

Urban policies, city management and fast urban growth in Argentine cities

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1. Introduction

Since the beginning of 20th Century Argentina has been an urbanized country: 52,7 % of urban population in 1914. This rate continues growing until 2010 when reaches 91 %. This condition of high urbanized Latin American country has been shared with the other two countries of the South Cone of Latin America, Chile and Uruguay.

Country	1970	1995	2010
Argentina	78 %	88 %	91 %
Chile	73 %	84 %	88 %
Uruguay	82 %	92 %	94 %
Latin America	57 %	73 %	78 %

Table 1: Urban population in Argentina and other LA countries – 1970 – 2010 (Demographic Bulletin N° 63 – ECLAC)

Briefly, the main moments of fast urban growth in Argentina are the end of 19th Century – beginning of 20th Century due to immigration to the biggest cities (Buenos Aires, Rosario, Mendoza and Córdoba); the 50's – 60's due to industrialization growth, also in the biggest cities (Buenos Aires, Rosario, Córdoba); and the 70's – 80's due to the development of Patagonian cities (Neuquén, Bariloche, Ushuaia), Buenos Aires conurbation and other cities as result of inner migrations.

During the last decades the most important cities of Argentina such as Buenos Aires, Rosario and Córdoba have slowed down its demographic dynamics. Anyway both first are the cities where the most outstanding changes have been registered during the 90's, while Rosario and Córdoba the cities where more innovations in city management have been introduced.

In this paper current trends in urban growth and city management will be explained considering the three recent moments of contemporary Argentina: neoliberal period, crisis and economy and state recovery. The first moment is the 80's and mainly the 90's, the last decade of a decaying and stagnant economy –the so called neo liberal economy– which in Argentina meant de-industrialization, welfare state destruction and people impoverishment. The second moment is the crisis period, the end of neo liberal rules with its corresponding economy blow up, political unrest and the sudden end of the elected national authorities. This was a period of three years of complete country stagnation. The third moment goes from new elected authorities until actual situation. This means economic fast growth (at "Chinese rates" until 2010), strong state empowerment and fast urban growth despite a low demographic growth.

The paper discusses about the housing and urban policies implemented in major cities and its effects in city expansion considering that social inclusion and sustainable development should be the north of an urban policy. According with these principles new approaches in urban planning are described.

2. The nineties, the apogee of neo-liberal policies

In this decade, after the first government of the recovered democracy, the national authorities, which at that time also ruled the capital city, implemented a liberal economy that almost destroy the state organization. According with this policy, state properties and enterprises were sold out. Meanwhile in other cities new ways of urban management were being explored. It was the case of Córdoba which started with the first attempts in strategic planning and local decentralization. Rosario also developed these innovative proposals to go out of the deep crisis that was affecting it.

2.1 Mega projects in 20th Century

The developing of Puerto Madero is a clear expression of the links between urban developers, strategic planning and local authorities. The approach of Puerto Madero project are Anglo-Saxon harbour experiences based in the agreements between public and private actors with the purpose of inducing private investments private from public actions. The urban transformations in Olympic Barcelona also had an important role in the management of the project.

This harbour for Buenos Aires started to be built in 1897 and was characterized by its red brick depots. After the 30's a new harbour for the city on another place of the river coast city was built and this one (known as Puerto Madero) was abandoned for more than fifty years until in 1989, and in accordance with the policy of reducing the State and privatizing services, it was rescued thinking about the benefits that could be get from a large real estate project.

Key factors of this mega project are linked to transformations in urban management more than in urban design as points out Jajamovich (2009). For developing the project a state enterprise was created (Puerto Madero Corporation) with the task of designing a master development plan considering the new infrastructure to incorporate and the real estate development with participation of national and foreigner capitals. For this, the sale of all this area of the public domain was sold. This was the most expressive example of capital friendly planning according with the economic policies that the national government was implementing; a good example of entrepreneurs' planning, as Peter Hall (1996) says.

All revenues from this mega project were invested in the same district, mainly in infrastructure to expedite private investments; nothing was assigned for other sectors of the city. After selling the land, the public enterprise contributed to increase plus values to the new landowners. With all this, Puerto Madero is today one of the city's most exclusive districts of Buenos Aires and has become one of its most important tourist attractions.



