European Planning History in the 20th Century

A Continent of Urban Planning

Edited by MAX WELCH GUERRA, ABDELLAH ABARKAN, MARÍA A. CASTRILLO ROMÓN and MARTIN PEKÁR

ROUTLEDGE

EUROPEAN PLANNING HISTORY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

The history of Europe in the 20th century is closely tied to the history of urban planning. Social and economic progress but also the brute treatment of people and nature throughout Europe were possible due to the use of urban planning and the other levels of spatial planning. Thereby, planning has constituted itself in Europe as an international subject. Since its emergence, through intense exchange but also competition, despite country differences, planning has developed as a European field of practice and scientific discipline. Planning is here much more than the addition of individual histories; however, historiography has treated this history very selective regarding geography and content.

This book searches for an understanding of the historiography of planning in a European dimension. Scholars from Eastern and Western, Southern and Northern Europe address the issues of the public led production of city and the social functions of urban planning in capitalist and state-socialist countries. The examined examples include Poland and USSR, Czech Republic and Slovakia, UK, Netherlands, Germany, France, Portugal and Spain, Italy, and Sweden. The book will be of interest to students and scholars for Urbanism, Urban/Town Planning, Spatial Planning, Spatial Politics, Urban Development, Urban Policies, Planning History and European History of the 20th Century.

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CONTENTS

Contributors *viii*

Introduction: The Continent of Urban Planning and Its Changing Historiography 1
Max Welch Guerra

PART 1
The Emergence of Contemporary Urban Planning

1.1 Historiography *avant la lettre*? On the Uses of History in Early Town Planning Manuals 11
Helene Bihlmaier

1.2 Urban Hygiene and Slum Clearance as Catalysts: The Emergence of the Sanitary City and Town Planning 27
Dirk Schubert

1.3 The Reverse of Urban Planning: First Steps for a Genealogy of Informal Urbanization in Europe 39
Noel Manzano

1.4 The Beginning of the Urbanism Teaching in the Schools of Architecture of Madrid and Barcelona: From Trazado, Urbanización y Saneamiento de Poblaciones to Urbanología 51
María Cristina García-González

1.5 Rethinking Urban Extension and International Influences: Spain and the International Housing and Town Planning Congresses during the 1920s 62
María Castrillo Romón and Miguel Fernández-Maroto

1.6 Influences of European Urban Planning in Post-war Spain: Pedro Bidagor Collection of the Historical Service Archive of the Official College of Architects of Madrid 72
Alberto Sanz Hernando

1.7 *Aménagement, embellissement et extension des villes*: The French Law of 1919/24 on Urban Plans 80
Laurent Coudroy de Lille

1.8 Bending Interests and Blending Media in the Inter-war Modernism of Central Europe: Wohnung und Werkraum Exhibition 91
Marcelo Sagot Better

PART 2
Functions and Practices of Urban Planning under Changing Social Orders

2.1 Swedish Planning and Development in the 20th and 21st Centuries 105
Ann Maudsley

2.2 Bratislava under Fascist Dictatorship 118
Martin Pekár

2.3 French Tools for Urban Heritage Protection in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century: From Groundbreaking Systematization to a General Trend toward Integration of Planning Instruments 127
Víctor Pérez-Eguíluz

2.4 History and Heritage: The Reconstruction of Blitzed Cities 139
Peter J. Larkham

2.5 Planning GDR and Czechoslovakia: The Scale Question under State Socialism 153
Azmah Arzmi

2.6 Transportation and Urban Planning under State Socialism: The Tramway in Medium-Sized Cities of the USSR, GDR and CSSR in the 1960s and 1970s 163
Elvira Khairullina and Luis Santos y Ganges

2.7 Contemporary European City-Making Process: Materialization-Emptying-Regeneration on Large Land Properties 175
Federico Camerin

2.8 Elective Affinities: The Recovery of Historic Seminal Ideas of European Urbanism for a Sustainable Urban Design in the Late 20th Century 186
Juan Luis de las Rivas

PART 3
Interpretation of the Twentieth Century Planning History

3.1 Is There a *European* Planning Tradition? 199
Stephen V. Ward

3.2 European Planning History in the 20th Century as a Reflexive Concept 207
Harald Bodenschatz

3.3 The Anarchist Strain of Planning History: Pursuing Peter Hall's *Cities of Tomorrow* Thesis through the Geddes Connection, 1866–1976 213
José Luis Oyón and Jere Kuzmanić

3.4 Mapping Transnational Planning History in Port City Regions – London, Rotterdam, Hamburg 222
Carola Hein

3.5 A Look to Transgressive Planning Practices: Calling for Alternative Sources and Actors 235
Andrea Gimeno

3.6 Neglected Narratives of Post-war Italian Cities: Actors and Rationalities in the Shaping of the Ordinary Residential Landscape 246
Gaia Caramellino and Nicole De Togni

3.7 The End of the Planned City? Urban Planning after 1989 256
Florian Urban

3.8 Interpreting 20th Century European Planning History: Eight Theses 268
Max Welch Guerra

Index *272*

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2.5

PLANNING GDR AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The Scale Question under State Socialism

Azmah Arzmi

In contemplating divergent paths of urban and regional developments of post-socialist countries in central and eastern Europe, scholars have attempted to categorize them according to the types of market economy that they embraced (Tosics 2005; Bohle and Greskovits 2012). From regulated market, welfare-state to laissez-faire capitalism, emergences of these developments covering different regions stretching from the Baltics, Central Europe to the Balkans require a critical reflection on the term 'post-socialist' as dependent on their past selves to determine future development after the critical juncture of 1989 (Hirt Ferenčuhová and Tuvikene 2017; Ferenčuhová 2018).

With standardization and industrialization projects in the face of modernity being a common factor for Europe regardless of different political, socio-economic factors (Hirt Ferenčuhová and Tuvikene 2017), the theories on territorial, infrastructural development charted by Western European and Anglo-American scholars and their impacts in the current neoliberal market urban development are still relevant in analyzing the post-socialist countries. This is because they still relate in general to contemporary European spatial and urban planning (Šlemr and Maier 2016). Urban development in post-socialist countries still bore the imprint of their past, and one aspect, i.e., rarely discussed or taken into much consideration is the impact of different scalar approaches in the planning of cities that determine their development today.

The state socialist concept of spatial planning, as defined by Polish architect Edmund Goldzamt in his studies on *Urban Planning in Socialist Countries: Social Problems* (1975) is analogous to that elaborated by the European Commission (1997). Both highlighted an overriding goal of long-term economic perspective, carried out by the national governments on a larger scale, ensuring even development between different regions. The difference is that state socialist countries often resorted to a more emphatic, technocratic mechanisms of organization and higher degree of social engineering, i.e., determining the types of employment, population growth and housing required within the localities. Considering that decentralized decision-making was almost non-existent during state socialism with regards to the municipalities' autonomy to develop their cities, these cities were often embedded within the development of the region as a whole that determined their exponential growth. Akin to their advanced capitalist counterparts, this begs the question of scale and the type of hierarchical, territorial scalar approaches used in city planning.

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Renowned scholars have written extensively on planning theories related to the scale question. Neil Brenner in his recent publication *New Urban Spaces: Urban Theory and the Scale Question* (2019). His studies mainly focus on the cities and territories of North American and West European countries throughout the last four decades and how supranational trade blocks such as the European Union impact spatial planning in these regions. His analyses on Central and East Europe however, is noticeably absent. From an organized, centralized, modernizing project during the post-war period covering large territories to the fragmented neoliberal capitalist urban spaces, he commented that these 'reterritorialized and rescaled' spaces 'no longer privilege a primary regulatory level or neatly converge around a single, encompassing territorial center, national or otherwise' (2019: 83). Neo-Marxist urban geographer David Harvey (1982, 1985, 1989) argued that often production of urban spaces in cities are results of 'spatial fixes', rooted within larger, national or international territorial organization, consequently restructuring social and economic relations. In describing the spatial imprint of state upon the capitalist urban fabric, Henri Lefebvre (2009) introduced state mode of production (SMP) concept. SMP described the state as co-producer, manager of urbanization, supporting capital circulation with logistical infrastructures.

Why Scales Matter in State Socialist Planning History

Patterns of interscalar trajectories of urban development studied by experts on post-socialist countries are not mutually exclusive to those theories above. Most notably, Kimberly Zarecor (2017) highlighted those patterns of post-socialist neoliberalism in cities build upon the spatial logic of state 'socialist scaffold' and 'infrastructural thinking'. Within the centralized, hierarchical planning system, she acknowledged that large-scale master planning process positioned the cities as *nodes*, as or centers of industries and production of goods, serving the national economy and reproduced at different scales from urban to regional, while transportation networks serve as *connectors*. These also aided the distribution of services and goods between COMECON (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, a former alliance of state socialist countries) countries, encouraging trade and collaborative measures for military purposes. Her concepts do not contrast with Brenner (2019: 138–139)'s diagnosis of Fordist-Keynesian scaling of cities operating as *nodes* in global flows and *coordinates* of state territorial power. Hungarian scholar György Enyedi (1996) notes that, within the market economy, regulations administering territories were determined by values of urban land based on location whereas in the planned economy, lands were subject to resource allocations. He highlighted how the two systems tend to overlap. Similar to Harvey's version, Bohdan Jałowiecki (2010) documented that state enterprises aimed for accumulation by 'means of production'. With priority given to expansion of industries in absence of commercial land values, industrial enterprises occupy urban spaces, producing the much-needed housing and social facilities, thus securing political influence and ensuring growth.

