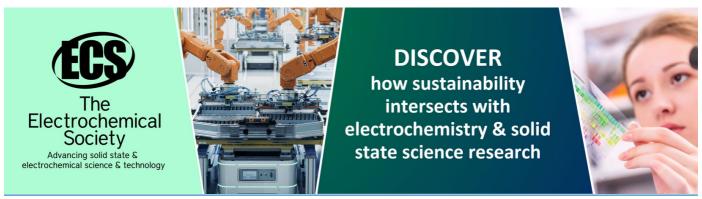**PAPER • OPEN ACCESS**

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Concept of 'Good Urban Governance' and Its Application in Sustainable Urban Planning

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Abstract. Contemporary urban theory and practice in the post-industrial era is increasingly often turning towards an approach based on sustainable development. That concept bearing the traits of a paradigm has grown on the ground of broad quest for an alternative to the existing development model of the industrial civilisation. It has gained wide social acceptance and is the basis for many development and environmental programmes at the level of national and local government. It puts in a new light the socio-cultural, ecological and energy-related aspects of space as well as its value and aesthetics. A model of governing the city called 'good urban governance' is in a very close relation with the concept of sustainable development. It is based on the principles of inclusiveness, citizenship, accountability, processuality and effectiveness. Although this approach is not entirely novel, it stays valid and open to new challenges connected with satisfying human needs in the urban built environment on the basis of new contemporary conceptualisations such as 'smart governance', 'governing the smart city', 'network governance' and 'governance networks'. The advantages of this approach based on the assumption of multidimensionality and subjectivity, matching the various and seemingly contradicting interests with a sense of responsibility for the quality of life in the urban environment are often underlined both in literature and in academic debate. The aim of this article is an attempt to present selected practices in spatial planning which employ the principles of the idea of co-governance. It will include various methodological assumptions and criteria applied in 'good urban governance'. The intention will be to show its new research and application possibilities in countries like Poland where the idea of governance and sustainable development remains a matter of theory.

1. Introduction

The principles which guided urban planning practices in the past did not withstand the test of time in the face of unpredictability, instability and discontinuity of contemporary urban structures. Fundamental balance between people and built environment is regained largely due to culture, which, together with economy and governance, is the basis of analytical and pluralistic urban methodology. A belief that creating opportunities for active participation in political, social and cultural life contribute to the improvement of the quality of life is gaining wide acceptance. The concept of sustainable development plays an increasingly important role in new models of global urban transformation which seek to integrate the needs of contemporary societies with the concern for future generations. It implies particular activities aimed at implementing strategies such as compact city and mixed urban forms, at recreating socio-cultural and landscape diversity and socialising the process of making decisions about the local environment.

According to Kevin Lynch, the author of, among many, 'Good city form', the reflection about the need to govern the city should be guided by criteria such as vitality, sense, fit, access, efficiency, control and justice [1]. This approach was preceded by two successive waves of urban transformation which changed traditional character of the city. The first one, which took place at the turn of the 18th and 19th century, shaped the currently recognised form of the cities. The second one, having a much wider range, started in the middle of the last century and led to formation of modern metropolis. It is still causing profound changes or even damage in the majority of cities [2]. It could be said that nowadays we are facing a third industrial revolution connected with digitalisation of production and modern technologies, the results of which are difficult to predict. This new reality requires a new terminology as well as new intellectual and ethical basis. In the presence of problems such as air and noise pollution, heavy traffic and appropriation of public space, it is widely agreed that changes should be performed in order to permanently improve the quality of life of urban residents. The language of modernist planners which uses uniform, logic and functional patterns, was subject to revision with the aim of avoiding the risk of repetition.

In this article we will attempt to show how important it is for cities in the times of globalisation to govern their built environment from a holistic perspective, based on many various interpretations, and to balance many social, economic cultural and ecological aspects. This results from a humanistic interpretation and the view that reality should be observed and examined through the eyes of those participating and creating this reality. Yet, it does not come down to a 'ready' tradition or identity which is currently imaginatively engineered to reduce tension between people and built environment. It is about an approach in which the city is recognised as a place of birth, adolescence, amusement, work, ageing and dying. As Benjamin Barber notes, the mayor of the city cannot advocate openly for a socialist option and trade unions. Neither can he do the opposite and support a free-market approach. He is obliged to reach an agreement between both sides as both of them are a part of the city. He needs to be able to reach a compromise and to co-govern [3]. We want to show that solving urban issues in conflicted and neglected areas can be achieved when decision-makers and institutions act using methodological guidelines of 'good urban governance'.

