

French urban planning tools and methods renewal

Introduction

French language has the same word for urban planning and urban design, *urbanisme*. So most of French well known *urbanistes* are in fact urban designers. This paper talks only about urban planning.

Today in France an urban planning tools and methods renewal process is running. So planning profession has to get organised to facing many challenges. In a way, this renewal takes into consideration creative economy.

1) Renewing French planning tools: a burning necessity

Decentralisation increasing

France is an old country build for centuries around its monarch, king's room as the physical center of the kingdom. That's the reason why, building axis of the city and the palace of Versailles connect from the king's room. Following that concept, until the revolution, state, and state services, were also organised around the monarch. So Louis XIV uses to say: "state is me" (*l'état c'est moi*). After less than one decade of revolution troubles, Napoleon Bonaparte, as first consul, organised France into *communes* and *départements*, nominating prefects to govern départements. To help prefects to achieve national policies, many local state services were organised or reinforced. This situation has almost not changed until today. Without overseas territories, France has still 36564 communes, 96 départements and 22 regions.

Regionalisation and decentralisation is a now a political shared goal for many decades. After a fruitless try of regionalisation in 1969, the first laws of decentralisation were voted by the parliament in 1982 transferring competencies from state to communes, départements and regions. The great winner of this process was the département. In 2004 a new step of decentralisation gives news competencies to départements and regions. Nothing has been transfered to townships ans the great winner of this new step is still the département!

Following this process another shared goal is reinforcing intercommunal structures but in that case, communes tranfer their competencies to intercommunal structure. Some competencies belongs to a single intercommunal structure: strategic planning, mobility planning, housing planning for instance. Some are shared between all levels of public authorities including French state and European Union as well: economical development so creative economy for instance

State civil services reorganisation and modernisation

As decentralisation increases, local public services increase as well, but the old local state services haven't been removed for two reasons. First, local authorities like to work with local state services supposed to be competent, loyal and neutral; second, most of French public policies are national and locally achieved by local state services

Fortunately, these services have been undertaking to modernisation for many decades and, after many years doing in place of local authorities, even after 1982, local state services help them now to do by themselves.

Since the beginning of planning in France, local state services, subordinated to the ministry of public works, transportations and housing, the *directions departementales de l'équipement, DDE*, used to study and survey strategic and local plans by themselves, even after the decentralisation law which transferred planning to local authorities. Except for a few of them, the civil servants in charge of that planning were not professional planners but engineers and technicians coming from civil and road engineering! That explains that in many departements there were not any private planning company at all!

Taking sustainable developement into considération

Taking really environnement into consideration in planning rules and methods came long after the beginning of planning, and unfortunately after the urban boom of the sixties. The first environment law has been voted in 1976. Sure there were laws before and they still run, to protect historical (1913) and natural (1930) heritage but they concerned emblematic monuments or sites.

In 1982, in fact more than 20 years ago, has been adopted the Rio declaration wich is the basement of main principles of sustainable development. A first translation into French law came in 1995 and all laws coming after take sustainable development into consideration. In 2000, solidarity and urban renovation law: SRU , introduces that principle into strategic and urban planning.

Metropolitan and urban planning tools unadapted

The first french planning law, *la loi d'orientation foncière, LOF*, has been voted in 1967 which created strategic plans *Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme :SDAU* and local plans *Plan d'Occupation des Sols, POS*. These plans organised space development at two scales: POS were supposed to be compatible with the SDAU.

- SDAU: metropolitan area :limits acted by prefect
- POS: limits acted by communes

These two plans files were quite similar :

- presentation report which describes the area and urban development trends
- zoning plan

These plans were conceived by local state planning services, DDE, except for the main cities where public planning agencies were created. These plans were acted by prefects, so by state, after consulting local authorities.

In 1983, decentralisation law reversed that system: plans become acted by local authorities after consulting prefect But planning tools and methods were not removed. In many cases SDAU have not been taken into consideration any more but it was not allowed to abolish them. So, for two decades, most of french cities had not strategic plans any more, in fact not strategic urban development policies any more. So, POS were only considered as a legal tool to manage local building rules. In a way, strategic and urban planning were quite dead in France.