Figure 1: Recent real estate developments in Puerto Madero, Buenos Aires

2.2 Local innovations

During the last decade of 21st Century local authorities in Rosario introduced city management innovations and new policies according following experiences from other cities, mainly Barcelona. These new policies, approaches and instruments have signed local city management until now. They were summarized by Gamba (2011) as follows:

- *Decentralization*: this policy was used with the intention of modernizing the local administration to achieve a closer and participative government in order to solve imbalances produced between the different sectors of the city.
- *Urban Marketing*: developed with the purpose of attracting investments and producing wealth, based on the location of new enterprises and on the generation of tourism through the rescue of geography, architecture and the private spaces of the city.
- *Strategic planning*: the strategic plan appears as a new instrument that facilitates the management of a city in times of change and as a process where the initiatives of the public and private actors to enhance the development of a city can be developed.
- *Socio-spatial integration*: actions to coordinate public works on infrastructure (water, sewers, pavement, etc.) together with social components (education, work, health) and legal (land tenure) particularly thought for the population of shanty towns.
- *Public – private agreement*: as the most important possibility for the "positive" transformation of the city and this way to generate a new "image of city".

3. Rebuilding a devastated country

After the deep economic and political crisis, the new elected government focused in reorganizing the state structure, promoting economic development and attending the most vulnerable sectors of the population. The effects of the economic growth in the cities were seen quickly. A national policy of construction of new housing and the transference of capital surpluses from the agricultural sector to the real estate one led to a fast process of transformation and urban development in the most important cities of the country. National and local policies to improve the conditions of urban life of the neediest sectors of the population were implemented. Despite the progresses achieved, new problems emerged deepening the process of fragmentation of urban space. It is a period of contradictory urban policies regarding inner transformation and urban expansion.

3.1 National and municipal policies for housing and urban development in the new Century

21st Century is characterized by a new elected government in Argentina with an economy and social policy very different from the previous unfinished government, while in Rosario the elected majors belonged always to the same political organization where the socialist party is the leading force.

Since 2003, the national government has tried to modify the housing situation from concentrating on the Housing National Authority all the programs which actions are focused on the neighborhoods and housing improvement. Two programs stand out: Neighborhoods Improvement Program and Federal Housing Program.

Prromeba (Neighborhoods Improvement Program): its target is to solve demands in urban districts with no regular land tenure situations and with unsatisfied basic needs and under poverty line population. It is a comprehensive program (land tenure solution, provision of infrastructure, equipment and environmental sanitation, strengthening of social organizations and labor training) that is developed with the participation of the inhabitants of the involved neighborhoods. It began in 1997, but reached its highest development in the first decade of the 20th Century. This program is sponsored by national state (40 %) and by Inter-American Development Bank (60 %). Minor works are done by municipal authorities.

Federal Housing Program: the objective is to solve the housing problem of vulnerable sectors in centers with strong housing shortage. 100 % housing and infrastructure is built by national state while some equipment is built by provincial or municipal authorities. Several stages of this program have been underway since 2004.

At the same time, innovative policies for the solution of the housing problem in the shanty towns with a more inclusive and comprehensive approach was implemented in Rosario. In this regard the Rosario Habitat program pioneered in the country.

Rosario Habitat Program: the target of this municipal program is to improve urban living conditions in shanty towns in Rosario. This is a program that defines various actions for these impoverished districts within the framework of a comprehensive public policy: land tenure, design of new streets, provision of basic infrastructure (water, sewerage, drainages, light), squares and recreation spaces, children and adolescents nutrition care, reincorporation to public education system; labor training for orchard activities; technical support for developing small enterprises and so on. It is implemented through an agreement between Argentina and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The program started in 2000 with own funds of the Municipality of Rosario and in 2002 receiving funds from the IDB.



Figure 2: Rosario Habitat improvement area and new housing, Rosario

3.2 Housing policies and the building of new ghettos

The Argentine cities, as other Latin American cities are undergoing a process of deep polarization. Within this context, polarization has become one of the most outstanding features of recent urbanization process in Rosario and its metropolitan area. This is the result of a complex process where different factors mixed together: continuous impoverishment of wide sectors of the population; migrant movements trends (immigration and intra metropolitan migration), absence of specific policies for urban land, conditions of housing policies, spatial concentration trends of real state capital, investments in public works, among other.

This polarization has traces of urban space segregation (social and functional). Segregation, and also fragmentation with the development of hermetically closed spaces which establish asymmetric relations between the high income districts and those where very low income sectors live. Social fragmentation of urban space understood as isolation, exclusion, separation and "archipelagoization".

