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## PARTICIPATORY URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC POLICY

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### ABSTRACT

*Public policy comprises means, methods and ways used by authorities to achieve desired objective. In this paper we analyse the urban planning as part of public policy and try to establish when public policy is considered the democratic process. In that regard we explore a general theory of urbanisation by highlighting the important stages of its development in a multi-party market economy in the US and a one-party economy in the former Yugoslavia. Later, we analyze the situation of public policy and urban planning in modern Croatia and Split, and compare it with the current situation in Europe. The emphasis is put on the following: democratic process of urban planning, acceptance of urban plans by the wider society, social balance of urban plans and increasing potential of well-functioning of cities.*

*In the concluding part the development of contemporary services of participatory urban planning and community informatics is considered with an aim of improving the communication between city authorities and inhabitants at lower cost.*

*Keywords: participatory urban planning, public policy*

### INTRODUCTION

In this paper we analyse the urban planning as part of public policy in both, multi party system and one-party system, and try to establish when public policy is considered the democratic process.

### PUBLIC POLICY - DEFINITION

Public policy is an action of government and other public authorities implemented through legislation, programs and activities. "Public policy consists of means, methods, and principles that the government chooses for an attainment of desired ends. In a democratic form of government public policy develops

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through an expression of the popular will. To a considerable degree, the popular will, as ascertained by public officials, is determined as a result of pressures. Pressures come from many conflicting interests and must be weighed in the light of community values with which public policy is concerned. Oftentimes these values are highly subjective. Planning attempts to introduce a degree of objectivity into this realm of subjective judgments, “(Webster, 1958: 5). Part of planning, which refers to the physical development of a city is urban planning.

## **RESEARCH GOAL AND COVERAGE**

We explore does public policy in developed democracies always includes public opinion and whether the public policy in Yugoslavia, despite the one-party system remains undemocratic. Our case study is Split III, an example of planning and construction of a city region for 50,000 inhabitants that had started in 1968 and almost continually going up to date.

We examine the part of public policy that relates to urban planning and start our research in the second half of the 19th century when Idefonso Cerdà writes his General Theory of Urbanization and coins the word *urbanism* and *urbanization*.

Since public policy develops in parallel with development of a city we briefly review the development of cities in the US where the complexity of the phenomenon is greater, carried out in a shorter time. We single out the essential stages of public policy relating to urban planning, to the time when the former Yugoslavia introduces self-management in 1950's. At the end of 1960's an idea of constructing Split III was created. We conclude our research with analysis of state of public policy and urban planning in today Croatia and Split and compare it with the current situation in Europe.

## **GOVERNMENTAL FRAMEWORK OF PLANNING IN THE US: 1800 - 1960**

In the United States (US), few cities are created prior to the year 1800. Then, only 4% of the population lived in cities, which had more than 8000 inhabitants. During the 19th century a large immigration from Europe took place. In only 10 years some cities increase their population by 80%<sup>1</sup>.

By 1890 not a single major city in the US doesn't have the appropriate infrastructure nor required services. “The Brooklyn Bridge completed in 1883 by the Roeblings ushered in an era in the building of super-bridges. Before it was completed the New York traffic problem had become worse than it was at the time construction was started, “(Don Martindale in Weber, 1958: 13). The City is

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<sup>1</sup> Detroit and Milwaukee, Columbus and Cleveland, twin cities that grow by 80%, (Don Martindale in Weber, 1958:12)

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in need of everything in unlimited quantities. US Constitution is adopted in 1787 and the federal government constituted. Values, prevailing in different communities in the US, as well as government organizations and responsibility, change in several phases. Public policy becomes socially sensitive: „Since the turn of the century, the role of the government has very definitely shifted in the direction of providing a positive and creative force in the life and development of the community”, (Marshall in Webster, 1958:12). Each state within the US can use federal laws-models, in order to develop an organizational structure, procedures, practices and concepts in planning customizing own situation, with the study of practices and experiences of others. The organization and content of planning have evolved over time, from civic clubs for progress, civic committees for planning and independent planning commissions, to the official department of planning, as part of the administrative structure of government. At the end of 1950's state planning agencies implement the planning programs headed by semi-autonomous commission, drawn up by citizens. General opinion on citizens participation in the process of city comprehensive planning is that it is invaluable, but in an advisory instead, until then, mandatory role, (according to Webster, 1958, 77-92). “Planning in the democratic process is a citizen responsibility as well as an official one,” (Webster, 1958:97). The success of the program requires that more attention be paid to people than to the mechanics of planning, is the opinion expressed in 1952 in the newsletter of the American Society of planners (in Webster, 1957: 6): “Too often planning has had a bad name because it lost sight of human beings it was supposed to benefit. The plan for social betterment was conceived by experts, “sold” to reluctant citizens, and carried into action by paid employees. But planning has a different meaning and outcome when people take precedence over blueprint.” And Webster says (Webster, 1957:6): “Unless the public has been kept informed during the period when policy is being formulated, it is seldom possible to create a favorable climate of public opinion sufficient to overcome pressures and combat opposition at the time the policy decision is to be made.”

“Planning, properly conceived, serves only as an arm to these political representatives to aid them in gathering, evaluating, and interpreting essential data to serve as a basis for making intelligent policy decisions. Under this concept, the planning function is compatible with the policy making responsibilities of either democratic or nondemocratic societies,” (Webster, 1957:8).

We conclude that in the US in the 1950's, in the context of urban planning as part of public policy awareness of the need of

- democratic planning process of the city
- acceptance of urban plans by the general public
- the social balance of urban plans
- increasing the potential of city well-functioning, existed.