2) Solidarity and urban renovation law: 3 goals

In december 2000, parliament voted the solidarity and urban renovation law, SRU law, which deeply renew french planning tools and rules. This law aims 3 goals so it has got 3 chapters.:

Planning policies more coherent: planning chapter

As described above, strategic planning (SDAU) was almost not used any more by local authorities and nothing else was supposed to coordinate local plans (POS), each commune, completely free to organise by itself its urban development and act its own building rules, daily helped by local state services, DDE. In that way, planning was just following local trends. After years, many diseases appeared, what was easy to foresee. So renewing planning tools and methods was a main goal of the SRU law.

More urban solidarity: housing chapter

Following housing market trends favours urban segregation. Rich areas become richer and poor areas become poorer, constituting ghettos either for rich or poor population, either inside the main city of the metropolitan area or in suburbs. So, social dwellings are concentrated in a few areas either in few parts of the main cities or in few suburbs. Most of these dwellings were build during the 60' in large ugly condominiums, *grands ensembles*. Now in France everybody is convinced that inside a metropolitan area the destinies of inhabitants and communes are linked. So mixity and diversity for housing is a shared goal. So the SRU law prescribes a rate of 20% of social housing for every communes. This famous article has not been abolished by the new government.

Urban transportation policies better linked with planning policies: mobility chapter

President Pompidou said the "cities must be adapted for cars" and for decades french cities aimed this goal highly helped by the state local service, DDE, an easy help in a centralised context, because most of concerned roads were included in national roads network managed by DDE. But this policy is not compatible with sustainable development. Favouring alternative means of transportation is now in France a shared goal and now, it's time to adapt car traffic to cities.

Edge of the cities, where low income families find dwellings become more and more urban, and urban sprawl is going on, pulling cities off limits. This kind of urban development is clearly linked with car use. Limiting urban sprawl by developping public transportation is a shared goal two.

3) New and renewed planning tools

Regional planning: directives territoriale d'aménagement (DTA)

Taking into consideration that strategic planning was out of order and that state have its own stakes on some startegic areas, parliament voted in 1995 a law which creates a new kind of strategic plan: the *directive territoriale d'aménagement* ,DTA.

Seven large areas has been selected for testing DTA: 2 urban regions (Lyon, Marseille), 2 estuaries (Seine, Loire), 1 coastal region (French Riviera), 1 mountain region (northern Alps), 1 industrial and mining region (Lorraine).

A DTA describes state stakes on the concerned area: national networks of transportation development, national public facilities, protection of landscape and environment. It also prescribes elements to be taken into consideration in all local plans. The DTA is conceived by state local services by themselves. Prefect consults local authorities about the project. A DTA is formally acted by national authority.

Now there is no chapter about creative economy in a DTA but it is supposed to preserve this kind of development.

Metropolitan planning: Schema de coherence territoriale, SCOT

SCOT takes place of SDAU. If SCOT limits and elaborating process are similar than SDAU, the file content is very different.

First of all, the zoning plan are abolished. A major failure of SDAU zoning plans was the excess of precision, sometimes similar as precise as a local zoning plan. In a SCOT, no map takes place of this zoning plan. Its a true way of progress and new tools and methods of mapping are to be conceived and improved.

Now the file is organised in three chapters:

- presentation report
- urban sustainable development plan
- guideline

Local authorities have to organise public debates and consult inhabitants from the beginning to the end of the process.

SCOT are conceived by local public planning agencies and private planning companies as well. For private companies it is a new market.

During the 80' considering that SDAU were out of order, thematic planning has been promoted, especially for housing and mobility. These thematic plans have been reinforced by SRU law. They have to be compatible with SCOT.

Housing planning: Programme local de l'Habitat, PLH

The main goal of such plans is favouring mixity and diversity of housing. PLH is also a 5 years contract between local authorities and state to finance social dwellings building. That's the reason why the P of PLH means Program. It's also a reason why no public debate has to be organised.

A PLH file contents:

- diagnosis
- selection of goals
- action program

Evaluating the first generation of PLH shows that in fact neither diagnosis nor action plan were really shared by local authorities and state services.

PLH are mostly conceived by private housing planning companies which work for a long time on housing problems and policies for local authorities and housing public companies as well.

Mobility planning: Plan de déplacements urbains, PDU

The main goal of such plan is limiting car traffic by favouring alternative means of transportation. PDU concerns all means of transportation and SRU law adds parking planning and goods traffic planning as well.

