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An Urban History of the Twentieth Century? Historiographic reflexions

We are currently celebrating the centenary of the first movements, exhibitions, congress and competitions on urbanism which took place in Europe. For this reason several scientific meetings encourage the discussion on history of urbanism and towns on the Twentieth Century. For essence, journal *Ciudades* dedicated its 6th issue (2001) to the centenary of the launch of «Garden Cities of Tomorrow» (<http://www3.uva.es/iuu/ciud06.htm>); the Berlin University of Technology has inaugurated the exhibition «City visions 1910 / 2010. Berlin Paris London Chicago. 100 years General Urban Design Exhibition in Berlin ('Allgemeine Städtebau-Ausstellung in Berlin')» (<http://architekturmuseum.ub.tu-berlin.de/index.php?set=1&p=451&LANG=EN>); a powerful group of research laboratories located in Paris have already organised two congress on the topic «Inventer le Grand Paris» (http://www.citechaillot.fr/fr/auditorium/colloques_conferences_et_debats/colloques/25377-inventer_le_grand_paris.html); and the Bauhaus Universität Weimar is preparing the commemoration of its own foundation.

All these germinal events have in common their internationality. Whether these celebrated facts arose with the 'international' feature or they have acquired it because of the expansion out of the own country, they give proof of a speech that has gone beyond countries and even continents in the early twentieth century, as stated by several authors (Topalov 1999). However, the extensive bibliography on the History of Urbanism on the Twentieth Century usually gathers local or national monographs. And, when they try to reach an international focus, they tend to juxtapose case analyses by countries. This is one of the contradictions that are currently being discussed by research teams from the Universities of Weimar, Paris-Est and Valladolid. In this context, several meetings have been organised in order to study the relevance, the interest and the conditions of possibility of the History of European Urbanism on the Twentieth Century.

Within those discussions several questions have emerged, that *Ciudades* would like to propose in order to open a debate. The objective is to look at the most convenient study framework in order to understand the evolution over time of urban facts. Monographs covering towns have largely developed. But, beyond local level, which geographical frameworks could take into account the most general evolutions and which could be the most efficient categories of analysis for studies on other scales? Which are the new requirements and perspective for a pertinent comparative approach? These are general questions, but more specific ones are also interesting: does it make sense to consider a History of European Urbanism on the Twentieth Century?; in a historical moment crossed by (de)colonization, conflicts, profound political changes and wars, what or which could be the pertinent territorial frameworks which not only will create changing polarities but also will redesign national and international frontiers?; What "20th Century" should we take into account?: the "long Century" (Arrighi, 1999) defined by economic cycles, covering since 1880 or even since 1860?; the political Century starting with the First World War?; or a Century covering much less than 100 years, reduced to the period of Union European consolidation as an international urban actor?

But, closely connected to the previous questions, a basic interrogation is set out: is it relevant to support the reflection on the history of urbanization or should we consider urban history? Urban history, history of city building history, town planning and urban design history, history of urbanization...

These concepts refer to different objects (social formations, urbanized areas, ideas, public action on urbanism...) and diverse disciplines and approaches. Nevertheless, sometimes they are not clearly differentiated. Alvarez Mora, in "La necesaria componente espacial en la historia urbana" (1996) has raised the problem concerning the relation between urban history, seen as a branch of social history, and town planning and urban design history, whose epistemological basis would be the urban area itself. And this area would be considered as a conflicting social product and not as a simple place for social facts. But, how could we grasp the complexity of building the urban area from a non-local level and *a fortiori* from an international scale? History often finds it difficult to go beyond ideas. It covers flow and reception of intellectual production on urbanism or dominant models of public action, avoiding at the same time the city built out of those flows and unregulated processes, and also omitting that those ideas come from an specific urban context. Therefore, this monograph also focus on a historiographic criticism with a prospective forecast, whether applied (new problems, methods of analysis, etc. that could be acceptable or interesting for international urban history on the Twentieth Century), or theoretical (analysis of historiographic production on the urban dimension, its evolution and tendencies). The question on the possibility of an urban history is again drawn up on a general basis, but that question could be reconsidered on particular contexts, properly justified.

We accept articles of different types:

- Articles debating epistemological aspects of urban historiography, starting from the analysis of specific facts or concepts.
- Articles on European Urban History with a particular object.
- Articles which, following the same theoretical aims, examine the history of the construction of urbanism, both as an academic discipline and as a professional status.
- Reviews or critics regarding historiographic problems related with the urban.

Deadline for submission of papers (see guidelines for authors): 10th September 2015.

Coordinators: María Castrillo and Charlotte Vorms

To send the articles (only by e-mail) to the secretary of *Ciudades*:

revistaciudades@arg.uva.es

The editorial guidelines for the elaboration and the remission of the articles are explained in:

http://www3.uva.es/iuu/Marcos_R.htm

Bibliographic references

Álvarez Mora, A. (1996). "La necesaria componente espacial en la historia urbana", *Ayer*, núm. 23, pp. 29-59.

Arrighi, G. (1999). *El largo siglo XX*. Barcelona, Akal.

Topalov, C. (dir.) (1999), *Laboratoires du nouveau siècle. La nébuleuse réformatrice et ses réseaux en France, 1880-1914*, Paris, EHESS.