2. From government to governing

There is an increasing awareness of the influence of spatial governance over the economy, natural and cultural environment and social life. In the 1990s economic noliberalism was still widely regarded as a remedy for the world's economic problems. The postulate of free movement of capital, manpower, products and ideas became the basis for global ideology. The dynamics of capitalism contributed to the degradation of urban civilisation, as viewed by many urban researchers and analysts. This was reflected in structuralist theories in urban sociology developed especially by American academics. They considered urban crisis against the background of the entire political and economic system, social structure and structural changes inherent in capitalist model, such as de-urbanisation of settlement structures and de-concentration of production, uncontrolled and unplanned urban sprawl, commercialisation and ghettoisation or decline of public space. From ancient times a perfectly integrated and composed urban environment was sought in order to fulfil people's needs and aspirations. Expectations of the urban environment were beyond the capabilities in regard to its material conditions, social and cultural features, security or opportunities in various social, economic, cultural and political fields. In this sense the city has been for centuries an area of research, experimentation and utopian assumptions.

Cities are an integral part of the processes of mass consumption which are accompanied by tensions and conflicts. A claim to the right to the city arises which is a demand to control the development of space and redistribution of urban goods. Citizens' influence over the governance of the city not only takes various forms, but also becomes an important factor of the ways of fulfilling various needs. The aim is to create a city which is, as Richard Sennett described it, "user friendly" [4]. Even if it sounds too

romantic in the times of a crisis of the city as a political idea, implementing it into reality is one of the most important social and economic goals. To achieve these goals, planning should not be for the city but with the city. Such attitude is given substance by the conception of sustainable development which bears the traits of a paradigm. It derives form interdisciplinary research and search for a planning model alternative to the growth of the industrial civilisation. The concept is not fully developed both theoretically and methodologically but it is widely accepted in many countries and it is a theoretical basis for national and local environmental development and protection programmes. This concept proposes a novel axio-normative approach towards the ecological, social and political dimensions of space, advocating for holistic and systematic planning.

The most important tools for space governance are: coherent urban development, system of land acquisition, consolidation and reparcelling in order to protect natural and cultural landscape, creating public space and urban policy to reduce dispersed investments and to order the inner structure of the city (e.g. eco-city, compact city, smart growth), creating socio-economic relations and controlling urban sprawl. The Dutch economist and the author of the concept 'XXQ factors for sustainable development', Peter Nijkamp, suggests looking at sustainable development from a perspective of quality of life in the 'XXQuality' size. He assumes that the physical distance acquires currently a new dimension. Cities, especially big ones, can offer entrepreneurs and residents easy access to information and knowledge but also to places crucial for social interactions, leisure and recreation. Therefore, creating innovative culture by stimulating certain activities both on the part of consumers and producers as well as promoting the steady image of the city through active involvement of authorities and public institutions gains a special importance [5]. Until now the path to reach collective consciousness with the thought of new regulations for achieving sustainable development objectives has been a laborious effort. It is important to note that various sustainable projects can successfully co-exist in one urban organism which implies rejecting a single simplified model and the emergence of competing paths. Therefore, a wider platform of cooperation is required where everyone feels responsible for the condition of built environment and the quality of residents' life. Although it sounds idealistic, it is important to ensure space for dialogue as a constant, invigorating mechanism to confront academic education with social expectations.

Some of the sustainable development aspects, such as the importance of community, were underlined in urban renewal movement called New Urbanism which was established in the 1990s in the United States. Its founders, American urbanists Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk sought for urban solutions drawn from the traditional model of the city with clear division of public and private space and based on community values. They referred to neo-traditional models of the city created by Jane Jacobs, Leon Krier and Christopher Alexander [6–8], promoting complex revitalisation of core urban areas and improving their attractiveness and multi-functionality by acting against urban sprawl or inconveniences for pedestrian traffic such as underground passages, footbridges or traffic lights. They advocated designing ideal housing complexes with clear relations between public and private space defined by greenery, fences, vestibules. These complexes reflected their initial assumptions but they failed to fit into the existing urban landscape and to fulfil the aim of mixed communities. Moreover, as Maria Lewicka notes, the movement, strongly based on Alexander's 'pattern language', erects buildings from scratch and at once as theatrical models, ignoring the rule of gradual development [9].