Above all, experts rarely acknowledge different scalar approaches in which former state socialist countries took in planning their cities. Therefore, the contribution of this chapter is to expose them via comparison of former GDR (German Democratic Republic) planning practice to that of Czechoslovakia. It challenges pre-existing notions that mechanisms of planned economies in Central and East European countries operated similarly during state socialist period, focusing on the years 1969–1989 as this period displays more refined methods of spatial planning. They restructured their spatial territories following the wake of de-industrialization and rise of tertiary sector. This timespan differs from the early two decades in terms of higher production of consumer goods and increasing welfare social services in return for political obedience such as

provision of housing and holiday facilities. Opportunities arising in this research could bridge a gap of knowledge of how irreversible past planning methods affect current issues. By juxtaposing GDR planning practice to that of Czechoslovakia, these differences may offer nuanced insights into how they resolved certain problems. More importantly, this chapter examines implications in urban landscapes when great planning decisions were made based on different scalar approaches, thereby also affecting spatial distribution of housing and transportation.

Through contextual analysis of planning textbooks, journals, and plans, this chapter is comprised of two main sections. Firstly, it elaborates spatial planning definitions in its historical, economic context and instruments used to steer planning. Then, it reviews examples of how these different scalar approaches consolidate urban development patterns in cities, paying particular attention to transportation networks and distribution of housing settlements. By unlocking these differences, it suggests that Czechoslovakia as a federalized country adapted a more layered, hierarchical organization of planning practice in a larger scale than GDR.

Instruments of Spatial Planning in GDR

In spite of the Soviet model, much of the territorial planning experience in GDR harks back to its pre-war governments, hence the similarity of its hierarchical organizations with Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). As with the other state socialist countries, central organs determined location of new industries, and larger scale territorial planning was an important instrument in the first two decades to determine investments, short to long term economic planning and distribution of housing as auxiliary to heavy industry (Fege and Menge 1992). New cities cropped up in 1950s–60s to house employees in vicinity of industrial sites such as Eisenhüttenstadt and Halle Neustadt. Other than reconstructing new industrial sites and cities, territorial planning was important in standardizing technical infrastructures.

Critique of modern planning took hold in late 1960s, when, influenced by urban planning discourse in FRG and Italy among others, GDR paid attention to historical preservation and quality of urban cores in cities. Planning strategies revolved around the compact city idea, around the time that East Berlin was ordained to develop as the center of politics, culture and science, housing important buildings for ministries. There were clear urban boundaries and they worked at a sufficient, city-planning scale, the General Development Plan. In contrast to Czechoslovakia as discussed later in the next section, after deploying large-scale 'urban-regionalist' planning methods which led to the critiques of Fordist-Keynesian style of modern planning (Kress 2018: 156–157), GDR shifted its focus towards the qualitative regeneration of the cores of their conurbations. This was easier for the regime as they only had four large conurbations with more than a million residents each; East Berlin, Leipzig-Halle, Karl-Marx Stadt-Zwickau and Dresden (Goldzamt 1975: 102).

Re-introduced into the GDR planning system in 1965, the General Development Plan referred to not just construction of buildings, but also land divisions, public spaces and green areas for an entire city or agglomeration (Frick 2008: 167–168). For GDR, it was an instrument for long-term management and coordination of city planning, from determining suitable residential areas to qualitative transport planning (Sommer and Weise 1971; Kadatz 1997; Lindemann 2017). The General Transport Plan and General Plan for Urban Technical Supplies, produced by municipalities and approved by top organs, supplemented it. A prerequisite for approval was that they must comply with the Social Political Objectives, providing a comprehensive view of population growth, labor force, economic activities, investment, planned infrastructure and recreation and environmental protection (Kadatz 1997). For East Berlin, the 1969 Politbüro of the Socialist Unity Party and the leading central organs such as the district planning

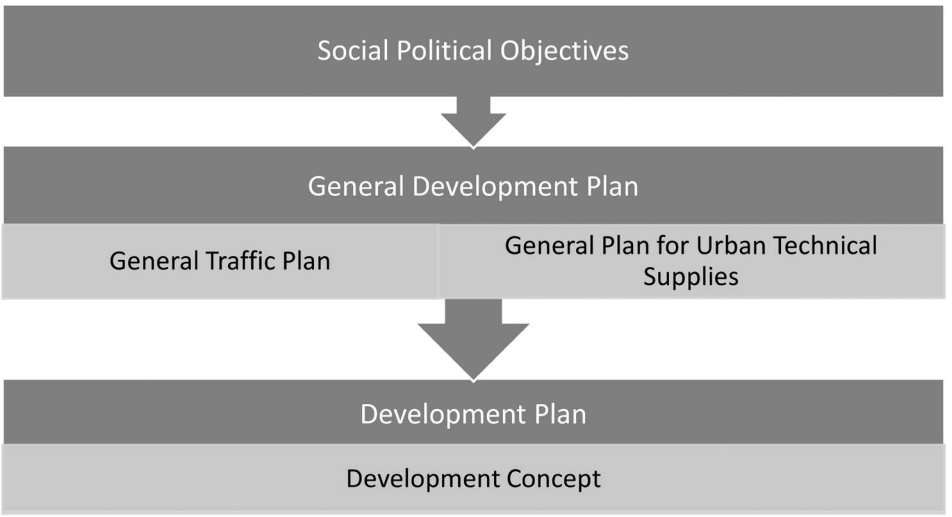

FIGURE 2.5.1 Simplified diagram of the hierarchy of the General Development Planning documentation in the GDR in 1972.

Source: Arzmi, 2019.

commissions were directly involved (Lindemann 2017). This General Development Plan usually range up to 1:25,000 in scale (Maaß 2006: 88–89). When focusing on core urban areas such as the city center or the housing settlement of Marzahn, they have their own Development Plans and Development Concept in smaller scales. An overview of these important planning instruments is shown in Figure 2.5.1.

Instruments of Spatial Planning in Czechoslovakia

Two parallel planning instruments dictated planning practice that emerged during the normalization period in Czechoslovakia. One was a set of territorial plans commonly used by architects and urban planners, which must be coordinated with oblast plans produced by centralized economic planners, an adaptation of the Soviet planned economy model. Oblast is a Russian word referring to regions, and they were very significant in the economic growth planning of Czechoslovakia as cities began to expand with high urban migration. They consisted of large city regions, called agglomerations with main city cores, the primary zones and edge zones (Buček 1983). Both territorial and oblast plans were blueprints for the long-term development of territories, encompassing issues of land-use, labor force, population growth, economic activities, transport planning and environment protection areas.

A territory, according to the Czechoslovak context, is an area with natural resources, therefore creating opportunities for exploitation and 'rational utilization' by the state (Hrůza 1977: 269). It could also refer to densely populated urban areas, as well as large rural settlements undergoing urbanization, controlled by state agencies (Ibid). Within the context of Czechoslovakia, territorial planning refers to the 'development of environment in large territories into uniform settlement systems' (Gál and Furdik, 1984: 6).

Created in 1949, territorial planning laws legalized state collectivization of lands for purposes of national economic development. Following federalization of Czechoslovakia with separate Czech and Slovak national governments in 1969, state agencies and local institutions

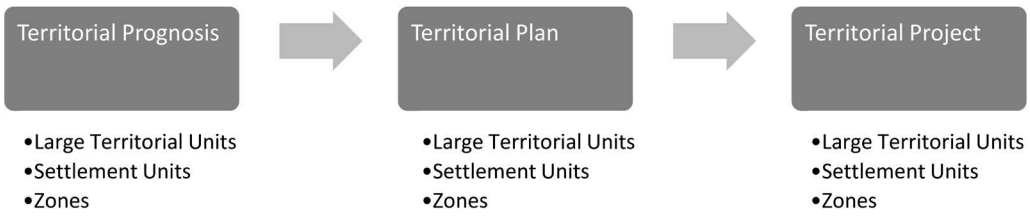

FIGURE 2.5.2 System of Territorial Planning documentation in Czechoslovakia in 1976.

Source: Arzmi, 2019 based on information obtained from Michalec, 1976 and Gál and Furdik, 1984.

were reorganized, and so were territorial planning laws. In 1976, they were divided into three different stages; Large Territorial Units, Zones and Settlement Units (Figure 2.5.2). Each corresponding plan not only have to agree with each other within the multiscale system, but also comply with centrally ordained Territorial Prognosis, its long-term economic, social demographic forecast and the Territorial Project, akin to general development plan. These laws even go down to the scale regulating the types of buildings that would be built in the Settlement Units Plan, i.e., the Building Act No. 50/1976, embedding the urban environment very strictly within the larger-scaled Territorial Plan (Ibid: 26). Prague, Brno and Bratislava for example, were considered cores of their agglomerations with their own Territorial Development Plans. Before they go into the stratified territorial units, central planners mapped out nationwide territories, identifying important areas for development before focusing on the big city agglomerations in larger 1: 500,000 scale. This planning system allowed the state to acquire more lands, annexing smaller municipalities in creation of newer satellite housing settlements, which intensified in 1970s. Despite federalization, center of governance was still in Prague and the federal government controlled much of the territorial and economic planning, with cultural activities and education left to the jurisdiction of the national states.

