activities and land uses.

This involved more than computer knowledge, but a different concept of planning. Instead of setting the objectives from the start, they were constantly adapted and changed. This planning process was independent of the thing that was planned. This process was based on goal-setting, forecasting of changes in the outside world, alternative solutions, the costs and benefits and continuous monitoring.

But this revolution was not complete at all: many of these systems soon resulted in concrete proposals for fixed investments. The planning system was seen as active, and the city system was passive, the political system was benign and receptive to planners' expert advice. The system planner was involved in 2 activities: as social scientists (observing and analysing reality) and as designers (acting on reality to change it).

In urban planning, there was not just one problem and one objective, but many, perhaps contradictory, so it was difficult to move from general goals to specific ones and not all of them were perceived. Also, the systems to be analysed did not exist, and costs and benefits were difficult to quantify.

THE SEARCH FOR A NEW PARADIGM

From the philosophical right came a series of theoretical and empirical studies from American political scientists, arguing that crucial urban decisions were made within a pluralist political structure in which no one had total knowledge or power.

The studies did at least suggest that planning in actuality was a very long way from the cool rational.

By the late 1960s, because of the civil rights movement and war on poverty, there were protests against Vietnam War and the free campus speech movement, which proved that systems panning had done nothing to improve the condition of the cities.

So the reaction was to call on the planners themselves to turn the tables, and to practice planning by becoming advocate planners. They would help inform the public of the alternatives: force public planning agencies to compete for support; help critics to generate plans that were better than the official ones…

A third model was set out (the planner as a disjointed instrumentalist, and the planer advocate): the planner as informal coordinator and catalyst, and then a fourth: probabilistic planner, who uses new information systems to facilitate debate and improve decision-making.

All are assumed to work within a pluralist world, with very many different competing groups and interests, where the planner has at most only limited power or influence.

Several historical factors contributed to this change: planners and politicians discovered the continued deprivation of the poor inner city, then it was seen that the areas where these people lived were suffering from depopulation and deindustrialization; in consequence, planners progressively moved away from the merely physical and into the social and the economic scope.

The change went like this: in 1955, the newly graduated planner was at the drawing board, producing a diagram of desired land uses; in 1965 s/he was analysing computer output of traffic patterns; in 1975, the same person was talking late into the right with community groups, in the attempt to organise against hostile forces in the world outside.

The planner could still offer specialized knowledge on planning laws and procedures, or on how to achieve a particular design solution; though he might not have enough of either of these skills to be particularly useful.

As a result, by the middle 1970s planning had reached the stage of a paradigm crisis. It had been theoretically useful to distinguish the planning process as something separate from what is planned.

So summarise, normative theorists felt city planning was too important to leave to elitist designers or technocratic systems analysts, and they were concerned with who the city was being built for and how planning might benefit poor and powerless people rather than focusing on design excellence or elegant mathematical modelling.

THE MARXIST ASCENDANCY

During the 1970s, Marxist theorists developed a coherent body of urban theories based on class conflict. Like the early neoclassical economists, Marx had been remarkably uninterested in the question of spatial location.

Marxist theorists felt updated class analysis was more appropriate, so Marxist urban theory dominated academic discourse throughout the 1970s greatly. Some geographers helped to explain urban growth and change in terms of circulation of capital, others developed sociologically-based theories…

At the same time, a Marxian view of planning emerged in the English-speaking world, based on a Marxist theory. It states that the structure of the capitalist city itself, including its land use and activity patterns, is the result of capital in pursuit of profit. The objective of this is to facilitate continued capital accumulation.

Capitalist class is not homogenous, it is made up of different fractions of capital that may be divergent, and complex alliances may be formed in consequence.

The reality, Marxists argue, is that viewed objectively, planning theory is nothing other than a creation of the social forces that bring planning into existence.

Marxian logic is strangely quietist; it suggests that the planner retracts from planning altogether into the academic ivory tower.

The problem is that all practical prescriptions come out as good old-fashioned democratic common sense, listening carefully to the people, involving the less-organized groups, educating citizens in how to join in, supplying information and making sure people know how to get it.

THE WORLD OUTSIDE THE TOWER: PRACTICE RETREATS FROM THEORY

Hall ends his tour of planning theory with some critical comments on the current divorce between planning theory and practice, between the Marxist theoreticians of the academia and the1980s anti-theorists.

Many academics did still try to teach real-life planning through simulation of real world problems. As professional education of any kind becomes more fully absorbed by the academy, as its teachers become more thoroughly socialized within it, then its norms and values will become ever more pervasive, and the gap between teaching and practice will progressively widen.

Perhaps, it might be argued, that was the practitioner's fault; perhaps we too need fundamental science, if we are later to enjoy its technological applications.

The relationship between planning and the academy had gone bad, and that is the major unresolved question that must now be addressed.

So to summarise and finish, he calls for an improved, reciprocal relation between the two: theory that is informed by and is relevant to planning practice, and planning practice informed and improved by theory.