PLANNING BETWEEN RELIABILITY AND FLEXIBILITY – CONTEMPORARY URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT: In recent years, China has undoubtedly undergone a dramatic process of urban growth and transformation. Apart from its speed and scope, the processes confronting the Chinese planning institutions with new and unexpected demands almost on a daily basis are least recognized. This article intends to illustrate how contemporary urban transformation in spatial, social and economic conditions introduces a new context of requirement for urban planning practices in China, how urban planning in China is facing these challenges and to what extent the planning approaches and methods have been adapted to the new situation. In addition, the specific historical roots of Chinese town planning and its related philosophies will be elaborated to place the current confrontations within the Chinese culture of planning. By reflecting ancient experiences and contemporary demands of the Chinese society, this article illustrates the changes, challenges and demands of the new conditions, approaches and results of contemporary urban planning in China. Argumentation suggests the application of the concept of Planning Culture for a better understanding in building up the discourse between the changes of the society and the demands of the new planning approaches.

KEYWORDS: planning culture, urban transformation, contemporary Chinese urban development

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Transformation of contemporary urban development in China

"Spatial transformation must be understood in the broader context of social transformation…the key endeavor of planning in the metropolitan regions in the Information Age is to ensure their connectivity, both intra-and intermetropolitan. Planning has to deal with the ability of the region to operate within the space of flows….The major challenge for urbanism in the Information Age is to restore the culture of cities." (Cast ells, 2005)

From late 1970s, China has undoubtedly undergone a dramatic process of urban growth and societal change. This transformation was triggered on the one hand by the inward demands of modernization that led the country towards the development of a prosperous society and on the other hand by the impulse of reacting to the external world-wide impact of globalization and the new social, technological, and spatial context in which we live. This resulted in the existing society that was based upon the embodiment of planned-economy, communism ideology and top-down political organization has being required to change. It was replaced and challenged by new arising interests in favour of the open-market entrepreneurial society. The overwhelming reformation of economy, politic and society had undermined the ethics of traditional Chinese norm and value system and therefore, its historical and cultural context. Although China has an urban tradition of thousands of years, modern urbanization of the country commenced rather late. In 1978 only 172 million people (about 18 % of the total population) lived in cities (China Statistic Yearbook, 2001). However, after the reversal of Chinese policies in 1978 and the opening of the country for market initiatives and foreign investments, the perspectives changed profoundly. Due to the market reforms and the opening up of the socialist economy an accelerated urbanization was initiated that is unprecedented in the history of mankind (Logan, 2002). Undeniably, doubts have risen since the mid-1980s due to the obviously exaggerated official estimates on the size of China's urban population (Wu, 1994). However, the last census of the year 2006 shows evidence that China's urban population rose to 593.79 million, reaching 44.9 percent

of the entire population (Statistic Communiqué of the P.R.C, 2007). It remains unclear to which extent China's increased urban population should be attributed to such arbitrary factors as administrative changes and modification of the urban definition. Nevertheless, the outcome of continued economic development in the 21st century will therefore be the massive economic and spatial transition from the rural to the urban sector if current trends of market reform and the relaxation of state control continue (Lin, 2002). Such a massive rural-urban transition will pose great challenges not only to the Chinese decision makers but also to anyone concerned with the sustainability of global development in general and of human habitat in particular.

1.2 The challenges of urban planning in the reconstruction of the society and the city

As the role of cities in the economic system - as rehabilitated, contemporary urban transformation in spatial, social and economic conditions - introduces a new context for urban planning practices in China. A new balance between public planning and private development, top-down and bottom-up approaches is required that is able to generate both a reliable and responsible framework for long term urban development and a flexible system of implementation that meets the needs of changing conditions and new demands. Not only the Chinese cities, but also the planning approaches and methods are in rapid transition. The rapid changes in the Chinese society, the fast processes of urbanization, the appearance of the market economy and growing foreign direct investments are confronting the Chinese planning institutions with new demands and new conditions. The supposed certainty of the planned economy is replaced by the increasing complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability of recent transformation processes; new parties such as private investors and developers become involved in urban development, bringing in their own interests and following their own logics; new user groups are demanding space for their own initiatives. Growing social contradictions are leading to increasing segregation and in many cases to a concentration of poverty in certain parts of the city. Last but not least, mobility questions and environmental problems have become key issues for the development of Chinese cities. In general, the energy consumption of buildings is much too high and has to be reduced profoundly, the increasing motorization and in particular, the fast growing number of private cars not only generate daily traffic jams, but are also the main cause of air pollution existent in most of the cities in China.