Although it is well placed in the sociological and architectural discussion about restitution of better settings and quality of urban environment, the New Urbanism movement was criticised for implementing static rules of traditional urban planning. An exemplary voice of opposition belongs to one of the influential contemporary architects- Rem Koolhaas, who presented in his urban manifesto 'The generic city' a thesis that the rules of traditional urbanism should be rejected as the city's identity is an obstacle to think freely about its future. He based his thesis on the inevitability of changes in the globalised world, suggesting *ex definitione* instability, uncertainty, discontinuity and risk. Therefore, architecture, instead of reviving nostalgic ideals such as community, should rather observe and reflect

surrounding reality. Complexities, conflicts, lack of control and contradictions provoke to rethink the ways of organising and interpreting contemporary strategies to design the city [10]. As viewed by other architects, space should not be perceived only as complex system but also as a common value. Therefore, it is subject to common agreement upon its arrangement and exploitation [11]. It remains certain that a new kind of sensitivity appears in the public discussion which is detached form the homogeneous and static 19th -century urban public space [12].

3. Good urban governance – old idea, new challenges

In this part of the article the most important aspects of 'good urban governance' approach will be revisited, explaining its principles and agenda. Its progressive potential will be shown exemplified by new conceptualisations employing recent trends in urban transformation and policies. It is important to note that collective urban governance is not novel. It can be traced back to ancient Greece where democratic mechanisms were well developed and citizens could influence political institutions. The idea was ignored and degraded in the course of industrial urbanisation and modern planning. As modernism had changed the political aspects of planning, ignoring its social and democratic character historically developed in European cities, it became obvious that in urban renewal processes issues of public participation, civic engagement, inclusiveness and transparency should regain attention and priority. These practices were conceptualised under the name of 'urban governance'. However, the word governance, as Mark Bevir argues, is rather ubiquitous and its relationship to democracy is not always clear; that is why it is important to clarify its nature, its practical aspects and challenges. Since the faith in state in under crisis, it is widely believed that "a more pluralistic pattern of rule", based on processes and interactions between the state and civil society rather than institutions, is a new form of governing to replace representative democracy [13]. The proccessuality of decision-making arrangements and empowerment of citizens replace previous institutionalised mechanism unfit to address complex, multidimensional urban issues. This was often described as a "shift from government to governance" [14]. In this phrase 'government' is understood as the formal and administrative structure of the public sector. However, it is important to note that the term 'shift' may be misleading as local government was not removed from urban management. Local authorities still hold many important functions in that process such as "setting an agenda, developing a vision, creating collaborative opportunities and platforms or providing funding schemes and allowing self-organization of different types of partnership" [15].

The commonly used word 'governance' refers presently "to a *new* process of governing; or a *changed* condition or ordered rule; or the *new* method by which society is governed" [16]. In the governance perspective, which transcends the public and private sectors as well as the civil society, the focus should be on networks rather than hierarchical relations, reinforced by diversified resources, actors and their knowledge and experience [17]. The interest in urban governance among academics, practitioners and politicians widened in the 1990s [18]. After the United Nations conference in Nairobi in 2002 was held, 'good urban governance' principles have become a global standard in urban policies. This concept is advocated as a strategy for improving the quality of life in urban settlements both in developed and developing countries where the sustainable growth and inclusive urban policies are threatened from rapid urbanisation. This notion has been further developed by the introduction of the word 'good' in the concept of urban governance as these two terms do not have the same meaning. Addition of this 'value judgements' started an international 'normative debate' on how to achieve "best standards of practice" [19]. 'Good urban governance' is conditioned by constantly reassessing these standards "in connection to a solid frame of reference" [20]. Quality of governance process can be described and assessed by a set of commonly accepted indicators. According to UNHABITAT, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, these indicators are: subsidiarity, sustainability, equity, efficiency, transparency, accountability, civic engagement, citizenship and security. Public participation is underlined as a key strategy in the decision-making process in which various stakeholders, i.e. local governments, business communities, organisations and groups representing citizens and minorities are

included [21]. The process of participation is understood as a bilateral exchange of information, engagement of local communities at the stage of design and multistage consultation process.