As the largest scaled planning unit of the Territorial Planning System, Large Territorial Units were measured in the technocratic form of economic indices, in 1:200,000. However, when the regime needed to focus on specific areas in detail, such as important building projects in Prague, 1:2500 plans were produced. Meanwhile, normative scale for settlement units ranged from 1:5000 to 1:25,000 which was akin to the GDR General Development Plan, whereas the Zonal Plan ranged from 1:1000 to 1:10,000, depending on the size of developed areas (Ibid: 27).

The other aspect of spatial planning in Czechoslovakia is the existence of oblast plans. Chart 3 is a translated diagram of the organization of planning activities in Slovakia, demonstrating the importance of oblast plan, which must mutually agree on the same level as territorial plan. The amount of investments for each territory was determined through the criteria specified in oblast plans, which were then allocated to the investors and state construction and industrial enterprises responsible for construction. While their GDR neighbors were concerned with compact city ideas with the government actually focusing on problems at urban scale, the expansion of city agglomerations with the satellite settlement system was a greater discourse in Czechoslovakia in the late 1960s in accordance with more technocratic economic planning methods. Influential Czech architect Emmanuel Hruška who worked on city planning in Bratislava reflected these core values, believing that the 'transformation of the economic structure would lead to transformations in the social structure' (1966: 409). By this time, Czechoslovakia had acquired the capacity to expand urbanization at an unprecedented scale, thanks to advancement in communications technology, industrialized building methods and good connection networks.

Implications of Different Scalar Approaches in Planning Practice

As experienced urban planners would know, at the time of planning inception, working in larger scales such as 1: 25,000 allow them to cover wider territories, but in order to concentrate on more detailed issues specific to the geographical location or urban context, they must work in smaller scales, i.e., 1: 10,000. In the days before AutoCAD, use of effective media is important, for example, thick markers and big felt pens are suitable in drawing up schematic, larger-scaled plans but details require fine-tipped pens and different textures, colors to highlight various features of the land-use plans in smaller scales. There is more margin for error when using large markers in small-scale plans for example, allowing displacement and overlooked areas.

Urban development during planned economy is in no doubt conceived at a much larger scale given the strict vertical hierarchy and democratic centralist principle of planning actors. Czechoslovakia, had a strict stratification system, where important state-wide projects were conceived on a larger, two-dimensional scale and were given more priority (Figure 2.5.3). When it comes down to planning urban projects on smaller scales, these must be compromised for larger scale infrastructural projects. Given that local municipalities and apparatuses must comply with central organs, these decisions are not flexible and certain delicate urban fabric had to be compromised or in some cases demolished for important projects.

Such as the case with Prague, the largest scale of inception for important urban planning decisions was 1:50,000, as the core of *Středočeský kraj* (Central Bohemian Agglomeration). Based on the finalized 1975 master plan of Prague Agglomeration (Podobský 1982), the Czechoslovak government meticulously planned specific areas of new settlement, capturing smaller adjacent communities and important development corridors, transforming the traffic system into a radial circular system (Hrůza 1977). They managed to protect the area of heritage interest in the city center from Old Town to Prague Castle, while successfully installing an underground subway. They also built large prefabricated panel housing estates further in the outskirts. Examples are Háje in the Southeast or Bohnice in Northwest. Bratislava was ranked hierarchically lower than Prague; therefore, any issues occurring on urban scale were not given attention in higher central organs, unless they pose as spatial barriers to important state infrastructural projects. Take for instance, the construction of the SNP (*Slovenského národného povstania* or Slovak National Uprising) Bridge in Bratislava, which was a part of the national highway network project in the late 1960s. The project tore down the Jewish quarter and parts of historic city walls, sacrificing a significant part of the city's cultural heritage in the face of modernity (Whiteaker 2014). Furthermore, clusters of new housing estates were built along highways as Bratislava expanded, while unresolved issues of adequate public transport networks led to restricted mobility, setting the stage for a more automobile-oriented urban planning.

The biggest advantage in Czechoslovakia's sectoral spatial planning vision was successful renewal and construction of highway networks connecting the main cities of Prague, Brno, Bratislava and Košice, which until now offer seamless connections between the Czech Lands and Slovakia, improving political-economic activities. However, it does not undermine technical issues, which were brought up frequently in 1980s architectural journals, as problems in communication between state apparatuses of City of Prague and *Středočeský kraj* tend to conflict with one another on waste disposal, complicated engineering infrastructural networks and effective land-use areas (Podobský, 1982: 31). Furthermore, they complained about incoherency and lack of coordination between oblast and territorial plans, admitting that there were little guidance in the translation of larger territorial plans into smaller scales when implementing the design and construction of urban spaces (Matoušková 1985; Zibrinová 1988: 23). Thereby, long-term goals and concepts eventually become lost in the process of land management and construction

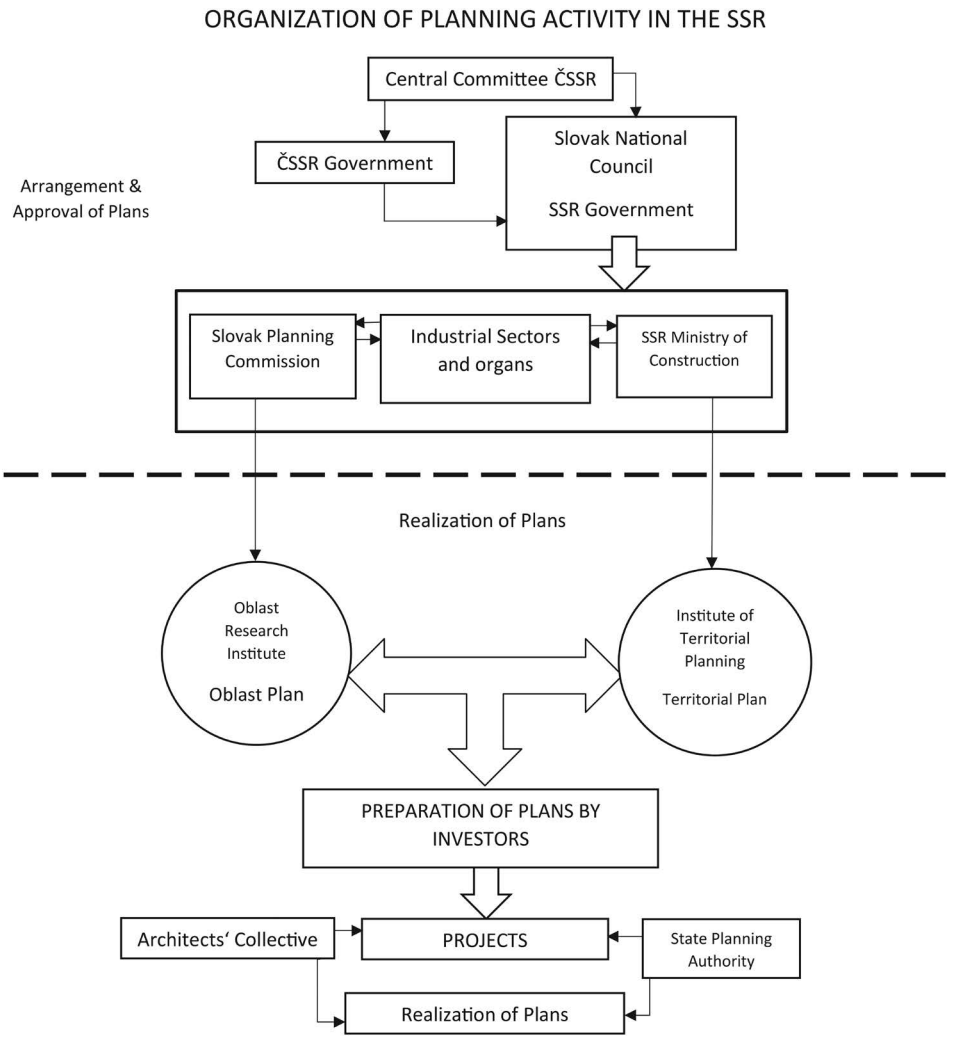

FIGURE 2.5.3 Organizational activity of planning practice in Slovakia under its official name, Slovak Socialist Republic (SSR) as part of Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (ČSSR), showing the equal weight of oblast plan with the territorial plan.

Source: Arzmi, 2019 based on the information obtained from Michalec, 1976 p.27 and Gál and Furdik, 1984: 10.

