

Urban Planning in the Americas in the 20th Century

Veranstalter: Anke Orllepp, Institute of North American History, University of Cologne; Katharina Schembs, Department of Iberian and Latin American History, University of Cologne

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Bericht von: Katharina Walus / Maria Wiegel, Department of History, University of Cologne

The international conference took a closer look at urban planning from a historical point of view, whilst focusing on the entire American continent. The idea for this conference sprang from the observation that cities in the Americas face similar problems and challenges nowadays, such as poverty, mobility and sustainability. With its focus on urban planning, the conference aimed at applying the spatial and material turn to the history of the Americas, while displaying similarities – such as colonial roots or being seen as blank spaces where innovation could take place – and differences – stemming from their asynchronous industrial developments – in the different regions of the continent, while also showing the continuous relationship between the Americas and Europe. Those differences, however, as was pointed out by presentations in this conference, did not prevent interaction and cooperation between urban planners throughout the continent in aiming at providing cohabitations for humans, animals, and nature.

Overall, the conference proved that urban planning is a process, which is shaped by relationships and contacts, but also by historical and political developments. Using the example of Columbia, MARC HEALEY (Storrs) laid out how the necessity to rebuild cities after wars has provided new blank spaces for innovation and the possibility to experiment with new forms of planning, building and living. Therefore, not only the experiments with and experience of the reshaped spaces is a significant marker of a new era of planning and building cities, but also the formation of larger groups of experts from the workshop, library and university. This collaboration also

enables networks of architects, planners and institutions across the Americas.

ALEJANDRA MONTI's (Rosario) graphs were excellent in illustrating the huge networks between institutions and actors from all over the continent. Her comparison of the Ford Foundation's sponsorship in Argentina and Chile showed how cities were built by networks and, at the same time, built networks in return. Not only did institutions, such as the Ford Foundation, enable the development of such networks. They also made the development possible in the first place, as Monti pointed out.

The influential character of international institutions, as DANIELA ORTIZ DOS SANTOS (Frankfurt am Main) emphasized, plays an important role in the development of cities in the Americas, but can also interfere with the urban planners' own work and representation of different points of view. Using the example of the UNESCO, she showed on the one hand that regional ideas can be brought together, reach a wider audience globally, and be integrated into global developments by the effort of international institutions. On the other hand, the example also demonstrated how geopolitics in Latin America influenced the view on urban planning, especially in the second half of the 20th Century. It was stressed that institutions were interested in spectacularizing Latin American developments in Europe and the US and in propagating European and US-American ideas with their publications. Moreover, especially during the Cold War, planners were aware of the contemporary international situation and often refrained from self-experienced displacement and international influences in their texts. In particular, the importance of mobility still needs to be studied in many ways.

Another observation Monti made was that there are links between politics, ideologies, and urban planning. Using the example of Cuba, MANUEL CUADRA (Kassel/Lima) showed how Cuban history shaped and reshaped Cuban architecture. This example, again, demonstrated how not only ideologies and domestic politics, but also a country's political allies, influence the cities' (re-)organization.

In his keynote lecture, ADRIÁN GORE-

LIK (Buenos Aires) also demonstrated the importance of national and international politics, and political systems, which ultimately led to Cuba being temporarily excluded from Latin American planning during the Cold War. He highlighted that Cuban developments remained important despite their limitations and pointed out the relevance of networking among different actors.

LIZABETH COHEN (Cambridge, Mass.) took up in a second keynote lecture the observation that networks are built through contact and relationships in her depiction of influences on architects and urban planners around Ed Logue. Logue's own experiences in India and cooperation with colleagues who worked in Latin America inspired his projects in the US, made him aware of the urgency of social inclusion, and, in the aftermath, influenced Latin-American planning.

The conference continuously demonstrated how networks are formed by building cities and how, in return, these networks shaped and re-shaped cities. In the same way as cities are shaped by their histories and political and social ideologies, architecture takes part in the shaping and reshaping, not only of cities, but also of histories, as ANKE ORTLEPP (Cologne) pointed out in her presentation on New Brutalism in Britain, the US and Brazil. She not only showed how New Brutalism helped constructing social structures, but also that it was inspired by social problems. She proved how New Brutalism symbolized hope and aspiration in these countries' post-war cultures and how, while similar in the buildings following democratic ideals, New Brutalism symbolized different societies in the different countries. While in Britain it symbolized the welfare state, in the US it became a symbol against urban crises and structural change, yet in Brazil it was a form of resistance against political oppression.

From JOAQUÍN MEDINA WARMBURG's (Karlsruhe) presentation we can take away that already in the early 20th century, mobility (even though in the case of the Jewish German architect Alfred Gellhorn it was forced mobility) had an impact on the discourse on architecture and urban planning, which emerged during the 1950s (although we know little

about the perception and reception of Gellhorn's work in Argentina).

Warmburg's observations were taken up by LUCIO PICCOLI (Berlin) who displayed the transatlantic transfer of architectural knowledge and practice using the example of the German architect Werner Hegemann. With his lectures in the US and in Argentina, Hegemann introduced German architectural and planning discourses to the Americas.

Globalization as a major influence on architecture and urban planning in the Americas was further proven by GUILLERMO JAJAMOVICH (Buenos Aires) and GABRIEL SILVESTRE (Sheffield) who compared the implication of the Barcelona model in the cities of Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro. Thereby they showed how experiences in Latin America reconstruct the Barcelona model, how epistemic communities of planning and design practice emerged through professional-academic networks, and how urban strategic planning was enabled through political-governmental channels. Their cooperation itself, which emerged out of the realization that the actors and structures of their researched programs overlapped, is a great example of the huge network constructed by urban planners, architects, and academics.