West District in Rosario is the most expressive situation of this fragmentation process. Economic and social situation in this urban sector is characterized by a strong imbalance and inequity, which shows the most negative values referred to socio-demographic questions:

Social Variables	District					
	Central	North	Northwest	West	Southwest	South
Infant Mortality	5,96	4,85	7,17	10,61	8,32	14,83
Unsatisfied Basic Needs	3,43	9,06	14,29	21,06	15,81	11,66
Overcrowding	0,38	2,59	5,13	7,61	5,09	2,88
Poor Housing	1,07	9,12	13,97	22,67	11,55	11,76
Illiteracy	0,41	1,67	2,47	3,38	2,67	1,86

Table 2: Social conditions in Rosario's Districts (2001) – Social Observatory – Municipality of Rosario

At least three large enclaves of poverty are perceived within the West District. They were growing as such in the past twenty years from the settlement and growth of shanty towns and the building of public housing neighborhoods, generally destined to inhabitants moved from other shanty towns. These enclaves are clearly seen in the territory because they are located in places of poor connectivity and enclosed for major roads; situation that reinforces its status as ghettos. An example of this is the southern sector of West District. A rural area plenty of orchards and surrounded by railways and the ring road that in thirty years had become a ghetto for the poor.

Year	Orchards	Vacant Land	Regular Neighbor.	Public Housing	Shanty Towns	Industry	Sport Areas	Rubbish Dump
1980	50 %	34 %	8 %	1 %	6 %	1 %	-	-
2011	11 %	14 %	14 %	26 %	17 %	7 %	6 %	5 %

Table 3: Land use changes in southern sector of West District in Rosario, 1980 – 2011 (After Bragos, O., 2012)

Social workers have wondered about this critical situation and about the growth of the so called “criminal economy” (drug dealing, robberies and assaults) that have transformed this place into one of the most insecure of the city.

Why did go over to this situation? Because this particular urbanization process had effects on land values in this sector which started to decline slowly. For this reason the landowners always found in the local authorities a good buyer, eager for cheap land for building new houses. On the one hand, many families improved their living conditions by having housing; on the other hand, it deepened the gap between the different sectors of the city.

From the different experiences of construction of the so called “social housing”, nowadays there is already a wide recognition about the negative effects of the public housing projects, in particular those for the sectors of more low incomes of the population, which are developed in peripheral areas, segregated of the rest of the city. In particular, it refers to the social costs of residential segregation that occurs with the construction of these neighborhoods that ends up being dysfunctional. This seems to be the situation which has been described in the Western District of Rosario.

The concentration of neighborhoods for population of very low incomes seems not to help to the social inclusion, beyond offering a concrete answer to the housing demand. Nevertheless it has been insisted by this policy. In this regard, M. Prévôt- Schapira (2001) points out that often the notion of fragmentation of urban space is associated with the process of creation of special districts where social policies specifically targeting poor populations are implemented.

3.3 Mega projects in the 21st Century

Few cities in the country had the opportunity to develop mega projects. Rosario was one of them and the chosen site was the waterfront along Parana River. For this reason it became

known with the name of the Rosario's Puerto Madero. But most were the differences that the similarities.

Puerto Norte is one of the most representative sites of the Rosario urban transformation (together with building renovation/substitution in the central area).

Puerto Norte projects in Rosario were developed according to a municipal urban policy radically different to that one that guided Puerto Madero development in Buenos Aires. Puerto Norte is part of the waterfront renewal in Rosario, after the old port area and railroad yards were classified for future urban developments. These lands of public domain (National Ports Authority and Argentine Railways) became new parks along the river. Puerto Norte, the other part of the waterfront whose lands are in the private domain, was designed with the aim of recovering as much as possible land for continuing with the green public spaces of the waterfront.

Mega project concept in this case is the opposite that in Buenos Aires: "Mega projects in the city of Rosario are thought as major urban developments which are part of the overall urban plan strategy for the city. Their definition and implementation are conditioned by belonging to one larger system. There are several actions and procedures that follow this logic and they are located in different parts of the city, with the aim of contributing to consolidate some operations addressed by the urban plan. Their contents are of different order and are defined according to the features and needs of each case." (LEVÍN, 2012)

An index of new planning instruments was tested in the designing of Puerto Norte, according to the following steps:

- a project competition to select the different types of building that better suit to this particular place on the river coast;
- the definition of urban regulations according to the selected project;
- the definition of a master plan for the whole area (*plan especial*);
- the definition of a more detailed plan for each unit of the master plan (*plan de detalle*);
- the definition of a framework agreement for each unit of the master plan between the Municipality and the developers (*convenio urbanístico*);
- the amount to be paid in concept of plus value recovery (in infrastructure, public spaces or lands for public housing).