(Hrůza 1977: 272). As the need for more detailed land-use plans grew, a database was set up to allow local and regional state apparatuses to upload their technical data for the use of other planners in other levels of territorial planning hierarchy, allowing the state to regulate regional and urban planning activities (Václav Havlík 1984: 175). Additionally, this problem is further impaired by the fact that, after 1968, a number of officials in the local municipalities were purged from their positions due to alleged wrongdoings, thus replaced by newly recruited members more loyal to the central organs who had no clue about pending urban development issues. For Czechoslovakia, the State Planning Commission and the Ministry of Technology had a stronger role in city planning than localities (Michalec 1976: 265–268).

In comparison, GDR architects faced smaller scale urban planning problems. In late 1970s, they discussed the lack of clarity in General Development Plan, leading to confusion in the

in traffic planning, which despite criticism continued to focus on the motorcar and was only gradually expanded to strengthen non-automobile means of transport.

Housing saw the most consequential deregulation measures, as in many countries national and municipal institutions retreated from their responsibility, and handed residential construction and management over to the market. In practice, these policies were often inconsistent, as they attempted to retain a certain degree of social commitment while at the same time promoting entrepreneurialism and profitability. Likewise, they failed to create new housing for the economically weak, whose housing situation deteriorated.

Only in the countries of the Eastern bloc was the year 1989 a milestone. Here it marked the end of comprehensive socialist planning, which in fact had been declining for years. In Poland, Czechoslovakia, Russia, and elsewhere, deregulation and laissez-faire came to be particularly widespread, as the next-to-almighty socialist planning organs were dismantled or restructured, and gave way to comparatively weak institutions. On the positive side, this brought about new spaces for trade and leisure as well as increasing opportunities for homeownership, while on the negative side it led to urban sprawl, a voracious real estate market, and growing social disparities.

To some extent the differences between Eastern and Western Europe fade against those between particular countries and planning traditions. In Western Europe, countries such as Great Britain experienced a comprehensive change toward deregulation and the emergence of powerful private actors, while in Scandinavia planning authorities remained comparably influential. Countries such as the Netherlands or (West) Germany occupied a middle ground and kept some important municipal planning competencies, while in countries such as Austria municipal intervention, for example in the housing sector, was largely retained.

In the attempts to reduce and revise municipal planning the negative image of the "planned modernist city" loomed largely. Deregulation and the strengthening of the market were justified by the memories of the state-regulated city and its bleak modernist housing complexes, car parks, and traffic arteries. These were censured as the outcome of comprehensive municipal powers and the overbearing influence of number-crunching bureaucrats.

Municipal planning in the post-Cold War era thus developed around an inherent contradiction. The critics of rational top-down planning favored heterogeneous, incremental approaches by multiple actors, and hence inevitably a weakening of central planning authorities. At the same time, their vision of a post-functionalist city was based on density, mixed use, and social mixture, and therefore only achievable through strong planning. This contradiction in principle remained unresolved and continued to shape the course of planning for the time to come.

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INDEX

Note: Page numbers in *italics* and **bold** refer to figures and tables, respectively; and those followed by "n" refer to notes.

Aalborg Charter 187
abandoned artefacts 182
abandonment-dismantling-emptying 182–183
Abercrombie, P. 23–24, 73–74, 144
Academy of Arts, Breslau 101
Adshead, A. D. 23
aesthetic criteria 13
affinities *see* elective affinities
Africa 2, 199
Ahlberg, C.-F. 106, 115n1
Aire de Mise en Valeur de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine (AVAP) 128, 131–132, 133, 137
airport planning 264; *see also* planning
Albers, G. 12
Albin Hansson, P. 105–106
Aldridge, H. 23, 53, 56
Alexander, C. 187, 213
Alfonso XIII (King) 52
Almbladet (zine) 239; *see also* zines
Alomar, G. 58
Alphand, A. 54
Alternative Communities Movement 235, *236*
aménagement 80–89; *see also* planning
American City Planning 51
anarchism 213–215, 216, 218, 240
anarchist 74, 213–219, 244n5; *Cities of Tomorrow* 213–216; Geddes 216–219; Reclus 216–217; Turner 218–219
Anasagasti, T. 52, 57
Andersson, M. 111
Angers plan 82; planning, beautification and extension of *83*
Anglophone 8n3, 11–12
Anglo-Saxon: bias in 4; manual 53; planning historiography 2–3, 5; urbanism 54; visions 60
Antipode 214
appropriation *see* land appropriation
Architectes des Bâtiments de France (ABF) 130
Architectural Association (AA) 218
Architectural Design 218
Architecture Study Plan 52, 56, 58–59
Argentina 70n7, 75
Arquitectura 52, 54, 56
ArSe (zine) 239; *see also* zines
Art and Crafts movement 218
artefacts, abandoned 182; urban 177–178
Asia 2, 5, 199
Association Internationale d'Hygienistes et des Techniciens Municipaux 43
Astengo, G. 127
Athens 17, *18*
Aunós, E. 67
Ausstellungsgebaude 99
Australia 5, 199
authorized heritage discourse 147; *see also* discourse
automobile city 164–165, 263
automobiles, traffic planning for 263–264
autonomy 91, 122, 153, 160, 238, 240–241, 244, 244n5
Avenida del Generalísimo 73
Avermaete, T. 5

Babylon 24
Banham, R. 238
Barcelona, Spain 46, 51–52, 56, 59, 72–74, 76, 87, 189–190
Barcelona Plan 52
Barcelona School of Architecture (Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura) 56
Bardet, G. 74
Barker, F. 149

Barré, F. 129
barriadas (self-help neighborhoods) 218
Bartsch, H. *97*
Bataille, G. 238
baukultur 194–195
Baumeister 78
Baumeister, R. 13, *14*, 15, 21–22, 24, 29–30
Bazalgette, J. 27, *28*
beautification (*embellisssement*) 39, 80–81, *83*, *84*, *86*, 87
Belgium 7, 41, 62, 73, 75
Belluš, E. 121
Bender, G. 92
Bengtsson, B. 112
Berlage, H. P. 64
Berlin, Germany 13, 18, 41, 91
Berndt, K. *112*
Berneri, G. 215
Berneri, J. 215
Berneri, M.-L. 215
Bernoulli, H. 99
bias: Anglo-Saxon 4; planning 244; potential 141
Bidagor Lasarte, P. 59, 72–78
Bidagor Plan 76
big events, urban planning after 1989 265
Blom, A. 147
Bodenschatz, H. 118
Booth, C. 28, 41
Boundary Street 34
Bratislava, Slovakia 118–125
Bratislava Castle Hill 120, 124, *124*
Bredäng 111
Brenner, N. 154
Breslau, 91–94, 95–96, 98–101
Brinckmann, A. E. 23
British Garden City movement 21
British Science Association 18
Brix, J. 23
Brussels, Germany 7, 13
brutering (grossing) 258
Buchloh, B. 237
Buckingham, J. S. 17
Building Act of 1947 114
Bünz, O. 73
bureaucratization 28
Busquets, G. 57

Campos Venuti, G. 127
Canary Wharf 260–261, *261*, 264
canonization 11
Canosa, E. 53
capital in land 177–178
capitalism 5, 74, 106, 153, 268
capitalist city 176, 178, 182, 183–184
Carson, R. 187, 215–216
Casas Baratas (Cheap Housing) Law (1911) 52
Casas Baratas Law of 1921 57
The Case for Town Planning (Aldridge) 53, 56
cassiers sanitaires 41
Castles, F. G. 114
Castro Plan 51
Cebrián, J. 53
Central Europe 94, 101, 153–154, 201
Central Society of Architects 65, 68–69
central spaces 177
Cerdá, I. 51–54, 188–190
Chabolas del Puente de Praga, Madrid, Spain *47*
Chadwick, E. 27
change management 127
Chelseafication 133
Cherry, G. 4
China 5
Choay, F. 188, 191–194
Cholera 31, *32*, *35*
CIAM Charter of Athens 191
Cities of Tomorrow (Peter) 5, 213–216, *214*, *216*
citizenship: insurgent 237; social reproduction space for 176, *177*
city centers 33–34, 42–43
city-making process *see* European city-making process
City Plan 246, 250, 252
city-region 190–191, 217
Civic Art: Studies in Town Planning, Parks, Boulevards and Open Spaces (Mawson) 53
Civics: As Applied Sociology (Geddes) 217
Civil War 58–59, 74; *see also* First World War; Second World War
Civitas 53
Clearance Act (No 177/1940) 121
Clout, H. 139, 150
Cold War 3, 47, 203, 256–257
collective public transport 165–167, *167*; *see also* public transport
College's Landscape Architecture of Harvard University 51
colonial/colonialism 7n2, 87, 202, 212, 235, 244n1, 271
Comité national de la Reconstruction 89
Comité national d'urbanisme 89
commercialization 41, 46
Commoner, B. 187
Commonwealth 2
communes 81, 235
communications: European planning 200–201; internal and external 269; mass 28
Communitas 215
community-based living 100
competition 1, 17, *123*, 124, 142; among nations 2; architecture 87; international 122; photography 96, *97*, 101; role in growth of Madrid 73
complexity, heritage 142–143
comprehensive integrated model 204
conditioning, urban hygiene 35–36
Confederaciones Hidrográficas (Hydraulic drainage Zones of the larger Rivers) 57
conflicts 143, 145, 183, 201, 205, 237
Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) 58, 60, 189, 191, 218
connectors 154