The fact that the above-mentioned phenomenon is generating new challenges to Chinese society in a relatively short period cannot be ignored. Therefore the scope and the scale of this transformation and challenge is much more overwhelming than any other kind that we have experienced in human history. It is argued that by investigating the contemporary urban transformation and development in China will contribute not only to Chinese urban studies but also to the wider urban debate that will tackle the ongoing challenges and demands of understanding the urban growth, both of today and tomorrow. It is deceptively obvious, that we are now at the beginning of a long journey, seeking enlightenment for a better discourse in order to understand and to be better able to confront the wave of urbanization worldwide. Some contemporary research has revealed that the Chinese experience of urbanisation has provided a significant real case to illustrate the heterogeneity and irregularity of the post-modern world which the neo-classical economic school has been unable to grasp with logical reasoning and deduction (Lin, 2001), so as Friedmann (2005) emphasized, China's current system of physical planning is still "under construction". But one could also argue it is demonstrating one of the most extreme cases of *pre*-modernization instead of *post*-modernization in the contemporary urban development. A lot of unclear presumptions about the Chinese economical and political reform remain, which does not bode well for the future. Therefore, the motivation to investigate under those circumstances returns to what strategies could be extracted from the planning practices by an in-depth research based on analyses of respective political and economic changes in planning.

1.3 The idea of Planning Culture

Planning systems, traditions, concepts and decision-making processes are always related to the cultural context and cultural background of the people and societies involved. The conditions of society define the conditions of decision-making and thus the conditions of planning. The links between society and planning emphasized by the German sociologist Karl Mannheim, who in 1936 stated that planning is necessary and inevitable for free and open societies. In his book 'Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction', published in the English language in 1940, he distinguished four types of societies resulting from variations in

participation and centralization of the societal decision making processes:
- Dictatorship is the result of low levels of participation and high levels of centralization.
- Anarchy results from high levels of participation and low levels of centralization.
- Anomie results from low levels of both participation and centralization.
- The 'democratically planned society', Mannheim's clearly favoured outcome, is a result of high levels of both participation and centralization.

Mannheim's book was a fundamental attack against both the top-down approach of the fascist dictatorship and the 'laissez-faire' of the liberalistic market economy. It triggered what became known as the Great Debates about planning and society that affected both USA and post-war Europe. The main questions were: who are the actors of planning, which (democratic) institutions should be involved in planning decisions and what are the rights of citizens in planning processes. The debate had a strong influence on planning practice and on planning legislation in almost all Western countries, resulting in highly formalized procedures for public planning, including the obligation for people participation or at least information.

In the 1990's the debate about planning and society arose anew, in particular in Europe. An important reason for this revival was the process of European unification and the growing demand to harmonize planning procedures and planning legislations and to understand the divergences and dynamics of planning approaches in different European countries. In addition, the rapid and fundamental changes of planning approaches and planning paradigms; caused by the political changes in Europe and in the resulting new actors' constellations, attitudes and modes of action as well as planning instruments; induced the recognition of the high relevance of 'soft' and culturally driven orientations by planning researchers (Keller, et al. 1993).

Within this framework a new term is introduced, subsuming all perceived and interrelated differences and changes of style and notion of spatial planning: the idea of 'planning culture' (Brech, 1993). Based on different international studies, John Friedmann defined planning culture 'as the ways, both formal and informal, that spatial planning in a given multi-national region, country or city is conceived, institutionalized and enacted' (Friedmann 2005). The link between planning, political culture and history is important: 'Because planning in this sense continues to be primarily a responsibility of the state even as it draws upon the contributions of other societal actors, it is deeply embedded in the political culture of the country and/or individual cities and, as such, is always historically grounded'. Planning Culture here refers to the collective ethos and dominant attitudes of planners regarding the appropriate roles of the state, market forces, and civil society in influencing social outcomes (Sanyal, 2005).