The concept of 'good urban governance' is well developed both in the academic debate and in planning practices and policies promoted by local governments and international organisations in many countries. However, the concept requires continuous updating because of rapid contemporary social, cultural and economic transformations. A single new model of urban governance do not exist and its new conceptualisations are based on different approaches and social, economic or political aspects. One of the new approaches towards urban governance is connected with the notion of urban creativity which is relatively new despite the fact that cities have been places of concentration of human knowledge and innovation for centuries. The widely publicised and discussed concept of 'creative city' was introduced by Charles Landry [22] and further developed by Richard Florida who coined the term 'creative class' [23]. As economic model based on human capital has gained increasing importance in the post-fordist era, cities, being nuclei in which this capital is accumulated, have started to adopt the notion of creativity in urban policies. Many of these involved actions such as place marketing and building infrastructure targeted at attracting representatives of innovative industries [24]. However, such approach is not accordant with the principles of 'good urban governance', failing the criteria of inclusiveness and social sustainability. Because of that a need to develop new forms of governance employing innovation potential appear. Patsy Healey explored the connection between governance process and the promotion of creativity in urban policies. 'Creative governance' can refer to different approaches. Firstly, it can be understood as innovation and flexibility in the modes of governance, fostering experimentation and adjusting to new possibilities and challenges. The second approach addresses the role of governance in urban dynamics in which "market processes are supposed to be driven by the creative response of producers to the behaviour of consumers" but also by the "value of aesthetic and spiritual qualities of urban life". Another meaning focuses on creation of new products and cultural objects such as art projects [25]. The third meaning seems to be connected most closely with social aspects of governance. It can be referred to the values of social inclusion and participation by involvement in cultural activities [24].

Another approach is connected with a response to the notion of smart city and growing importance of technology in the urban built environment. Meijer and Bolivar argue that the debate on 'smart governance' is confusing because of many different perspectives, varying both in the understanding of the nature of smart city and in the approaches towards transforming governmental structures in the quest for becoming smart. They underline that the richest perspective is a socio-technical one in which information and communications technologies serve just as a tool to facilitate collaboration between different actors. In this case smart governance is not brought down to a technological issue but becomes a matter of developing infrastructure for enhancing knowledge and improve the understanding of the interactions between society and government [26]. However, as Sennett observes, the 'smart city' approach creates a risk of returning to top-down planning "conceived in <<Fordist>> terms" where technology is used to control or generate city layout in order to achieve the best relation between space and time. He argues that smart technology should be used to co-ordinate rather than to prescribe and pre-organise [27]. Some other approaches also arise attempting to deal with the complexity of interactions in governance process. 'Network governance' draws on the concept of 'network society' by Manuel Castells and it is seen by some researchers as a potential for creating a new context in planning because "networks are becoming a prime mode of organisation" [28]. The activity of independent governance networks can be used by planning authorities in order to improve the collaborative aspects of planning practice [29]. There is also a growing body of literature that concentrates on 'meta-governance' as another form of re-establishing and remodelling interactions between different stakeholders and politicians. 'Meta-governance', also referred to as the 'governance of governance' or 'multi-level governance' [30], does not mean functionalistic managing and regulating multiple processes but it involves "facilitating and fostering processes of collaborative governance and coordination" and

"setting the scene for self-organisation and emergence of solutions and innovations" [15]. It is in fact a set of processes involving governing structures and institutions at different levels in which the scales and sectors of policy making are reworked [31].

4. Good urban governance – Polish experiences

Urban planning in Poland will be discussed in regard to the 'good urban governance' values. The search for implementation of that concept in urban policies leads to a diagnosis that in Poland the government structures do not co-exist with governance processes. The problem seems to be connected with political and administrative system which is hierarchical and predetermined, having no flexibility in terms of access to decision-making processes, horizontal coordination and information exchange. Urban policies are focused on the management of infrastructure and spatial resources and urban renewal programmes are limited to superficial revitalisation programmes and new investments which are intended to raise the city's prestige. These prestigious buildings (museums, galleries, commercial buildings, stadiums etc.), unsatisfactory for residents who develop new sophisticated needs and expectations regarding urban public space, are not always counterbalanced by creation of well-design public spaces and social architecture, responding to human needs and suitable for human scale [32]. According to some urban planners, spatial planning and decision-making processes are not based on the private-public partnership and the criterion of transparency is not properly met. In the past years a growing interest among urban activists and residents in the process of planning and decision-making was observed. However, urban spatial strategies are still developed only with the expertise of professionals, such as architects or sociologists, and not according to the knowledge and experience of residents expressed in public debate. Moreover, the level of consciousness and the sense of community and common good still vary among citizens and is very low in some social groups, making it difficult to introduce participation in the development of spatial planning strategies. It is still merely an infrequent practice in the process of urban planning rather than an active and widely employed tool [33]. A low degree of involvement among some residents in the planning process is a result of lack of education and information. Public opinions are expressed usually in cases of important investments, which are widely advertised, and conflictual [34].