A PDU files contents:

- diagnosis
- selection of goals
- action plan
- evaluation indicators

The Action Plan runs 5 years.

Local authorities have to organise public debates and to consult inhabitants from the beginning to the end of the process.

Evaluating the first generation of PDU shows heavy trends:

- mobility increasing : car traffic still increasing, public transportation increasing after declining but the repartition of traffics still profits to car
- public transportation networks developping especially with new tramways which bear now a very positive image of cities and can be considered as contributing to creative economy
- alternative meanings of transportation networks, especially cycling and walking paths.

PDU are mostly conceived by private mobility planning companies which work for a long time on transportation problems and policies for local authorities and transportation companies as well.

Urban Planning: plan local d'urbanisme, PLU

PLU takes place of POS. Process is quite similar than POS but much more simple but its content is very different:

- presentation report
- sustainable development plan
- zoning plan and building rules
- attached files

Local authorities have to organise public debates and to consult inhabitants from the beginning to the end of the process. PLU have to be compatible with DTA, SCOT, PLH and PDU.

PLU are now mostly conceived by private planning companies.

4) New mutual methods and tools at any scale

Project management

Coming from industrial processes and methods, project management is more and more used in public policies management. Comparing each steps of project management and planning processes a lot of similitude appear what shows the following board.

Project management	SCOT	PLH	PDU	PLU
Diagnosis	X	X	X	X
Goals selection	X	X	X	X
Action plan		X	X	
Evaluation/ goals hit			X	

Formally there is no action plan in SCOT and PLU process but in a way, guideline for the SCOT and zoning plan for the PLU can be considered as action plan.

For SCOT or PLU, impacts of plans on environment must be evaluated and existing situation which must be bettered. Such studies need special competences and knowledges. They are realised by special private companies.

In a way, creative economy is based on innovating projects which use project management methods including dynamics of systems. In that way urban planning become clearly a strategic part of creative economy, especially when diagnosis, strategies and actions plans are shared between local authorities, holders of creative economy and inhabitants.

Planning sustainable development: plan: plan d'aménagement et de développement durable, PADD

The great innovation of the SRU law is the PADD which takes place in SCOT and PLU as well. In fact, law writers had not imagined such plans which came from an amendment defended by a deputy against government! So, when law has been voted, nobody was really able to precise what these plans were. So, parliament precised what PADD are in another law in 2002.

Referring to the process described just above, it's in fact quite easy to identify PADD place and role in planning processes just between goals selection and guideline of SCOT or zoning plan of PLU. PADD translates local authorities goals into schemes and maps free of form.

PADD is a very interesting opportunity to improve new methods for planning and mostly consultations or competitions to select planning companies are based on comparing proposal of methods.

Favouring all types of mixity and diversity, PADD is a also very interesting tool to promote creative economy..

5) Into decentralisation context, new planning policies organisation

State civil planning services new positioning

A new step of decentralisation consists also by transferring in 2006 most of the national roads network and state road keepers to the departements. So, losing 70% of their activity and servants, DDE have to be adapted. Their reorganisation is based on 4 main missions.

- Local knowledge (more than 95% of local data and digital maps are produced by state agencies)
- flooding risk and industrial risk management (state competence)
- housing and urban renovation (local management of the national program for urban renovation)
- transportation security (state competence)

So DDE have now to help local authorities to manage regional and regional planning. In concrete terms, DDE hold state stakes, share their data sometimes produce diagnosis elements, help local authorities to select the right process and how to achieve it to the end, help them to select planning teams, give technical advices about networks, transportation and housing.

Metropolitan planning services emerging

Following the constitution of new intercommunal authorities, new local services are emerging. as well. Sure, their main mission is the daily management of all running processes concerning directly their own authorities. But another mission is watching after all others plans which could concern their authority: adjoining SCOT, PLH or PDU; PLU which have to be compatible with their own SCOT, PLH or PDU.

In such emerging local authorities many missions begin to be shared between servants especially what concerns economic development. Most of these servants coming from urban planning institutes are young and ready to be involved in creative economy.

Private planning offices facing to an an increasing market of studies and surveys

As the SRU law was voted, nobody, neither local authorities nor planning profession imagined that it was the opportunity for DDE to stop concepting local planning for local authorities. Even the SRU law stipulates that DDE are at the service of local authorities and inside the DDE itself nobody, especially servants who did that for many years, imagined that SRU law will stop their activity.