Figure 3: Recent real estate developments in Puerto Norte, Rosario

According with this procedure, 42 hectares (of the 100 hectares of the whole area of private dominium) will be incorporated to the green strip along the river, about 26 M USD will be invested in public spaces and 11 M USD in streets and avenues. (LEVIN, 2012) The Land Fund is assigned to land purchase for building social housing. Until May, 2010, only USD

1,652,800 were received in such concept (roughly one-third of the total; the other two-thirds are still in process). Part of this amount was assigned to purchase 21 hectares in the city's Southwest District, where social housing will be built. (BRAGOS, 2010)

3.4 Fast metropolitan expansion and un-sustainable development

A new inner population movement started in Rosario Metropolitan Area in the last decade of 20th Century that continues and deepens during this 21st Century up to now. Small towns close to Rosario have been chosen as the new place for living by Rosario's inhabitants, while they keep their jobs in the main city. New commuter communities are growing in various towns to the North, South and West metropolitan zones. The most important are those from the West which has chosen Funes and Roldán as their new residences; two towns that have emerged when the railroad was built in the second half of 19th Century. From its beginning Funes has been the traditionally week end and summer place of Rosario. Roldán, more tied to rural activities, started to develop also as week end place during the 70's.

In the middle of the 90's the construction of Rosario – Córdoba highway started. This new regional connection encouraged people to move little by little to Funes. And also the first real estate projects started, closed communities (country clubs and close neighborhoods) was the modality of these new developments.

Pressure to urbanize the West Side of the city has been very strong during last years due to the limited availability of land for urban developments. Large portions of the territory in the North and in the South still remain as productive land and cannot be urbanized. The pressure is exerted mainly on that urban sector urban linked to regional routes and highways and with direct connection to downtown area.

The real estate pressure consists fundamentally in the division of big plots. So, urban developments projected with plots of 1.200 sqm. for the construction of individual housing, are subdivided internally hosting three or four houses. This has been possible thanks to a particular interpretation of the Urban Code. As it was said, in these districts the construction of individual housing is accepted, but as he (she) does not say definitely that it is a question of the only familiar (family) housing for plot, there are approved presented projects that contain two or three single-family housings for plot that then, as soon as the construction was finished, subdivide in accordance with the figure of the horizontal property.

This pressure and demand for urbanized land which is not satisfied in Rosario is resolved with new housing developments that are emerging in the cities of Funes and Roldán, adjacent to the West Side of Rosario. Improvements in regional accessibility encouraged the emergence of various development projects in these two cities such as country clubs and gated communities. In recent years, the suburbanization expansion has grown fast with the approval of a large number of real estate projects, mostly under the figure of the open neighborhoods with their commercial and recreation amenities.

The Rosario West Side spreads towards the west in Funes and Roldán. In the last two decades Funes, a traditional weekend and summer urban center of Rosario, has been hosted Rosario's inhabitants who move there to live, keeping their jobs in the main city. Therefore, Funes has grown very fast, mainly in the latter three years. New neighborhoods are being built, expanding the urbanized land in about 23 % in only three years!

New housing developments have been approved with an average surface plots suitable to build only one family house with a small green area. They are sold at prices relatively low (compared to the prices of the land in the city of Rosario). Although making affordable housing to Funes's people has been the argument to approve these projects the new owners came from Rosario.

In the town of Roldán, that was not historically a recreation center as Funes; the urbanized land also expands rapidly. A town smaller than Funes, Roldán has increased its urban area in about 33 %.

Town	Population 2001	Real estate projects	Surface (h.)	Lots
Funes	14,750	10	560	4,179
Roldán	11,468	8	540	7,531
Total		18	1,100	11,710

Table 4: Expansion process in Rosario Metropolitan Area – 2008 – 2011 (After Bragos, O. et al., 2011)

This way, these two localities will see increasing not only its urbanized surface but also, and significantly, its population. Funes practically will duplicate its population and Roldán can go so far as to multiply it by three. And this in a very brief period, which implies thinking about what way the municipality will give services, how demands of school and health establishments will be solved and, fundamentally, when and how the infrastructures will be built. To all this we must add that has not been thought even to improve the public transport. For this reason, most of the interurban travels are done with private automobile.