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### **SELF – MANAGED FRAMEWORK OF PLANNING IN SFRY: 1950 - 1990 - CASE STUDY OF SPLIT III**

In Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) the Constitutional Act of 1953 introduced the self-management and social ownership, a special form of collective ownership, and withering away of the state and the state property. The state transferred many powers to the self-governing bodies in the field of education, culture, science, health and social care. The businesses received the right to governance, which resulted in a turnover of goods socially owned and the formation of the market framed with the plan. This period, from 1950 to 1965, represents the period of the greatest economic ascent, and also the growth of cities.

We conclude that the public policy of SFRY in the 1950's through withering away of the state, self-management and the right to governance introduced elements of democracy in the one-party system.

Urban planning, according to Mušič (1976 in 1980: 288) at the time did not lag behind the US, " Those years, sometime after 1958, meant new, richer, development period for our urbanism. This is not a specific period only for us, because everywhere in the world during those years, or slightly before this period, urbanism began to be regarded as a true social discipline, that among other things combine aesthetic shaping undertakings with scientific research, namely in its large range of architecture (urban design) up to the planned regulation of the region (the wider scope area of the city). Mušič (1972 in 1980: 207) on the planning and related public policy also says: "That moment, when we would start, for example, to describe the decision-making power enjoyed by sectors as carriers of investment decisions or municipalities as carriers of political decision-making in the region, we would probably learn that many of our problems are actually problems of spatial planners of the world as well. I also know that myths of spatial planners of the world are our myths."

In such a system the Split III programming for the urban design state competition brings a new approach. At the time a wider society – with its specific organizations like city councils of culture and education and social and health affairs, Split organization of architects, a city chamber of economy, political organizations, Split construction enterprise and the like – participate with data and proposals. Particular surveys, on subjects like number of apartments, their contents and equipment for single investor, or who wants to buy a parking lot in public garages and on which location on the site, are carried out and their results implemented in the programming based on which the state competition is announced.

Authors of the winning design are Mušič, Bežan and Starc, from Ljubljana, Slovenia. Their proposal is the base for drawing up of the urban development

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program and plan as well. This process is carried out on the basis of self-management - discussions and coordination. The same procedure takes place at a later stage of construction. All companies and organizations in Split are invited to submit information and make expert opinion, which are then placed in Split III urban development program, especially for healthcare small clinics, schools, kindergartens and playgrounds (\*\*\* 1970: 2). The city planners gave the final form of the program which is then voted for by the Split Municipality Assembly. Public policy, especially urban planning, in frame of which Split III occurred leads to the conclusion that the project was organized through

- democratic process of city planning,
- acceptance of urban plans by the narrow public,
- socially balanced urban development plan,
- increasing the potential of city well-functioning

### **GOVERNMENTAL FRAMEWORK OF PLANNING IN RC: 1990-2015**

Republic of Croatia (RC) Constitution and the two key laws define the framework for development of public policy and urban planning since 1990. Croatian Constitution enacted in December of 1990 abandoned the system of public ownership and nationalized all social assets. The Law on Amendments to the Law on Construction Land (NN 53/90) abolished the social ownership over the construction land. The Law on compensation for the property confiscated during the Yugoslav communist rule (NN 92/96), unused construction land returned to the original owners at their request. Other laws did not introduced instruments that would allow planning and delivery of facilities for public and social purposes.

At the end of 2005 the General Urban Plan (GUP) of the city of Split was adopted. In the introductory text authors state „The basic problem is the inability to derive plans that create spaces for public and social purposes. The reasons are twofold regime to dispose of the land, and the differences between needs and resources which cities have available for the provision of land and regulation of public spaces, social facilities and infrastructure systems."

In the context of the current legislation in Croatia citizens have the right to express their comments and suggestions to the plan posterior to the authors of urban plan explanations, solutions, guidelines and measures that are an integral part of an urban plan. The possible results are minor changes and additions to the urban plan that do not undermine the basic concept. From this we can conclude that the aforementioned public policy and urban planning, which relate to the procedure described:

- does not democratize the process of urban planning,
- does not increase the acceptance of urban plans,
- does not encourage the social balance of urban plans,
- does not increase the potential of city well-functioning

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## **FRAMEWORK OF PLANNING IN EUROPE IN 21 CENTURY**

Communication between city authorities and the population in the 21<sup>st</sup> is of major importance. If good it provides for greater efficiency and transparency. Transparency is achieved by the availability of relevant documents and information that can be achieved by Internet development. "An efficient and sustainable urban planning is only possible when participating in the planning of the greatest possible number of people." (Benner, Eichorn, at all, 2009: 431) For this purpose, it is necessary to design data models and formats that will suit their exchange and the urban planning, but must also offer the ability to access data via the Internet, like the model tested in Hamburg in 2008. With this kind of technology, important step in the democratization process of adopting plans and pro-active citizen participation and cooperation at an early stage of the design concept can be provided and

- democratic process of city planning,
- acceptance of urban plans to a greater extent,
- increasing the social balance of urban plans,
- increasing the potential of city well-functioning, can be achieved

## **CONCLUSION**

Cities need to be managed by adoption of modern and democratic form of cooperation between residents and authorities. Urban planning can achieve its full potential through public policy that would in the most logical way solve many functional imbalances of life in the city. "The way we design our streets, open spaces, public buildings and neighborhoods will give shape to urban society for a long time to come", (Gehl in Rogers and Power 2000: 230).

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