conservation-industrial complex 244n3
Construcción de ciudades según principios artísticos (Sitte) 53
construction-emptying-regeneration 176–177
construction industry 111
contagion theory 30–31
containerization 231
cooperation 163, 166, 179
Copenhagen Finger Plan 107
Corbusier, L. 54
Cornudet Law 80–89; Angers plan 82; legacy of 87–89; Marseille, France 85–87; medium-sized town 82; urbanism movement in France 80–81; Vitry-sur-Seine, Paris 82–85
Cort, C. 52, 53–54, 57–58, 68
Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) 154, 160
coventry central area plan *143*
Crespo, S. 57, 64–67
crisis 270; of 1929/30 88; economic 46, 56, 93, 114; housing 92; political 88; transnational financial 40
criticism 4–5, 56–58, 109, 111–112, 114, 121, 164, 237, 257–258, 263, 266
Crooke, P. 215
CSSR 164–166, 168, *169*, 170
Culture of the Cities (Mumford) 218
Czechoslovakia 62, 94, 119, 153–161; rescaling of cities and regions 160–161; scalar approaches in planning practice 158–160; scaling 154–155; spatial planning in 155–157, *156*; state socialism to the European Union 160–161; state socialist planning history 154–155; Territorial Planning documentation in *157*; urban plans of 75
Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR) 164–166, 168, *169*, 170
Czech Republic 7, 160
Czsekelius, O. 73

Damaschke, A. 28
Datawheel 226, *227*
De Carlo, G. 215
decentralization 28, 66, 69, 130
de la Granja, L. P. y 63
de Montoliu, C. 53, 57–58
Denmark 62, 260
Departmental Commissions (*Commissions départementales*) 88–89
deregulating housing 257–260; *see also* housing
de Rivera, P. 57
Der Städtebau (Stübben) 15, *15*, 53, 57
design 123, 249; architectural 36; building 145; community 213; formal 24; and implementation of public squares 15; of public space 250; regional 94–99; role in settlement of the WuWA 100; square block pattern 51; top-down imposition 240; of town development plans 15; urban 6, 45, 54, 118–120, 172, 186–188, 194–196, 257, 261
de Terán, F. 73
Deutscher Werkbund 91, 100
de Vries, B. 147
de Zuazo, S. 73
dictatorship 57, 118–125, 204, 209–211, 212n2
Diefendorf, J. 224
Die fertige Wuwa in Bildern (The finished WuWA in pictures) 96
Die Neue Stadt (Feder) 74
Diesener, F. *97*
Die Wohnung 100
discomfort 4–5, 57
discourse 209, 237, 244; architectural 93; authorized heritage 147; memorial policy 209; official 87–88; planning historiography 5; spatial planning tools 2; town planning 11–13, 16–17, 21, 23–24; urban planning 155
dispossession-appropriation 179–182
Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea 58
Dresden, Germany 13
Dulla, M. 120, 123–124
Düsseldorf 11
dynamic sample 239

Eastern Block 46, 263
East Europe 48, 154, 161; *see also* Europe
East Germany 256; *see also* Germany
Eberstadt, R. 13, *16*, 16–17, 22–23
economic growth 1, 48, 156; *see also* growth
Effenberger, T. *98*
Egypt 16, 24
Elche 54, *55*
elective affinities 186–195; historical cities 191–194; long *durée* in urban design 194–195; sustainable cities 186–188; sustainable urban design 186–188; urban geometry 188–190; urban sustainability 186–188
Elective Affinities (*Die Wahlverwandtschaften*) (Goethe) 187
El problema de la vivienda en Inglaterra (López Valencia) 65
England 51, 127; common lodging houses 33; *Garden City Association* 28; *The Home Colonisation Society* 28; housing laws in 33; housing problem 32; *Land Nationalisation Society* (LNS) 28; public health care 30; racial hygiene 35; urban plans of 75; urban redevelopment 34
English Town Planning Act 51
Entwicklungslinien im Städtebau (Albers) 12
environmental transgressive planning 237–238; *see also* transgressive planning
Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam *264*
Escola d'Administració Pública de Catalunya (Catalonian Commonwealth) 57
Escola de Funcionaris d'Administració Local (School of Public Services) 57
Esposizione Universale Roma project 123
Estatuto Municipal 57
eugenics 36
Eugenic Society 28, 36
Europe 51, 53; East Europe 48, 154, 161; informal urbanization (*see* informal urbanization)
European Capital of Culture 265

European city-making process 175–184; abandonment-dismantling-emptying 182–183; construction-emptying-regeneration 176–177; dispossession-appropriation 179–182; historical social product 183–184; industrial property 177–179; military property 177–179; production-construction 177–179; railway property 177–179; strategies 179–182; urban regeneration of artefacts-properties 182–183
European Commission 153
European planning 199–206; cohesive aspects within 203–204; communications 200–201; nationalism 201–202; overseas imperialism 202; project and 204–205; transport 200–201; wars and 202–203
European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) 205
European Union 7, 137, 154, 160–161, 204
European urbanism *see* elective affinities
Evelyn, J. 17
The Evolution of Cities (Reclus) 217
exhibition(s) 11–12, 68; competitions and 62, 269; congress and 64; housing estate 100; of the IFHTP 60, 67; of radical Modernist urbanism 141; Stadtplanung in Breslau 91–94; Stuttgart 99; *Vystava Soudobe Kultury* 94; *Wohnung und Werkraum Ausstellung* (WuWA) 91–92, *95*, 96
Expert Group on Urban Environment 187
Extrarradio 42

factories 260–263
Farsta center, Stockholm *110*
fascism 118–125, 193
Feder, G. 74
Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) 155; *see also* Germany
Federation of German Land Reformers 28
Fernández Balbuena, G. 65, 68
Ferretti, F. 216–217
festivalization of urban development 265; *see also* urban development
First Act on Cheap Houses 63
First Garden City at Letchworth 19
First National Congress of Urban Planning 68
First World War 52, 56, 80, 93; *see also* Civil War; Second World War
Florensa, A. 53
Ford, G. B. 53
Foucault, M. 238
France 2–3, 5, 51, 62, 201; town planning manuals 13; urbanism movement in 80–81; urban plans of 75
Frankfurt, Germany 91; *see also* Germany
Freedom to Build (Turner) 219
free-market policy 260
Freestone, R. 4–5, 12
French Urban Planning Law of 1958 76
Frey, K. 12
Fritsch, T. 29
Fritz, J. 22

Galton, F. 35–36
García Cascales, J. 65, 68
García Mercadal, F. 73
Garden Cities 18, 21
Garden Cities in Theory and Practice (Sennett) 17
Garden Cities of To-morrow (Howard) 21
Garden City Association 17, 21, 28
GDR (German Democratic Republic) 154–155, 164
Geddes, P. 23, 54, 190, 193, 216–219
Gemeindewohnungen (municipal flats) 258
General City Plans (PRG) 250
General Development Plan 155–156, *156*
General Polish National Exhibition *see Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa* (PeWuKa)
gentrification 133
Genzmer, F. 23
George, H. 28
geospatial mapping *228*, *230*
German Democratic Republic (GDR) 154–155, 164
German Garden City Society 28
German Society for Housing Reform 28
Germany 2–3, 11, 51, 62, 106, 201; housing problem 32; public health care 30; *Society for Promotion of Inner-colonisation* 28; squats on public lands 41; town planning manuals 13–17; urban plans of 75; urban redevelopment 34; *Verein für öffentliche Gesundheitspflege* 29; *see also* Hamburg, Germany
Gibson, D. 143
Giese, E. 167
Giovannoni, G. 193
globalization 222, 224–225, 232, 257
Global South 4, 39
Gočár, J. 122–123
Godwin Bursary (travel grant) 18
Goethe, J. W. 187
Goetze, R. 219
Goldzamt, E. 153
Grand Paris 45
Granés, N. 52
Gran Madrid 45
gray spaces 39
Great Britain 27–28, 144, 201; class differences 258; deregulation 266; dominant form of housing 32; industrialization 149; *tabula rasa* 142; town planning 17; town planning manuals 13; Twentieth Century Society 150; urban plans of 75
Greater London Plan 144
Gréber, J. 86–87
Gréber Plan 87
Greece 15–16
Griffin, R. 118
Grindtorp housing, Täby, Greater Stockholm *113*
Gross Berlin 45
Grotjahn, A. 36
growth: economic 1, 48, 156; of large cities 30, 66, 81; and modernization of the Italian cities 246; population 51, 57, 153, 155; processes 270; substandard city 46; and territorial planning 247; of trade 229; uncontrolled city 44; urban 39, 41,

43–45, 47, 51, 81, 83, 93, 128, 165–166, 168, 172, 178, 247, 249–250; worldwide crisis 270
Gruneiche 99
Guichard circular 257