Tracing the use of these European and US models in Latin American urban planning in the 1960s and 1970s, KATHARINA SCHEMBS (Cologne) illustrated the Latin-Americanization of this framework over time. She made evident that learning processes and cooperation did not only take place in a North-South divide, but that regional and South-South cooperation is also of great importance. The increasing classification of Latin American cities as Third World Cities was aptly described, which in turn had the effect of drawing the attention of Latin American planners to Third World projects and bringing South-South cooperation more and more into the focus of urban planning. The importance of international networks, which should not be reduced to the Americas, can thus be gleaned from her contribution.

Nevertheless, the relevance of the Barcelona model for Latin American cities demonstrated the European influence on the Americas beyond their independence.

BRYANT SIMON (Philadelphia) proved this using the example of public bathrooms in the US. Inspired by the European role model, American public bathrooms soon became a site and location of power and protection. Thereby they invited to and excluded from basic necessities, the public sphere and social infrastructures, which leads to the question: who is worth of being included?

TED RUTLAND (Montreal) also asked this question in his analysis of the development of the Canadian city Halifax. He concluded that, while human life has been improved in white communities, the very same improvements worsened public life in black communities, leading to the question of who is being included in this idea of the improvement of human life; who is even considered as human? By comparing two projects from two different centuries, Rutland further proved that this mode of operation did not change up until now.

That segregation and inequality are common aspects of housing, especially in fast, uncontrolled and illegally growing cities, was also demonstrated by KATHRIN GOLDA-PONGRATZ (Barcelona), who used Lima as an example of the British architect John F. C. Turner and his writings. She proved that despite decades of effort, the integration of the local population into housing projects was and is a constantly contentious and still relevant issue.

Studying dam building, FREDERIK SCHULZE (Münster) showed the close connection between modernization processes, economic and political developments, and urban planning in Latin America during the Cold War. In addition to typifying the different kinds of cities associated with economic modernization processes – such as company towns – he also illustrated the social segregation and ignorance of the needs of local marginalized working-class populations. The consideration of US expertise in Latin America was mostly based on strategic decisions taken by the government and did not eliminate the problem of inequality, but rather reproduced older structures which had favored the middle class and elites.

With its international and interdisciplinary presenters, the conference demonstrated the

variety of influences on urban planning and that, as Cohen emphasized, there is not one perspective by one national planner. Rather there are many perspectives, planners, and points of contact, which shape and re-shape cities and knowledge. Learning processes do not take place unidirectionally but represent a reciprocal system that is formed by displacement and mobility. The networks taking part in building cities are, at the same time, built through building cities. Networks of planners are particularly important elements for the exchange of ideas at different levels. Nevertheless, networks, just like international organizations, also reach their limits when it comes to the exchange of ideas, joint learning processes, and the resistance they experience.

Furthermore, despite all the differences in urban planning in the various regions of America, the problems of social segregation and unequal treatment seem to be similar and continue to beset cities to this day.

Conference overview:

Anke Ortlepp (Abteilung für Nordamerikanische Geschichte, Historisches Institut, Universität zu Köln) / Katharina Schembs (Iberische und Lateinamerikanische Abteilung, Historisches Institut, Universität zu Köln): Welcome and Introduction

Panel I – Actors and Institutions

Marc Healey (University of Connecticut, Storrs): CINVA, the Interamerican Housing and Planning Center

Alejandra Monti (Universidad Nacional de Rosario): Two Methods for Technical Assistance. The Activity of the Ford Foundation in Chile and Argentina. 1960-1973

Joaquín Medina Warmburg (Karlsruher Institut für Technologie): 8,66: On Alfred Gellhorn's Concept of Buenos Aires as an Architectural System

Manuel Cuadra (Universität Kassel / Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería, Lima): State Planning and Architecture in Post-revolutionary Cuba

Keynote Lectures

Lizabeth Cohen (Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.): An Americas Story: Hemi-

spheric Perspectives on Postwar Urban Renewal

Adrián Gorelik (Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, Buenos Aires) : Conjectures on an Absence. Classic Latin American planning, seen in the Mirror of Cuba

Panel II – Urban Transformations

Ted Rutland (Concordia University, Montreal): Displacing Blackness: Planning, Power, and Race in Twentieth-Century Halifax

Bryant Simon (Temple University, Philadelphia): The Rise and Fall of the Public Bathroom in the United States

Guillermo Jajamovich (Universidad de Buenos Aires) / Gabriel Silvestre (University of Sheffield): Barcelona made in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro: Investigating the Relational Production of Urban Policies

Panel III – Architectural Styles

Lucio Piccoli (Freie Universität Berlin): Optically Constructed Space and Artistic City Building: Notes on Werner Hegemann's Understanding of the Grid Plan of the Cities in the Americas

Anke Ortlepp (Universität zu Köln): The New Brutalism in Great Britain, the United States, and Brazil

Panel IV – Mutual Perceptions and Exchange

Daniela Ortiz dos Santos (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main): UNESCO Transatlantic Affairs: Repositioning Latin American Architecture, 1966-1981

Frederik Schulze (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster): Large Dams and Urban Planning in Latin America's Cold War

Katharina Schembs (Universität zu Köln): From European and US-American Models to Third World Cities: Urban Planning in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s

Panel V – Informal Urbanism and Segregation

Felipe Hernández (University of Cambridge): Rethinking the Informal City: Critical Perspectives from Latin America

Kathrin Golda-Pongratz (Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, Barcelona): The Evolu-

tion of Self-Help Housing in Latin America: Revisiting and Reactivating the Ideas of John F. C. Turner in Peru

Final Discussion / Roundtable

Chair: Anke Ortlepp and Katharina Schembs

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