We believe, however, that there is some evidence of 'good urban governance' indicators in Poland which may in the future become a potential starting point for its full implementation in the policies and urban planning practice. This potential can be achieved by building on the social dimension of governing. It can be assumed that public participation and urban movements are factors which will foster the acceptance of a new approach towards urban planning based on the values of inclusiveness, openness, democratic debate and common good. Participation, as discussed above, is still insufficient both in terms of public awareness, education and engagement and in terms of tools to support it, despite of it being one of the key principles of 'good urban governance'. Residents do not always participate in the development of public space due to insufficient access to information and lack of transparency of the process of urban transformation. The process of civic participation in Poland is guaranteed by the law and is most often implemented in the form public consultations held in case of establishing new local development plans. Public consultations should not only serve the purpose of coordinating local regulations between the residents and other stakeholders and administrative institutions but its most important function should be educational. The process of decision making, which is more important than decisions themselves, is primarily a tool for improving social and spatial awareness and developing active citizenship [11].

Over past years, however, some improvement can be observed and several decision-making processes were conducted with active participation on the part of local residents. If it becomes a standard to involve people in the process of public consultation even in a very small scale, they will become prepared to participate in much more complex mechanism of urban governance. Another important aspect is the activity of bottom-up, civic movements. The urban movements phenomenon appeared in Poland only relatively recently but is becoming very popular in the last decade, supported by tools such

as the participatory budget, taking a form of either well-structured and experienced NGOs or transitory movements established for the purpose of achieving a single goal [35]. There are numerous examples of actions taken by such movements aiming at improving the quality of built environment and existing municipal infrastructure or at fostering civil involvement, education and consciousness. They take informative and educational initiatives, criticising many recent urban developments and commenting on proposed local regulations, laws and spatial plans.

It seems necessary to underline the need for further reflection on the research perspectives of 'good urban governance'. Some academics underline that although this concept is deeply theorised in an extensive body of literature, only few studies have been carried out to investigate its outcomes in planning practice [36]. An increase in the number of research projects would allow to re-asses its normative standards and investigate the potential created by its new conceptualisations. A study regarding the implementation possibilities of good urban governance in Poland is required, which would identify areas for further investigation. It is important to observe whether the aforementioned existing indicators of 'good urban governance' may become an important factor in its full implementation. The question remains if it is possible to achieve success in the field of co-governance only by bottom-up actions, reinforced by limited institutional and legal support and a permanent educational programme, especially when the processes of participation and urban activism is often a form of protest and single or random rather than permanent schedule. It would be also important to investigate urban creativity and awareness in Polish urban environments to establish to what extent they are involved in improving the quality of space and built environment. Moreover, organisational structures and institutions should be examined for the possibility of transformation according to the notion of co-governance.

5. Conclusions

Planning practice in countries which have successfully implemented the principles of 'good urban governance' is no longer hierarchical and top-down and increasingly often becomes a working process where the ideal outcome should be constantly developed and coordinated between various actors. The relations between local governments, organisations, residents, urban movements and many others are changing in the effort to include effectiveness, participation, accountability and equity. Various new conceptualisations and approaches toward new urban governance, such as 'creative governance', 'smart governance', 'network governance' and 'meta-governance', indicate that the concept is still valid and applicable in the process of urban planning based on the principles of sustainable development. Although many countries have successfully improved the modes of collective governance, some of its aspects remains to be further developed, especially in the face of constant and rapid urban transformation, globalisation and many other processes. In the process of collective decision-making the focus should not be only on obtaining certain results and reaching an agreement between its participants. It is also important to underline its educational aspect and its role in shaping citizenship and developing increasingly complex participation forms.

In this article it was argued that despite the practice of public consultations, other indicators of 'good urban governance' in Poland are not fully met. However, the emerging urban movements may become the nucleus of governance transformation, promoting practices from other countries and contributing to the development of civic involvements and consciousness, drawing public attention to many important issues. Some of them have already become institutionalised, although many still take a form of single initiatives established in order to stop particular municipal development plans. The idea of 'good urban governance' may be implemented partly under the pressure and influence of such bottom-up initiatives provided that they become a permanent partner in the process of planning. In that case the responsibility for spatial development may be shared between public institutions and citizens and based on experience, expertise and collaboration of various actors, both urban activists and professionals. It may be assumed that the growing popularity and effectiveness of public participation and civic engagement may open the path to transformation of the modes of governance.

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