

New Methodologies for a comprehensive Planning of the great Resistencia Metropolitan Area (Argentina) in a Crisis Context

The City of Resistencia, capital of the Chaco Province, leads a Metropolitan Area (MAGR) composed with other six municipalities (1) within the same jurisdiction with a total of 373.964 inhabitants (according to the *Population and Housing National Census 2001*).

This settlement, together with the city of Corrientes (Capital of Province with identical name) 20 km from Resistencia with 316.782 inhabitants, makes up an important strategic axis for multimodal transport at regional level, as well as socioeconomic and important cultural center, lending center of services, among other characteristics which gives the region an outstanding role within the geographic boundaries of the South Cone Market (*MERCOSUR*).

However, the numberless favourable conditions of this settlement, have not been possible to capitalize effectively and integrally in the course of the history, affected by continuous and innumerable socioeconomic crises derived from its deep economic dependence upon national and international power, as well as hydraulic, political and organizational emergencies which made impossible to face a continuous process of sustainable development.

Frustrated Attempts

Given the efforts performed to take back the ways to coordinate, compatibilization and community joint-action in the city planning management of the area, it is considered valuable to evaluate the different attempts that had been done in planning comprehensively and coherently MAGR, to consider facts that determine such frustrations and to capitalize in new approaches and methodology that allow us to overcome the stagnation in which the topic is.

The above mentioned subjects are fundamented in facts that took place in different organizative and political periods of the municipalities that make up MAGR:

- a) In the 50's it was foreseen, in the contract written out for the drainage of the area (2) the hiring of Arch. De la Paulera to work out a true physical plan of Resistencia that would complement the hydraulic one, but when the 1955 Revolution broke out (it set up a military government) and with the changes of authorities, all the dealings about these subjects came to an end.
- b) In the 60's the University through its Planning Department, worked out the "*Physical Development Plan for Resistencia and its Influencing Area*" directed by Arch. Brian Thompson (3) which was not applied in any of its important faces.

(1) Municipalities of Resistencia, Barranqueras, Fontana, Puerto Tirol, Puerto Vilelas, Margarita Belén y Colonia Benítez.

(2) The *Plan SANINTEC* was worked out by a contract of the Provincial Government with the Consultants Ing. Rosell, Ivanisevich and Wenselblat.

(3) The Physical Development Plan and its Influencing Areas started in year 1966; it was published in 1973 by the Engineering, Housing and Planning School of the Universidad Nacional del Nordeste by an agreement with the Province of Chaco.

- c) In 1979 the Satute of the Municipality of Resistencia N° 523 and Provincial Law N°2406 passed the *Physical Environmental Plan for the Great Resistencia* and its Influencing Area is directed by Arch. Odilia Suarez (4).
This work had the merit to put in use *The Urban Planning Code* of the city, but the active measures implemented herein that complemented the code (public works arrangement of the transit, etc.) were set aside. This rule was soon outdated as a consequence of the hydric emergency in 1982/1983 and due to the lack of the full functioning mechanisms of evaluation and adjustment provided herein.
- d) The *Resistencia Strategic Plan* (RSP) in the year 1994/1995 was drawn in a democratic and participative way (5), but it was postponed again due to changes in the local political conduction.
- e) In 1998 an *Environmental Urban Diagnosis of MAGR* is developed (6) a detailed analysis of the situation of the seven municipalities. It is carried out and new lines are proposed to overcome the main organizative, technical environmental and planning aspects among others. But these requests were not applied by the local and provincial government who ordered the study.

Process Organized in the State

In year 2000 the *Chart of the City* is passed whereas the local authorities have the following habilities:

- a) To obtain a city functionally integrated with the municipalities of the Metropolitan Area with which development policies and environmental protection should be applied, it should also plannify altogether with the other municipalities subjects of common interests.
- b) To set up steps towards *Environmental Management and Environmental Code* as well as the commitment to elaborate an *Environmental Urban Plan* with interdisciplinary participation.
- c) To develop in a non delegated way, a planning policy and environmental urban and rural management, made up with the economic, social and cultural development policies that takes into account the municipality area, its role in the Metropolitan Area, its area of influence and functional integration with the city of Corrientes.
- d) Full practice of its municipal competence in the issue, application and implementation, among others, of the *Urban Physical Code, Environmental Code, General Regulations concerning Constructions*.
- e) Participative features of the municipal budget ("participative budget" which should be enforced on January 1st 2002) the opinion proceeding and other participative mechanisms like *Popular Connective Survey, Public Hearings and the Economic, Social and Political Council* as consultative organisms as advisor of the local government. Neighbourhood Commissions as permanent assistant agencies with municipal representation with a voluntary and honorary features.