In this way, a fast urban expansion has been tolerated. And this urban expansive model is very far from being sustainable. An urban model that in the case of Buenos Aires conurbation is several times greater. In the great metropolis urban expansion has been based primarily on the development of closed neighborhoods as predominant residential model and in the use of the private automobile as a means of transport.



Figure 4: Recent low density expansion in Roldán, Rosario Metropolitan Area

4. Conclusion: community participation, social inclusion and urban planning

This rapid and brief summary of the most well-known urban transformations reveal the contradictory nature of urban policies implemented. While progress has been made in the definition of new instruments there is still much to be done. Other recent approaches in urban planning and city management with an emphasis on citizen participation and the definition of proposals for social inclusion are presented as conclusion.

During last decades social participation in urban planning has been developing in different ways encouraged by the academia, social organisations and local authorities. Recent urban planning processes are characterized by the presence, at least of two components: integrated or comprehensive approach and active participation of the social actors. Both

components turn out to be unavoidable at the time of designing processes of sustainable planning on the future of the cities.

4.1 Citizen participation

According with planning experience in various Argentina cities (Ushuaia, Tucumán, Mar del Plata among other), in an IGC document two questions are formulated about citizen's participation in the planning process (IGC, 207):

- Why municipal authorities should include other actors in that process?
- Why civil society should be involved?

There is an answer to the first question: the decisions taken will have a higher level of legitimacy; the work of collective discussion, at the same time which promotes trust between rulers and citizens, helps to install complex themes on the urban agenda; promotes transparency and socialization of local issues; generates higher levels of social responsibility; reduces the individualism and generates integration, promoting the dialogue and agreements above clashes, which manages to reduce the virulence of the conflict and install a way of doing policy based on consensus and conventions.

And there is an answer to the second one: it is an opportunity to influence and be part of a collective project; decide and make decisions collectively; promotes knowledge and discussion of public issues which have a direct impact on the everyday life of the citizens; it promotes democracy.

Very briefly, this community participation will be held in three stages, accordingly with IGC general methodology implemented in various cities:

- *Exploration*: report of current situation and identification of actors (according with their position in decision making, knowledge and diffusion of ideas). Focus groups are organized to know about different visions of the city.
- *Interpretation*: prospective diagnostic and critical issues in city developing. Workshop is organized to get a shared vision of the current state of the city and of its critical issues.
- *Formulation*: definition of objectives and strategies. Workshop is organized to agree about projects and its prioritization.

4.2 Comprehensive approach

Cities and regions are complex facts but by no means inaccessible or impossible to deal with. A first approach to their knowledge is to recognize different dimensions or areas that comprise and the pattern of relationships that link them. According with this, in the quoted IGC document, four dimensions are identified: urban / environmental, economic, social, and institutional:

- *Urban / environmental dimension*: the physical and functional organization of the territory, the environmental conditions that presents, urban codes and other regulations the municipal government has to have to deal with the two issues mentioned in first term.
- *Economic dimension*: economic activities in general (production, trade, services) and its articulation with regional inclusion and infrastructures for development.
- *Social dimension*: living conditions of the population (education, health and work), levels of organization, the situation of the most vulnerable sectors; on the other hand, policies and strategies of inclusiveness and the articulation and complementarity of social policies with economic and urban operations.
- *Institutional dimension*: role of municipal government, internal organization, coordination with government agencies and local actors, the development of its technical offices and equipments and capacity for territorial management.

A multidisciplinary and multisectorial approach for the knowledge of cities and regions needs of a methodology that sets off of understanding that it is a question of "knowledge for action". Accordingly, different dimensions are identifies as well as different levels of

government that have an impact on these systems are taken into account. With regard to the size of the universe to study means that it is possible and necessary to make a cut of the case in question. Then it is a deliberate cut, identifying what is really necessary to take planning decisions, which issues that are secondary, and which will not be taken into account. There are no topics in the cities that are exclusively of economic, social, urban or management character. Substantive topics, those that directly impact on the development of a city, are multidimensional in nature.

The comprehensive approach and the concurrence of public policies for the solution of urban problems is still a pending issue. Many efforts have been done in this sense. But the coincidence of various policies in the same sector of a city is not synonymous with holistic or comprehensive approach.

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