In France exist in 2005

- about 330 strategic plans (1/3 of communes, 2/3 of population): 150 SDAU, 41 modification running processes and about 180 SCOT running processes.
- about 18 000 PLU (1/2 of communes), 8000 modification running processes. Considering that a PLU process takes about 4 years, that means that each year, 2000 PLU are to be modified.

If many companies for housing planning, mobility planning, environmental surveys exist, a very few very were in 2000 specialised in urban planning, most of them were planning department of architects involved in urban design.

So, planning profession have to face this new market improving new tools and methods. In a way, it is an historical opportunity to better urban space in France and maybe favour creative economy as well.

6) Planning profession facing new challenges

Into licence master doctorate, LMD, context, initial education reorganisation

In France urban planning is not a true academic discipline but a specialisation of cursus of geography, engineering, law and politics. Before the LMD reform, initial education for urban planning, which supposes special diplomas at master level, was provided in France by institutes of urban planning and schools of ingeneering. In fact, except for the Paris institute for urban planning, the oldest one, all the others institutes are departments of universities or schools mostly included in geography departments. Such institutes provides only one year cursus, at master level.

There is no planning institute subordinated to a school of architecture, and none of the 20 french schools of architecture propose a diploma of urban planning. In fact many teachers are involved in urban planning or urban design, so many architects learnt about urban planning and design They use to work for urban planning or design without any diploma. And architect professional organisations use to defend that an architect is of course also a town planner and urban designer as well.

The LMD reform is going to transform deeply the offer of education for urban planning. This process is beginning. Creative economy will take place into urban economy lessons.

Professional identification and certification

In France planning profession has not been officially identified as a profession for many decades even if exists a professional society since 1911, *la Société Française des Urbanistes, SFU*. Today, A planning profession organisations union: *le Conseil Français des Urbanistes, CFDU* was created in 1996 to gather all planning professions organisations which ever mode of practise: private or public, boss or employeee.

According with all professions and authorities concerned, French state decided in 1998 to create a qualification office, *l'Office Public de Qualification des Urbanistes, OPQU*. Today,

288 urban planners are qualified (169 in private companies, 102 in public structures, 17 others). This small number hides reality: public planning agencies employ more than 1200 people for instance. In fact it's very difficult to know precisely how many urban planners are working in France.

That's the reason why a national working group gathering state, professional organisations, university representative decided to start two studies:

- identification of urban planners
- definition of initial knowledge for urban planning profession

New roles expected for planning profession

Renewing tools and methods of urban planning changes the role of profession and local French authorities facing many urban problems expect more than never from profession.

First expecting is transversality: it is rational and usual to manage problems themes by themes. Most of public authorities services are organised by thematic departments and a few head managers are supposed to guarantee the coherence of public action. Today most of urban problems are complex because of interactions they breed and it is quite impossible to get solutions without mixing themes. So transversal managers are expected.

Second expecting is expertise: in traditional disciplines (building, transportation, environment, water etc.) , French public and private expertise is rather well organised and efficient but many new problems are rising which need other types of expertise (public debate management, new information and communication networks, urban quality, urban policies evaluation, etc.). These new types of expertise suppose new skills for professional.

In a way, contributing to creative economy suppose for planning profession transversality and expertise as well.

Conclusion

Urban planning tools and methods renewal in France began in 2000 with the solidarity and urban renovation law vote. Running decentralisation process reorganises roles of actors and local state planning services stop conceiving plans. These two factors induce to open the market of planning studies and surveys. It breeds many challenges for a profession expected first on basic issues: strategic an local plans conception. But achieving correctly these plans supposes new skills, especially transversality management and expertise.

French planning profession is getting organised to face these challenges contributing to initial education reorganisation, managing national and local professional networks, contributing to the public debate about planning tools and methods.

To get more information:

Conseil Français Des Urbanistes, CFDU: www.cfdi.org

Association pour la Promotion de l'Enseignement et de la Recherche en Urbanisme, APERAU : www.aperau.org

Fédération Nationale de Agences d'Urbanisme, FNAU : www.fnau.org

Ministère de l'Équipement, Direction Générale de l'Urbanisme, de l'Habitat et de la Construction : www.urbanisme.equipement.gouv.fr

Centre d'Etudes sur les Réseaux les Transports et l'Urbanisme : www.certu.fr