(4) Worked carried out by the sponsorship among Housing Department of the Province of Chaco and the Department of Environmental Planning of the Nation in year 1976.

(5) Strategic Plan of Resistencia developed within the frame of the institutional agreement, held between Federal Investment Council, the Government of the Provincie of Chaco and the Municipality of Resistencia, by the Executive Unit Project, headed by Arch. Alicia Esther Mastandrea till 1996.

(6) The Expeditious Urban Diagnostic of MAGR worked out by Arch. Carlos Osvaldo Scornik and his coworkers, is developed by a contract with the Provincial Unit of Coordination for Emergencies in Chaco as part of the Program for Protection Against Floods in the Nation.

- f) Creation of territorial agencies with a non central management.

Finally in the year 2002 the provincial law N° 5174 is passed and the creation of the *Provincial System of Planning and Assesment of Results*, that among the other aspects fosters the conformation of *Regional Councils* (among them that AMGR) which shold pass their own rules, formulate a *Local Development Plan* and will be made up by:

- a) Municipal Governments through the corresponding municipal regional union,
- b) Representative organizations or an oustanding person of the population who should be resident, accordning to what is set up in the rules.
- c) Delegates on agences belonging to provincial government
- d) Delegates of agences belonging National government
- e) One CCA (*Central Coordination Agenci*) representative appointed by a director.

Process Generated from below

Simultaneously with the approval of the rules already mentioned, a certain change of attitudes and citizenships habits began to develop due to the traumatic Argentinian socio-economic crisis of the years 2001/02. But these changes must be valued in their fair measure so as not to encourage false expectations regarding social joint action.

People have lost certain restraints which limited their joint action and on other hand, the whole society assumes more sensitivity upon the serious state of helplessness of an important sector of population.

The cultural change that can began to be visualized is shown in several ways and circumstances:

- a) The movement of jobless social sectors and without land (“picketers = *piqueteros*”) which set forth their rights through street demonstrations, routes or central street cuttings, food obtain through popular help cooked altogether (“*ollas populares*”), etc.
- b) The spontaneous expressions of differtent social groups about serious safety problems which affect them and are frequently repeated.
- c) The increasement in quantity and specificity of the ONG with different aims (social-productive, environmental, educational) which generally canalize in institutional way and organized an enormous quantity of actions which complement, support or even substitute the function of the State itself.
- d) The corporative organizations which pronounces permanently in defense of their own interest and that quite often can not support, compliment or associate legally with the Government to obtain common interests aims.

Comprehensive Planning as Instrument of Underused Application

In this process of development of new instruments and means of management offered by the State in different levels, on one side, and the cultural and attitudinal change, on the other, which have promoted a deep socioeconomic national crisis, the Comprehensive Urban and Regional Planning is presented as a suitable mean, appropriate, of low social cost to overcome the inertia of continuous and costly inefficiencies in the current management of the cities of MAGR.

The challenge set forth in this step becomes a threat to the society greedy of a more rational and effective management of the public affairs, governance and of the scarce resources availables, for an organic and continuous application of new mechanisms and planning

instruments that are ignored (such as *Planning in Partnership* and *Participative Budget*) or the own instrument given by the sanctioned new rules and that in fact still are of very little use.

The challenge for planners is to find the most efficient way to obtain that social actors with greater power in the decision making process, assume the task more difficult and compromising with the society, to overcome narrow and mean attitudes to contribute in the improvement of previous failures with a positive and constructive attitudes, with healthy basic principles and high universal consensus like the ones stated in Local Agenda 21 and the most modern comprehensive planning techniques, directed to transform many mistakes in the management of our settlements with a comprehensive regional and urban planning, which has to be participative, democratic and effective in the North Argentinian Litoral.

For the case of the MAGR it would be possible to instrument from a clear political will of an urban and regional planning to define the priority of some converging guidelines:

- Definition of the strategic urban lines to be faced in a comprehensive and continuous form,
- Consensus about the main joint development and investments to benefit MAGR as a whole.
- Aggressive and organic environmental policy that guarantees the sustainability of the physical strategies.
- The sanction of converging and compatible rules among the several jurisdictions involving the guarantee of governance.

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