Friedmann (2005) argued, despite the growing international communication within the profession, major differences exist in the ways that planning is conceived, institutionalized, and carried out. The planning of cultures worldwide can exist only in the plural, even as global restructuring is challenging them in similar ways. If that is true, then it is necessary as Fainstein (2005) emphasized to avoid a narrow definition of planning theory resulting in theoretical weakness arising from the isolation of process from context and outcome, planning activities needs to be rooted in an understanding of the field in which these are operating and the objective of planning as the conscious creation of the just city, which requires a substantive normative framework. She further contends that the object of planning theory should be to formulate answers to the following questions: (1) Under what conditions can conscious human activities produce a better city for all citizens? (planning vision; planning mission). (2) How do we explain and evaluate the typical outcome of planning as it has existed so far?

By reflecting on the concept of planning culture, it is much easier for us to understand the ongoing changes in Chinese society, especially in the last 20 years. Inward transformations took place in many different dimensions. Amongst the many other things the Chinese had to learn - was that the market can do little to transform an economy without a parallel shift in class relationship, private property and all the other institutional arrangements that typically ground a thriving capitalist economy (Harvey, 2005). Therefore, the transformation of the society and the urban planning had to be embedded into its own root and its own path.

From the very beginning, the idea of planning culture has the advantage of being developed as cultural differentiation; related to specific historical, political and social environments of countries, regions and cities. It allows us to approach the recent changes in urban development in China in a more original and specific way. I will use the theory of planning culture as an analytical, scientific approach to investigate the recent developments in urban planning in China, interpret them as 'cultural turn' - embedded in the changing political culture of the country and simultaneously grounded in the tradition of Chinese town planning.

2   A TIME OF CHANGE: REFLECTING THE ANCIENT CHINESE URBAN PLANNING AND PHILOSOPHY IN CONTEMPORARY URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Although the extent of contemporary urbanization and transformation is a unique phenomenon within the history of China, it is historically not the first time that Chinese society has undergone such vast urban transformation. A relatively comparable adaptive planning approach was once introduced within ancient urban practices. The ancient character of this development allows one to understand contemporary demands better as they generally are based on Chinese tradition. Therefore, this article aims to outline the urban planning experiences in Chinese history before entering the debate on contemporary urban developments.

In the late 10th century, during the transition from the Tang (618 – 906 A.D.) to the Song dynasty (960 – 1125 A.D.), China already experienced a comparable shift from a dominant top down approach in urban planning to a more flexible system that would give space to citizen's initiatives. The transformation from Tang to Song dynasty illustrate how new urban planning idea and concept is required under the condition of a new society and how time of change introduced a new planning idea and approach that enable reshaping of the urban form, where a new urban space is able to rehabilitate a new way of living in a new civil society.

2.1   Cities of Aristocrats and Cities of Bureaucrats

In his book 'Cities of Aristocrats and Bureaucrats' (1999), Heng Chye Kiang presents two cases that are representative for this transition: the city of Chan'an - the ancient capital of the Tang dynasty - an example of imperial top down planning order and the city of Kaifeng - the capital of the Northern Song dynasty - an example of a city developed in the context of free trade. The Tang and the Song capitals represent two stages in the development of the Chinese medieval city. Chan'an was a city built from scratch, tailored to the needs of a new dynasty. On the contrary, Kaifeng grew towards being an important entrepot and prosperous city. The two capital cities, each with their own urban structure and cityscape, reflected the respective periods that produced them. Chan'an was rooted in a strong aristocratic power with a highly hierarchical social structure, while Kaifeng was shaped by a diverse and mercantile society and managed by pragmatic professional bureaucrats. The emergence of this new urban paradigm was introduced in the context of a demand for political reforms as well as important social and economic changes in which the transformation of urban institutions and a rapid urbanization were integral. This transformation took place, on the one hand, during the collapse of the regulative power over commercial activities within the late Tang Dynasty. During this time, a new social order was built. It replaced the old ruling aristocracy with a professional bureaucracy that was recruited through open civil examinations. This had a significant impact on the official attitude toward commercial activities and later was followed, during the Song Dynasty, by an increase in agricultural productivity, rapid growth in population, the development of an extensive communication network and a more efficient method of transporting goods for the rapidly growing urban consumer population.