Hall, P. 5, 105–106, 111, 114, 213–216, *214*, *216*
Hamburg, Germany 27, 31, 231–232; miasma 31; mortality due to Cholera in *32*; *Nördliche Altstadt* 34; port city territories 227; sewer system *29*; slum clearance in *35*; *Südliche Neustadt* 34; transnational planning history 227–231; urban redevelopment tasks 34
Hampstead Garden Suburb 19
Handbook of Architecture (Stübben) 15
Handbook of Building Lore 21
Handbuch des Wohnungswesens und der Wohnungsfrage (Eberstadt) *16*, 16–17
harbors *see* master planning harbor
Harris, A. 224
Hårsman, B. 112, 114
Harvey, D. 115, 154
Harwood, E. 147
Häusler, P. *98*
Hayden, D. 237
Healey, P. 224
Hegel, G. F. W. 3
Heim, P. 92, *92*, 99
Heimat movement 98
Heimatschutzstil 93
Hein, C. 5
Hénard, A. 18
Hénard, E. 54, 58–59
heritage: complexity 142–143; and history 139–150; multiple plans 142–143; personal conflicts 143–145; protection **132**, 132–133; reappraising 146–148; rebuilding 145–146; replanning 141–145; re-rebuilding 146–148
historical anarchist planning tradition 244n5
historical cities 187, 191–194
historical social product 183–184
historiography 11–24, 44, 46; Anglo-Saxon planning 2–3, 5; discourse planning 5; history in town planning manuals 13–20, 22–24; identified uses of history 21–22; planning theory as means in planning history 12–13; *see also* planning historiography
history: British town planning manuals 17–20; Czechoslovakia's state socialist planning 154–155; and heritage 139–150; identified uses of 21–22; multi-layered 246–248; planning 2, 4, 11–13, 36; political 2; in town planning manuals 13–20, 23–24; transnational 47–48; transnational planning 222–232; urban 247
Hobrecht, J. 29
Holston, J. 237
The Home Colonisation Society 28
Horsfall, T. 21
housing: corporations 259; demand 43; deregulating 257–260; estate exhibition(s) 100; issues of low-income groups 32; laws in England 33; legislation in Spain 66–67; problem in England 32; shortages in Sweden 106, 110–114; standards 31, 41; urban hygiene 33–34
Housing: an Anarchist Approach (Ward) 214
Housing and Town Planning Congresses 62–69; *see also* exhibition(s)
Housing by People (Turner) 219
Housing of the Working Classes Act 33
Howard, E. 17, 21, 65, 107, 190–191
Hruška, E. 157
Hughes, J. 214
Hyde, R. 149

ideology 29–30, 88, 118–120, 122–125, 145, 181, 244
immaterial production 239–244; *see also* production
Indore Report (Geddes) 214, 218
industrialization 32, 51, 105, 111–112, 153–154, 163, 179, 229, 263, 270
industrial property 177–179
informal urbanization 39–48, 48n1; during 20th century 43–46; after Second World War 46–47; development 39–42; origins of 39–42; transnational history 47–48
infrastructure/infrastructural 210–211, 217; administrative 72; green 194; logistical 154; networks 229; problems 30; public 41, 44; road 163, 165, 231; sanitary 41, 46; technical 155; thinking 154; traffic 208, 264; transport 135–136, 165, 172; urban 43
"inner-urban expansion" 34
Insolera, I. 178
institutionalization 51, 59, 237
Instituto de Reformas Sociales (IRS) 57, 62–63, 65
insurgent citizenship 237
integrated planning 163, 165–167; *see also* planning
interdisciplinary perspective 191
interests 232, 252, 260; of capital 184; capitalists 41; hegemonic 208; of house and land owners 34
International Federation for Housing and Town Planning (IFHTP) 43, 54, 60, 62–69, 204
International Garden Cities 203
International Housing Association 43
International Planning History Society (IPHS) 5
interwar period 6, 51, 88, 119–120, 123, 128, 210, 212n2
IPHS *see* International Planning History Society
Italian Law 457 128
Italy 2–3, 51; town planning manuals 13; urban plans of 75
Ivry-Sur-Seine, Paris, France *44*

Jahrhunderthalle 91–93
Jałowiecki, B. 154
Jansen, H. 60, 73
Japan 5, 8n7
Jaussely, L. 52, 87
Junta para Ampliación de Estudios e Investigaciones Científicas 54
Jürgens, O. 51
Jurgers, O. 60

Kakstäder 42
Keatinge-Clay, P. 218
King, A. 224
Kingsway 34
Kista 111
Klemm, B. 143
Klette, H. *98*
Kohn, B. 216
Kononowicz, W. 93
Kovats, B. 48n1
Kramár, E. 122–123
Kreuer, W. 121
Kroll, L. 216
Kropotkin, P. 213–215, 244n5
"Krotten" in Limburg, Netherlands *45*
Kulturbund Schlesien 96

laissez-faire 39–42
land appropriation 46
land commercialization 46
Land Law 76, 77
land management 132, 158
Land Nationalisation Society (LNS) 28
land occupation 133, *134*
Landsberger, F. 96, 99
landscape 78, 98, 100, 130; architects 86–87; reconstruction of Plymouth *148*; residential 246–248, 252; Stadtplanung in Breslau 91–94; terrain and 111; urban 141, 147–148, 252
Landscape Protection Law 78
land use management model 204
Lane, B. M. 120
Lange, E. *98*
La Padula, E. 121–122, *123*
Larrodera, E. 58–59
La Teoría General de la Urbanización 52
Latin America 2–3, 5
Latin Europe 5
Lauterbach, H. *94*
Le Case popolari e Le Citá Giardino 53
Lefebvre, H, 154
The Legacy of Transgressive Objects (Müller) 237
legal instruments 106
legislation 252, 260; city planning 88; common lodging houses 33; and planning 76; Spanish housing 62, 66–67; town planning 13, 80
Leipzig Charter 195
Le Marais, Paris 133
Leopold, A. 187
Le Sauvage (zine) 239
Les promenad de Paris (Alphand) 54
Lever Dynasty 28
Lewis, N. P. 54
Ley del Suelo y Ordenación Urbana 128
Ley de Régimen de Suelo y Ordenación Urbana 59
Libera, A. 122, *123*
light rail 168; *see also* tramway
Lindley, W. 27, 29
Linz, J. J. 119
Llopart, A. 52, *56*, 56–57 59
Local Agenda 21 187
Lock, M. 142
Loi Grenelle II [Second Grenelle Law] 131
Loi Malraux (Malraux Act) 129
Loi relative à la solidarité et au renouvellement urbains (SRU) 135
Loi sur les Monuments Historiques 129
London, England 11, 17, 27; *Boundary Street* 34; housing problems in 29; *Kingsway* 34; sewer system *28*; slums in 41; transnational planning history 227–231
London Docklands Development Corporation 260
long 1970s 235, 237–240, 244n1
long *durée* in urban design 194–195
López Valencia, F. 57, 63–68, 70n13
lotissements 43–44, 81
Lubbers, R. 256
Lüdemann, H. 93
Lukačovič, Š. 122–123

Madrid, Spain 39, 51; *Extrarradio* 42; urban void 181, *181*
Madrid Plan 52
Madrid School of Architecture 52–53
Magnaghi, A. 216
Magnago Lampugnani, V. 12
Making the Invisible Visible (Sandercock) 237
Malraux, A. 129
Malraux Act *see Loi Malraux* (Malraux Act)
Malthus' population law 36
management 266; city 88; density 190; land 132, 158; land use model 204; of natural resources 237; *see also* change management
manuals, town planning 11, 12–20, 22–24, 270; *see also* town planning
Marais PSMV 133–135
Markelius, S. 107, 115n2
Marseille, France: Cornudet Law in 85–87; planning, beautification and extension of *86*
Martin, B. 218
master planning harbors 260–263
material production 239–244; *see also* production
Mattsson, H. 114
Mawson, T. H. 53
McHarg, I. 187, 191
Mediterranean Europe 46; *see also* Europe
medium-sized cities 163–173; *see also* tramway
medium-sized town 80, 82, 86, 165
Mercadal, G. 73
Mesopotamia 16
Metchnikoff, É 217
methodological approaches in planning theory 12
Meyer, H. 231
miasma theory 30–31
Middle Way movement 105
military property 177–179
Mill, J. S. 28
Million Program 110–114
Ministerio de Instrucción Pública y Bellas Artes (Ministry of Education and Fine Arts) 58

