



Call for articles – Special issue of the journal of urban studies *Métropoles*

Alternative Urban Development Policies

Many urban scholars have argued that the last three decades have been characterized by dynamics of homogenization and standardization of urban policies around entrepreneurial objectives (Harvey, 1989, Hall and Hubbard, 1996; Moulaert *et al.*, 2005). These processes have been accompanied by the dissemination of “good practices” (*Espaces et Sociétés*, 2007) such as “cultural-led regeneration projects”, the construction of business districts, the creation of shopping centers, recreational facilities or new transport infrastructures, the policies of urban sustainability, the hosting of major sport events or the strategies to enhance image through urban marketing, etc. All these policies and urban projects seem to pursue the same objective: to (re)develop the city by making it more attractive to the post-Fordist firms and mobile social groups (high-skilled students, the “creative class”, tourists ...) in order to strengthen its position in the new international division of production and consumption. This trend is the product of the interaction of several dynamics such as the introduction of neoliberal dogma in urban governance (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Béal and Rousseau, 2008), the acceleration of the flow of ideas and concepts among urban elites (McCann and Ward, 2011; Peck, 2011), the weakening of the link between local governments and urban societies (Pinson, 2009) or the rise of the financial sector in the production of urban spaces (Renard, 2008; Aalbers, 2012). Amid the ongoing destabilization of the economic base of many cities, these factors explain why key actors in urban governance rely increasingly on mainstream solutions whose effectiveness are only validated by the debatable success of highly specific – and arguably unrepeatable – models such as the widely publicized cases of Glasgow (culture), Hamburg (creative industries) or Barcelona (prestigious sporting events). Recent researches also demonstrate that this trend is not confined to the cities from the global North. The neoliberal “best practices” also spread in the global South, leading to the implementation of entrepreneurial urban development strategies in Africa (Murray, 2011; Myers, 2011), Latin America (Portes and Roberts, 2005) and Asia (Wu, 2003; Broudehoux, 2007; Dupont, 2011).

However, this generalization of mainstream strategies should not obscure the existence of alternative urban development policies. By “alternative”, we mean the set of initiatives, projects or strategies supported by the local authorities and that seek to redirect urban development away from the entrepreneurial model. These alternative urban policies have three main characteristics:

1. They are not designed in a top-down perspective or by policy circles dominated by senior politicians, experts or businessmen. Alternative urban policies are elaborated in a bottom-up perspective in which urban society – including the most disadvantaged social or ethnic groups – is the driving force.
2. They are not only organized through market mechanisms. Alternative urban policies are not primarily intended to support pre-existing growth dynamics. Rather, they seek to establish political or "social" regulations in order to limit "uneven development" in contemporary cities.
3. They are not intended to rebuild the city for the more affluent social groups or for the "visitor class" (Eisinger, 2000), but above all for the people already present in the city. Alternative urban policies differ from neoliberal urban policies insofar they use public resources to address the situation of disadvantaged groups, without the intervention of the so-called "trickle-down effect".

Alternative urban development policies are heterogeneous in their objectives (redistribution, preservation, etc.) and in the nature of the municipal resources they use (planning decisions, financial support of local initiatives, transfers of expertise etc.). They may relate to various fields such as urbanism (de-growth strategies, land trusts, anti-gentrification or anti-speculation initiatives, etc.), local economy (alternative local currencies or local exchange systems, cooperative firms, etc.), finance (tontines, credit unions operating at the scale of the district or the city, etc.), environment ("transition town" movement, free public transport initiatives, etc.), food supply (urban agriculture, local food systems, etc.) or governance (participatory budgets, self-management, etc.).

Are local government forced to design and implement neoliberal urban development policies? This special issue considers that the relative decline of the state in the regulation of the economy and society and the current economic crisis could open a space for the development of alternative urban strategies. If there is now a substantial literature on entrepreneurial urban strategies, academic work on alternative urban development policies is less developed. Despite some interesting case studies, there are only few systemic analyses which try to draw more general conclusion regarding the development of alternative urban policies.

The purpose of this special issue is to contribute to fill this gap. It seeks to bring together articles, covering cities from the global North as well as the global South, which meet at least one of the four following objectives:

1. Describing alternative urban development policies through case studies. What are the contents and objectives of these policies? How and why have they emerged? What kind of actors and groups are involved in these policies?

2. Contextualizing alternative urban development policies. We expect articles questioning the socio-political and economic conditions triggering the emergence, implementation and stabilization of these policies. Are they more likely to emerge in cities with specific characteristics? Does the presence or the absence of any peculiar actors play a role?
3. Evaluating alternative urban development policies. How does their content differ from mainstream urban development policies? Do these policies still fulfill their original objectives? What dangers lurk them, and ultimately, are they doomed to be institutionalized?
4. Developing conceptual or theoretical approaches for answering the question why and how alternative urban development policies could be developed and successfully implemented in particular urban settings. How to conceptualise the opportunities which allow local actors to find and to pursue their own development strategy in a world dominated by a small number of hegemonic neo-liberal ideas? Why do local actors still have choices?

Submission guidelines

-Métropoles is an open access journal of urban studies which is indexed by the French agency for the evaluation of research in Geography and Town Planning, Sociology and Political Science. <http://metropoles.revues.org/>

*- **Abstracts (500 words) should be sent by the 31st of March 2013.** They can be either written in French or English. **They should be directly sent to the managing editor of Métropoles, Deborah Galimberti (deborah.galimberti[at]gmail.com).** **A copy should also be sent to the two coordinators of this special issue: Vincent Béal (vbeal[at]unistra.fr) and Max Rousseau (max.rousseau[at]cirad.fr).***

- Authors will be notified of the acceptance of their abstract by the 15th of April 2013, at the latest.

-The definitive manuscripts should be submitted to the journal by the 16th of September 2013. They can be either written in English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese or German. The definitive version of the articles accepted for publication should however be written in English or French. The charge of the translation is the author's responsibility.

-The articles should comprise between 8.000 and 10.000 words (including references).

-Presentation standards and information for the authors can be found on the website of the journal: <http://metropoles.revues.org/>

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