2.2   A new urban paradigm and the open city

A new urban paradigm and the concept of an open city were introduced during this time. It included a change in the urban form, layout, skyline as well as governance. The city became less controlled and more open to public involvement as well as the change in urban scale and urban density. As described by Heng, "…physically, the open city was significantly different from its predecessors. Driven by increasing congestion and economic consideration, there was a tendency, slight thought it may be, to vertical expansion…rapid urban population growth also led to the emergence of suburbs at strategic locations around the city. Within the walls the gridiron plan eroded to a more subtle network filled with T-junctions, cranked intersections, and oblique streets over a complex urban fabric. Toward the end of the North Song, a new kind of city was born."

The Tang-Song transition period, important in many aspects for the Chinese social, cultural, and economic history, is equally critical in the history of Chinese cities. The transformation from one to the other was long and tortuous. The reasons for such a development were equally complex and multifaceted. When disregarding the causes for a change in the social structure; one can conclude that in the spatial and structural dimension in which the transition was taking place, that the city was forced to re-adapt and re-establish a new urban paradigm - the open city which Heng describes, was transformed into an open system in order to enable multifunctional street activities dynamically and spontaneously.

Because the transition from one to the other was a long and often non linear process influenced by many

factors, no definite conclusion can be made for each individual case concerning which interactive forces caused the adaption of the system towards an open city and how it had been transformed into spatial structure of the city. However, even today, within research on urban change and urban transformation, there are demands to explore in depth the reasons behind formal transformations, how cities were perceived and what they meant to their founders, planners and inhabitants based on an extension of Heng's research.

2.3 The demands of reliability and flexibility in the 'City of Bureaucrats'

"Cities of Aristocrats" was based on the manner and approaches in which the planning system operates. This operation is dominated by the logical response of strict top-down regulation and control while the "Cities of Bureaucrats" was introduced as an adaptive apparatus capable of responding to diverse bottom-up incidents. Heng illustrated in his article on a description of the capital Chan'an: "To its founders and administrators, it may serve critical political, military, and economic functions. To its inhabitants, it is the crucible in which they forge their lives, make their living, establish meaningful personal relations, entertain themselves, modify their environment, and eventually mold their own culture. They are also regulated by its laws, restricted by its layout, and affected by it landscape."   While, the comparative description of the capital Kaifeng is: "The central authorities seem content to be involved only in general zoning, in the transportation network, and in the selection of sites for critical government functions. Installations that were detrimental to health such as cemeteries and kilns were relegated to areas distant from the city…the rest of city building-residential, commercial activities, and non-hazardous industries, and perhaps open space-seems to have been left to the initiative of the common people."

In other words: More than a thousand years ago, the planning system of the city of Kaifeng already realized an optimal balance between a top down and bottom up approach by integrating a reliable long term framework for urban development (general zoning, transportation network, locations for public institutions) with a flexible (open) system 'for initiatives of the common people' (residential buildings, commercial activities, non-hazardous industries and open space). The question is to what extent this balance can be retrieved under the conditions of current urban developments in China and within a society that is again in transition.

3   CONTEMPORARY URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

Obviously, the complex mechanism of China's urban transition has been and will continue to be interpreted in different perspectives. What are the new paradigms for urban planning in China, what are the new conditions of the society and the political system? To answer these questions, there is the need for better understanding in a systematic manner and courageous efforts to search for paradigms and formulas to guide China's continuing urban transition. Some important facts can be highlighted which contributed to the urban transformation during the contemporary urban development.

3.1   Market reforms and relaxation of state control

Until its end the Maoist regime seemed to maintain a strong anti-urban stance (Bergère 2000; Lin, 2002). The peculiar system of cities under the Maoist strategy of regional development was to favour the inland regions over the eastern coast for both the reasons of ideological commitment of spatial equality and national security.(Fan,1995,1997; Wei and Ma,1996). This strategy has been reversed since Deng Xiaoping and other reformists initiated institutional changes in 1978. The period since 1978 has been characterized by a rapid surge in the number of designated cities as a result of both relaxation of state control over city designation and the operation of spontaneous forces of market reforms and globalization. Rural development has provided tremendous impetus for the upgrading of towns into cities and the expansion of small cities. Lin (2002) concluded that this remarkable reversal has been inseparable from the three powerful forces; including the state shifting development emphasis from the interior to the eastern coast, phenomenal growth of rural industries and relaxed control of the state over the upgrading of towns into cities[1]. This resulted in two major developments: Firstly, existing cities of different sizes have expanded in both population and land