Ministry of Labour, Trade and Industry 63–64, 65, 67
Mitterand, F. 265
modern city 24, 81, 164, 178, 240
modernism 6, 91–101, 124, 146, 249
modernist top-down planning 240
modernity 72, 109, 118, 124, 145–146, 153, 158, 193, 219
Modern Movement 164–165
Molzahn, I. 98–99
Molzahn, J. *95*
Moore, S. 224
Mora, Á. 182
Morandi, C. 128
Moravčíková, H. 120, 123
Morocco 75, 87, 202
Morris, W. 30, 218
mortality rate 30–31
Moshamer, L. 98
Muguruza, P. 58
Müller, K. 237
multiple plans, heritage 142–143
Mumford, L. 187, 191, 213
Munich, Germany 17–18; *see also* Germany
Municipal Statute 65, 68–69
Murcia, un ejemplo sencillo de trazado urbano (Cort) 54

narratives *see* neglected narratives
Nash, J. 17
Nasr, J. 224
National Building Conference, Madrid 66, 68
National Committee for Reconstruction *see* *Comité national de la Reconstruction*
National Congress of Architects 68
National Housing Reform Council (NHRC) 28
nationalism: European planning 201–202; political Catholicism and 119
National Town Planning Committee *see* *Comité national d'urbanisme*
national urban planning 76, *78*
Nazi Germany 119–120, 124; *see also* Germany
neglected narratives 246–253; multi-layered history 246–248; ordinary city 248–253
Němec, R. 120
Netherlands 2, 106, 147, 259
Nettlefold, J. S. 33
Neues Bauen 93
New Earswick 19
New Urban Spaces: Urban Theory and the Scale Question (Brenner) 154
A New Vision of the Housing Deficit 219
New York 17
Nielsen, C. 93
nodes 154, 231
Nolen, J. 53, 64
Non-Plan (Hughes and Sadler) 214
Nördliche Altstadt 34
Northern Europe 105; *see also* Europe
North Sea *228*, 229
Nouvelle Géographie Universelle (NGU) 217
Nuremberg, Germany 146; *see also* Germany

Olson, L. *108*
Opérations Programmées d'Amélioration de l'Habitat (OPAHs) 131
oral history 247
ordinary city 248–253
organic planning 215
overseas imperialism 202
Owl of Minerva 3

Pagano, G. 193
paradigms: automobile city 165; of city planning 166; intervention project 57; modernist 256; *quartiere integrato* 250; state-market 249, 251; urban hygiene 35
Paris, France 4, 18, 39; St. Trinité in Hausmann 13; *Zone* 42
Paris City Council 135
Paris Inter-Allied Conference 54
Parker, B. 17, 19
Patrick Geddes in India 218
Paz Maroto, J. 73
Pérez-Mínguez Villota, L. 73
Perotti, E. 12
Persico, E. 193
personal conflicts 143–145; *see also* conflicts
Pessina, G. 128
Piani di Recupero [Restoration Plans] 128
Piani Particolareggiati [Detailed Development Plans] 128
Piani Regulatore Generali [General Urban Development Plans] 128
Piazza Pitagora, Turin (Italy) *251*
Pieper, H. *144*
pigsty theory 33
Piraeus 17
Pisuerga Valley, Valladolid-Palencia industrial corridor (Spain) *192*
Plan de Sauvegarde et Mise en Valeur (PSMV) 128–130, 133, 135
Plan Local d'Urbanisme (PLU) 130–131
Plan Macià 189
Plan Nacional de Obras Hidráulicas 57
Planning and Building Act 114
planning historiography 270; Anglo-Saxon bias in 4–5; asymmetries of 2–3; functions of 3–4
planning history 2, 4, 11–13, 36, 207–212, 244n4, 268–271; circulation of matter between humans and nature 270; external communication 269; internal commnucation 269; land clearance 269; orientation toward growth 270; planning 268–270; product 207–210; production 207–210; propaganda 207–210; *Städtebau* 210–212; terminological and factual incongruities 269
planning instruments 6, 91, 127–137, 269
planning theory: international 12; in planning history 12–13
planning tradition 5, 24, 72, 86, 172, 199, 205, 244n5, 266
Plan of Prague Agglomeration 160
Platz und Monument (Brinckmann) 23
Ploetz, A. 36

Poděbrady Army Barracks *176*
Poland *63*, 75, 94, 164, 168, 258, 260, 266
political system 229
Pontes, L. 66
population growth 51, 57, 153, 155; *see also* growth
portable utopias 240
port city regions 222–232
PortCityScape 222, *223*
Portugal 46–47, 75, 210
postwar Italian cities 246–253; *see also* neglected narratives
poverty, urban hygiene 33–34
The Power of Place (Hayden) 237
Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa (PeWuKa) 94
product/production: European planning history 207–210; immaterial 239–244; material 239–244; production-construction 177–179; *see also Städtebau*
Programme National de Requalification des Quartiers Anciens Dégradés (PNRQAD) 135–136, *136*
project, European planning 204–205
propaganda, European planning history 207–210
property *see* military property
Provo (zine) 239
Prussian Law on Building Lines of 1875 15
public health care 30
public history 247
public squares: historical review 15
public transport, collective 165–167, *167*
Purdom, C. B. 65

Qualls, K. 150
quartieri integrati (integrated neighborhoods) 250

racial hygiene 35–36
railway property 177–179
Ramos, S. 5
rapid tramway 167–170
rapid urbanization 106; *see also* urbanization
rationalization 30, 111, 130, 164, 172
Read, H. 215
Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando 53
reappraising, heritage 146–148
rebuilding heritage 145–146
Reclus, É. 216–217
Reclus, P. 216–217
reconceptualizing housing 240; *see also* housing
reconstruction landscape *148*; *see also* landscape
reforms 4–5, 29–33
regional economic planning model 204
regional planning 1, 58, 68, 73, 187, 190, 205, 213, 218; *see also* planning
Reichstag 34
renewal 58, 76, 81, 89, 128–129, 134, 158, 175, 184, 192–193, 207, 252
Rental Regulation Act of 1942 114
rent seeking activities 178
replanning heritage 141–145
re-rebuilding heritage 146–148
rescaling of cities and regions in Czechoslovakia 160–161
retreat of the state 259
Rhine-Alpine model of capitalism 106
Ribas i Piera, M. 59
Richtlinie für die Planung und Gestaltung der verbesserten Straßenbahn – Schnellstraßenbahn 169
right to buy 257–258
Rinkeby, Spånga 111, *112*
Rodrigo, C. 54, *55*, 57
Romania 75
Rome 16–17, *180*
Rothenburg *16*
Rotterdam 227–231
Rowntree, B. S. 28
Royal Commission for Housing of the Working Classes 33
Royal Decree-Act of July 28, 1925 67
Royal Decree-Act of October 10, 1924 67
Royal Sanitary Institute 29
Rue Champlain, XX arrondissement, Paris, France *42*
Rueda, S. 189
Ruskin, J. 30

Saarinen, E. 64
Sadler, S. 214
Safeguarded Area 129
Salvador Carreras, A. 65, 68
Sambricio, C. 73
Sandercock, L. 237
Sanfeliú, P. B. 58
Sanguigna *194*
sanitary city 27–36; *see also* urban hygiene
sanitary standards 31
satellite cities 66–67
Saunier, P.-Y. 224
scaling, Czechoslovakia 154–155
Scandinavia 105
Scavuzzo, L. 128
Schilling, O. 34
Schinkel, K. F. 22
Schlesische Monatshefte 96, 99–100
Schlüter, P. 256
Schnellstraszenbahnen (Giese) 167
Schwartz, G. 149
Scotland 75
search for autonomy 241, 244; *see also* autonomy
Sección de Casas baratas (SCB) 62–63
Second Act on Cheap Houses 66–67
Second Republic 57–58, 65
Second World War 46–47, 74, 106, 191, 203
Secteurs Sauvegardés (SS) (Safeguarded Areas) 128–129, 133
Segal, W. 216
self-contained family housing 33; *see also* housing
Sennett, A. R. 13, 17–18, *18*, 21–22
sewer systems 27, *28*, *29*, 30, 33, 40, 42
Sharp. T. 146
Sidenbladh, G. 107, 113–114, 115n3
Siedlungsgesellschaft Breslau A.G. 92, 93, 101
Siedlung und Stadtplanung in Schlesien (Settlement and City Planning in Silesia) 92–93