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[1] the designation of cities in China has been handled by the Ministry OF Civil Affairs. In 1984, the Ministry relaxed its criteria for city designation. These relaxed criteria were approved by the State Council and disseminated in a 1986 circular titled "On Adjustment of Standards for City Designation and Conditions for City to Administer Counties." For detailed discussion, see Hsu 1994, pp 516.

area and secondly, a large number of newly designated cities have been added to the existing system of cities[2]. It unveiled that structural and spatial changes of the Chinese cities over the past two decades have been shaped by the re-articulation of the socialist state whose functions were shifted from being interventional to regulatory. At the same time, the scope and scale of the state sector under central planning have been gradually reduced to make room for the growth of the private sectors and operation of free market forces. The transition of the Chinese political economy from central authoritarianism to local corporatism and from plan to market means that the nature of cities as both administrative and economic entities will undergo profound transformation. This power is now well on its way.

3.2 New urban paradigm: Region-based agglomeration

The transition of power from the Maoist plan-ideological into post-Mao market-regulatory regime has ushered in a new development strategy that values efficiency over equity, individual creativity over collectivism, and regional comparative advantages over defence or ideological consideration (Fan, 1995 and 1997; Lin 1997). Since institutional changes were initiated in 1978, the trend of structural and spatial redistribution of cities has been shifted. Notably, large and extra large cities enjoyed significant expansion whereas the growth of small cities suffered from contraction in the Maoist era. Now, the latter have become the most dynamic urban settlements with the highest annual growth rate (Lin, 2002). Geographically, the eastern region has demonstrated the highest growth. Recognition of the inherent economic comparative advantages of the cities, particularly those alone on the eastern coast, has led the government to set up four Special Economic Zones in 1979 and designated 14 coastal open cities in 1984[3] (Teung and Hu, 1992; Wu 1999). Along with the two coastal provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, these cities were given greater autonomy to attract foreign investment. Now they have become pioneers of economic reforms and centres of modernization. Because of their inherent advantages in agglomeration economies, these large urban settlements received more than 60 percent of all fixed asset capital invested in cities since 1990s. This new urban paradigm polarized the co-existence of dual-track system of a top-down manner to the dominance of large and super-large cities in the urban hierarchy on the one hand and a large number of newly emerged small cities and towns subsequent to rural transformative development from below on the other (Lin, 2002).

This phenomenon has been conceptualized as "urbanization from above" and "urbanization from below", but McGee and Ginsburg have argued that both models have seen urban transition as a city-based process shaped by the forces of agglomeration economies and comparative advantages, which may not be the only option for Asian urbanization. It has been observed that a distinct process of region-based urbanization has been taking place in the extended metropolitan regions as a result of economic restructuring, influx of foreign capital investment and revolutionary advances in telecommunication and transportation. This process has led to the formation of zones of intensive urban-rural mixture and interaction located in the area surrounding and between metropolitan centres (McGee, 1991; Ginsburg, 1990). It shows the trend that in some areas a polycentric region has been emerging and a pattern of multi-layered governance, which originates in some regions of the European Union, has been established (Yang, 2008).

3.3 From planned economy to urban planning: Urban as an experimental base

It is argued that urban development in the earlier stages of the opening up reformation was not initiated by the central government with full confidence of implementation. It was the mutual awareness among the central group of party leaders as planned economy entered a dead end and could no longer promise the future development of the country that led to the understanding that economic reformation needed to take place. Reformations were on two dimensions: on the one hand the reformation took place in order to open up the country to the outside world while on the other hand it afforded the opportunity for China to learn new ideas and knowledge from foreign countries. There is a double meaning behind this, to open up means not only to open the country to the outside world but also to make it possible for other countries to get acquainted with China. China had been isolated since 1949; therefore it became important to explore the possible and appropriate approaches for its own benefit that will lead to the establishment of a new Chinese society.

During the period of new development, problems were recognized. The most rigid challenge among

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[2] The number of cities drastically rose from 193 in 1978 to 668 in 1998, an increase of 475 new cities in twenty years, far greater than the 61 new cities established over the previous decades. For detailed discussion, see Lin 2002, pp. 106

[3] The four Special Economic Zones established in 1979 included Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou, and Xiamen. In 1988, Hainan Island, previously part of Guangdong Province, was designated as the fifth and largest Special Economic Zone.

them was the question of how the reformation can be realized in reality since the "market" was totally an unknown economic term for the country and was never addressed in the communist regime. Therefore, the idea of experimental-base (Shi-Dian) was addressed in the central government. In this framework, urban (city) played an essential role as the experimental base in order to practice the "market". At the same time, the central government started to study many comparative cases in many other different countries, such as the export processing zone, tax-free district and trade-free zone for example. Even though the open-up policy is the right track, for Chinese communist society it was a tremendous new experience and the existing facilities and programmes were not built to support it. On the other hand, China had been isolated from the outside world for a long time and there was lack of experience on how to trade with other countries. Therefore, one could argue the establishment of the special economic zone and the initiative of the urban experimental base was a very unique and most important factor that triggered and influenced the contemporary urban development of China.

3.4 The changing role of the government and the challenges of planning approach

In the blueprint era, the government played its role as planner, operator and investor. Thus, the government monopolized the national sources of planning ultimately, including land distribution and land ownership. Master plans were made as tools to legalize the restructuration of the land. But in the post blueprint period, the government is no longer the almighty controller and with its limited economic resources, the making of planning decisions is becoming a process of negotiation and collaboration with other actors. Spatial restructuring depends on the demands of the market and the contributions of different parties (Peng, 2007). A top-down planning approach was formulated by the strong hierarchical bureaucratic system in the Maoist regime. This system is now challenged by the emergence and divergence of new collective interests of different players involved. In other words, not only is the role of the government changed but also their planning skill and planning attitudes are required to adapt to the new demands of the society. Within the progress of market economy system reform, the problem of government function transformation has been especially highlighted, seeking to clarify the governments' role of "economic regulation, market supervision, social administration, and public service". (Gao, 2008)

3.5 Multi-level governance and the threats of the GDP based-planning approach

Subsequently, the demand of multi-level governance is becoming increasingly important due to the polycentric development tendency (Zheng and Yang, 2008). It suggests that to build up the reasonable authority division in vertical structure (the relationships between planning departments at the state, province and city levels) and simultaneously to straighten out the administration system in horizontal structure (the relationships between the planning departments at different levels and relevant departments).

Another impact due to the changing role of the government in the planning system is the shift towards GDP-based planning approach. In order to have an outstanding growth of GDP result, the local government collects farmlands from farmers at a very low price and gives the development rights to private parties and retain no control over the environmental effects. Frankly speaking, the GDP growth does not compensate for the cost of the long-term environmental maintenance (Peng, 2007). The increment of GDP has become the main criteria for planning decisions. However, this approach does not take into account the long-term loads and burdens (of the environment, for example) and the subsequent costs to repair and maintain the environment.

3.6 Invalidating the master plan

Since the 80s, discussions have arisen focused on the validity and sufficiency of the Master Plan. In the traditional urban planning approach, city scale was required to be defined by two criteria: the planned growth of the population and the predicted scale of the built-areas in relation to its population. In order to claim more land for expansion of future urban use, the local government tries to exaggerate the expected population amount in the Master Plan. The result in inefficient use of the land and a huge overhead cost of public means for investment in public facilities when the "expected" result does not happen or the market does not follow it (Peng, 2007).

On the other hand, evidence has revealed the invalidation of Master Plan in contrary dimensions. It is mostly happening in those regions and cities with an unexpected scope of accelerated development where the prognosis of the population in the Master Plan is much lower in comparison to the growth of population in

reality. That is to say that the Master Plan is not able to cope with the speed and demands of real developments. This presents enormous pressures on the planners confronted with the continuous change of circumstances, an unknown experience to them with the past of the Maoist regime.

3.7   New planning organization and planning process

New urban phenomenon has also triggered the reformation of the planning organization and the planning approaches. For example, in 1993 the Shenzhen Master Plan (SMP) (1996-2010) was proposed and followed by the Regional Plan for the Pearl River Delta in 1995. After seven years, the State Council approved it in 2000. During this period, a new system of scrutiny was introduced and the public's general opinion was integrated[4]. Furthermore, the Shenzhen Urban Planning Committee was set up, including both city officials and—for the very first time in China—stakeholders representing local business interests. The assigned role of the Committee was to conciliate district level plans with the municipal Master Plan. Ordinary residents and the floating population continued to be virtually invisible and inaudible. Unfortunately, many Shenzhen planners considered the Urban Planning Committee a nuisance, deeming this attempt at enlisting participation of a limited number of private stakeholders in the planning process as 'too advanced' for China. Nevertheless, the planning process has slowly becoming more transparent (Friedmann, 2005).