Silent Spring (Carson) 215–216
Silver, C. 5
Sitte, C. 13, 15, 18, 53, 54, 59
Skärholmen 111
Skarpnäck 111
Slovakia 7, 119–120, 122, 160
Slovak People's Party 119, 122–123, 125
Slovak Socialist Republic (SSR) *159*
Slovak University 121
Slovenskeho narodneho povstania (SNP) 158
slum clearance 27–36; London, England 41; restoration 35; urban hygiene 33–34
Smith, M. P. 224
Smith, T. D. 259
social: city 190; dispossession 183; expropriation 182; groups 2; housing 52; hygiene 36; justice 1; product 178, 183–184; reproduction space for citizenship *177*
Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterna) 105
Social Democratic Welfare State 114
Social Democrats 106
socialism 6, 153–161
socialist scaffold 154
Socialist Unity Party 155
social reproduction space *177*
Sociedad Central de Arquitectos (Central Society of Architects) 52, 57
Society for Promotion of Inner-colonisation 28
Sociological Review 54
Soria, A. 52
Southeast Asia 5
Spain 5; Barcelona 46, 51–52, 56, 59, 72–74, 76, 87, 189–190; housing and town planning 69; housing legislation 66–67; and the IFHTP 63–69; Madrid 39, 42, 51, 181, *181*; town planning manuals 13; urbanism teaching in 51–60
Spanische Städte (Jürgens) 51
Spanish Civil War 53, 58, 65; *see also specific entry*
Spanish Republic 72–73
spatial planning 1–2, 36, 46, 153–155, 239, 268; competency 205; in Czechoslovakia 156–157; in GDR 155–156; tools and discourses 2; *see also* planning
Speer, A. 73
Spencer, H. 36
Spirn, A. W. 191
społdzielnie mieszkaniowe (housing cooperatives) 258–259
Staal, E. 259
Stadtbaupläne in alter und neuer Zeit (Baumeister) 22
Städtebau 6, 56, 59, 212n2; concept of 207–210; municipal 210–211; private sector 210–211, 212n3; as science 211; state-controlled 210–211; temporal dimension of 209–210; *see also* product/production
Städte-Bau (Sitte) 13
Stadt-Erweiterungen in technischer, baupolizeilicher und wirthschaftlicher Beziehung (Baumeister) 13, *14*
Städtisches Strassenwesen und Städtereinigung (Baumeister) 13, *14*
Stadt und Text (Magnago Lampugnani, Frey and Perotti) 12
stakeholder research 147
Stano, J. *124*
Stare Miasto 146
state mode of production (SMP) 154
state-socialism 2, 163–173; automobile city 164–165; collective public transport in urban planning 165–167; of Czechoslovakia to the European Union 160–161; integrated planning 165–167; Modern Movement 164–165; rapid tramway incorporation into urban planning 167–170; tramways 164–165, 171–173; transport-city relations 171–173; *see also* socialism
Stein, C. S. 64
Stenberg, E. 112
Stephan, H. 121
Stockholm, Sweden 106–110; *Kakstäder* 42
strategies: emptying 179–182; green 187; and ordinary city 248–253
Středočesky kraj (Central Bohemian Agglomeration) 158
Street Farm (zine) 239–240, *243*
street intersection layouts *14*
St. Trinité in Hausmann's Paris 13
Stübben, J. 13, 15, 18, 21–23, 29, 53–54, 56–57, 59–60
Sudreau, P. 76
sustainability 244n3; urban 186–188, 194
sustainable cities 186–188
sustainable urban design 186–188
sustainable urbanism 187
Sutcliffe, A. 4, 12, 224
Sweden 105–115; growth in towns and cities 106–110; housing shortages 106, 110–114; legal instruments 106; Million Program 110–114; new planning 106; rapid urbanization 106; Stockholm 106–110; urban plans of 75, 114–115
Switzerland 62, 75, 106

Taylor, G. A. 24
technology as instrument of liberation 240–241
Tensta, Spånga 111
Teoría General de Urbanización by Cerdá (Florensa) 53
Terán, F. 68
territorial planning 76, 89, 155–157, 159–160, 247, 250; *see also* planning
Thatcher, M. 256, 260
theoretical writings 12
theory of space 118
Third Republic 80, 82, 88
Tiergarten 92
Tiso, J. *124*
To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform (Howard, E.) 17
tools of planning 251
Town and Country Planning Act 127
town planners 29, 33, 35, 85, 145, 149, 207

town planning 36, 69, 70n7; discourse 11–13, 16–17, 21, 23–24; Great Britain 17; manuals 13–20, 22–24; urban hygiene 33–36
Town Planning, Past, Present, and Possible (Triggs) 18, 54
Town Planning Association 203
Town planning in Practice: An Introduction of the Art of Designing Cities and Suburbs (Unwin) 19, 51, 53
Town Planning Review 23, 53
traffic planning for automobiles 263–264
tramway 171–173
transformation 17, 45, 89, 100, 105, 122, 127, 157, 178–180, 183, 210, 222, 226, 238, 249
transgressive planning 235–244; environmental 237–238; immaterial production 239–244; material production 239–244; zines 238–239; *see also* planning
transnational: history 47–48; urbanism 222, 224–227
transnational planning history 222–232; Hamburg 227–231; London 227–231; port city territories 222–227; Rotterdam 227–231; transnational urbanism 225–227
transport, European planning 200–201
transportation *see* state socialism
transport-city relations 171–173
Trazado, Urbanización y Saneamiento de Poblaciones 52–56
Triggs, H. I. 13, 19, *19*, 22, 54, 59
Triggs, H. R. 18
Troisième Arrondissement 135
Tuka, V. 121
Turin 17, *20*
Turkey 75
Turner, J. 215, 218–219
Twentieth Century Society 150

Uncontrolled Urban Settlement: Problems and Policies (Turner) 219
Undercurrents (self-published zine) 235, *236*, *242*
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) 164
United Kingdom *see* Great Britain
United States 1, 53, 62, 199; town planning manuals 13; urban plans of 75
University of Liverpool 51
Unwin, R. 13, 17, 19–20, 22–23, 53, 190
Upton, R. 224
URBACT programs 204–205
urban, ruralising of 241
urban design 6, 45, 54, 118–120, 172, 257, 261; long *durée* in 194–195; sustainable 186–188; *see also* design
urban development 13; after 1989 265; England 27; festivalization of 265
urban extension 62–69; housing legislation 66–67; legal framework 68–69; Spain and the IFHTP 63–69
urban geometry 188–190
urban growth 39, 41, 43–45, 47, 51, 81, 83, 93, 128, 165–166, 168, 172, 178, 247, 249–250; *see also* growth
urban heritage 127–137, 191; conservation 137; international tendency 127–131; Marais PSMV 133–135; protection tools 127–128, **132**; recovery initiatives in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges 135–136; relationship to other planning instruments 132–133; traffic regulation compatible with 189; *Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural Urbain* (ZPPAUP) 130–132, 135–136
urban history 247
urban hygiene 27–36; as catalyst for control and reforms 29–33; conditioning 35–36; housing 33–34; poverty 33–34; sanitation of cities 35–36; slums 33–34; town planning 33–36
urbanism model 204
urbanism movement in France 80–81
urbanism teaching in Spain 51–60; Architecture Study Plan 58–59; Civil War 58–59; Trazado, Urbanización y Saneamiento de Poblaciones 52–56; XI Congreso Nacional de Arquitectos y I de Urbanismo 56–58
urbanization 1, 27; rapid 106; standards 41; *see also* informal urbanization
urban lifestyle 28
urbanología 51–60
urban planning 1–2, 128–129; collective public transport in 165–167; discourse 155; hypotheses 73; institutionalization of 51; national *78*; rapid tramway incorporation into 167–170; sketches *77*; in Sweden from welfare state period till present 114–115; *see also* planning
urban planning after 1989 256–266; big events 265; deregulating housing 257–260; end of the Cold War 256–257; factories 260–263; master planning harbors 260–263; traffic planning for automobiles 263–264; urban development 265
Urban Planning in Socialist Countries: Social Problems (Goldzamt) 153
urban planning in Spanish post-war period 72–79; Bidagor Lasarte, P. 72–78; during the Franco regime 72–73; German and European influences in 73–78
URBAN program 204–205
urban redevelopment 27, 34
urban regeneration of artefacts-properties 182–183
urban restructuring 33
urban sustainability 186–188
urban values 183
urban void in Madrid, Spain 181, *181*
Uspenskin cathedral, Helsinki, Finland *40*

Vällingby 107, *108*
Vannbaereren (zine) 239
Västra Orminge 111
Vecchie città ed edilizia nuova (Giovannoni) 193
Vega, M. 114
Verein für öffentliche Gesundheitspflege (Association for Public Health Care) 29
Vermaat, S. 147
Vers une Arquitecture (Corbusier) 54

Vienna, Austria 13, 17–18
Villeneuve-Saint-Georges 135–136
Vitry-sur-Seine, Paris 82–85, *84*
Volait, M. 224
Volontà 215
von Pettenkofer, Max 31
Vystava Soudobe Kultury (Exhibition of contemporary culture) in Brno 94

Wagner, P. 65
Wahlich, H. 92, *92*
Wałęsa, L. 263
Wallace, A. R. 36
Wallenstein, S.-O. 114
War Commentary for Anarchism 215
Ward, C. 213, 214
Ward, J. 224
Ward, S. V. 4–5, 91, 224
wars and European planning 202–203; *see also specific wars*
Warsaw 139, 146
Washington 17, 20, *20*
Weber, A. F. 28
Weimar Constitution of 1919 91
Weimarer Republik 93
welfare 114–115, 240; equality and 109; public 76, 210; social services 154; state institutions 1
Welter, V. 217
Western Europe 105, 201, 235, 238
West Germany 258
Wijkmark, B. 112, 114
Wilhelm Gottlieb Korn Zeitschriften-Abteilung 96
Wohnung und Werkraum Ausstellung (Apartment and Workroom Exhibition) (WuWA) 91–92, *94*; city building through material culture at 99–100; housing lessons and fleeting images 100–101; regional design and culture in Breslau 94–99
Wolfgang Draesel, H. 121
Woodcock, G. 215
World Commission on Environment and Development 186
Wren, C. 17

XI Congreso Nacional de Arquitectos y I de Urbanismo 56–58

Zarecor, K. 154
Zhao, Q. 225
Zimpel settlement in Breslau *92*, 92–93
zines 238–239
Zone in Paris 42
Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural Urbain (ZPPAUP) 128, 130–132, 135–136
zoning 45–47, 82–83, 85–88, 131, 165, 172, 178, 181