4   DEMANDS OF NEW PLANNING CULTURE FOR THE INTEGRAL URBAN PLANNING DISCOURSE

It is argued that (Bergère, 2000) perspectives have changed after the reversal of Chinese policy in 1978 and the opening of the country to foreign investments and technology. The republican era was increasingly perceived as the starting point of the forceful modernization drive; as a time of economic, cultural innovation and creativity to which contemporaries should turn to for inspiration. Castells (2005) has emphasized that the major challenges for urbanism in the Information Age is to restore the culture of cities. The direct impact to the Chinese urban planning system requires dynamic and adaptive urban policy as well as strategic vision of the desirable evolution of the urban space considered in the duality of global space of flows and local space of places. As a guiding tool, the vision must result from the dynamic compromise between the contradictory expression of values and interests resulting from the plurality of urban actors. Chinese urban planners and urban designers who used to follow the top-down and blueprint planning approaches need to learn the skills of compromise and negotiation to deal with the new urban phenomenon.

The recent changes in the Chinese society demand fundamental change in planning culture, based on the societal rules and values of an open society, integrating the specific perception and meaning of space in China as well as that of Chinese planning traditions and philosophies. The new planning culture has to redefine the role of state, market and civil society in the planning process and has to generate a new balance between centralization and participation and between top-down and bottom-up approaches (Mannheim, 1940).

By replacing the top-down approach of the Maoist period, the new planning culture has to fulfil contradictory demands. In this framework, planning strategies have to be developed not to avoid and reduce the uncertainties of the society but instead to generate flexibility for new and unexpected developments in order to work with complexity; and not to reduce unpredictability but to generate and build up a reliable framework for sustainable long-term developments in order to face the uncertainty of initiatives from diverse public and private actors.

Nevertheless, despite the worldwide influential impact of the globalization or urbanization, China still belongs to the group of highly state-controlled countries in comparison with capitalism Western societies in urban planning. Planning could be a powerful instrument to realize a better vision for the country's future that may also suffer with the faults and mistakes of its own political and societal limits. Those conditions have to be taken into account in this context as well.

The above argumentations suggest the importance to establish the embodied context of an individual case. It indicates that planning is more an instrument that serves certain demands in the functioning of society and an intervention with the intention to alter existing course of events. The role of planners is often

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[4] The draft Third Master Plan was scrutinized for a 30-day period by the general public. Cadres and scholars from neighbouring cities were invited to comment on the draft. (Friedmann, 2005, pp 189)

challenged by the new demands and new conditions of the society; provision of security for the functioning of society in planning operation is often challenged by why and in what situations should planners (planning) intervene? All the above new confrontations are relatively new challenges to the Chinese government and its planners. China is experiencing a cultural turn of society and thus fundamental changes in planning culture. New experiences and new experiments are explored almost on a daily basis. Furthermore, they differ greatly depending on local conditions and until now these changes have been barely documented.

The dynamics of globalization and urban transformations in Europe and in North America have been extensively documented and analyzed. Compared with this body of knowledge, the number of studies about the recent transformation processes in China is rather limited. Only a few studies place the contemporary changes within the framework of Chinese history of the last centuries. Hou (2003) argues that the modernization of China has a delay of about 160 to 200 years, in comparison with western industrialized countries. In addition, development has become retarded by political turmoil, (civil) wars, foreign invasions and occupations. As a result, China is confronted with a double challenge: to catch up with the delay of the past and to simultaneously deal with the current challenges of globalization and economical transformation worldwide. This situation is generating a special mode of development: the processes of industrialization, urbanization, decolonization, westernization and post-industrialization are affecting the country not in a linear-subsequent manner but simultaneously in multiple layers. The discourse between the effects of this layered development on the system and on the approaches of spatial planning in China will require a better understanding of its own cultural context. This understanding will make it possible for China to enrich and stimulate the public planning debate and promote a further exchange of knowledge and opinions on planning issues worldwide.

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