

## **Urban planning as a pedagogical experience through an Action Research Project in intermediate cities in northern Peru: “Transversal (2011- 2016)”, La Libertad Region**

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Traditional urban planning teaching provides a normative and general knowledge that does not contribute effectively to its practical application (Uribe-Echevarría, 1977; Alexander, 2001; Carreño & Duran, 2015). This becomes evident in intermediate cities where the globalization phenomena demands that planning involves the present, the places and the local actors. Traditional intermediate cities are facing strong real state dynamics (pic.1), with a high building rate and increased land value resulting from grow up productivity in the rural areas due to new and important investments whose interest slip away from those of the local economy.

The pressure for immediate response from the economic and social actors has led to underestimate long-term policies as inefficient or innocuous. Faced with this: Why teach planning in an environment that despises it? In addition, drawing up urban plans has become a bureaucratic matter that does not assure any usefulness, so Budget and Operation Plans are prioritized based on experience, political interests and other concerns.

The challenge we are facing is how to make and teach planning socially and politically legitimate. Within this context, participative planning emerges as an alternative to build legitimacy between the local actors thus efficiently regulate their territorial development. This kind of planning has required a pedagogical experience that needs transversal strategies from interdisciplinary skills, and commitment from the local actors' in the city development.

This is an opportunity to reinvent the way to make planning useful and agile, binding it to the management practice in the everyday occurrences and in local areas.

In this planning project, the objective is that the group of local actors (civil servants and authorities) and students learn to become planners by participating in the ideas, decisions, strategies and follow ups, in other words on the coproduction of the city project. The hypothesis is that higher education in planning must be understood as a participative pedagogical experience in the context of the complexity of each urban phenomenon.

Within this perspective, education is the conductive thread that will allow committing the local actors' and the activities. If planning is at the service of all, such instrument must be accessible in understandable terms to the group of actors and not become a technical tool that would affirm the power of a group of professionals.

This begins with the (formulation) activities which are:

- a. Understanding the city (Baud et al, 2011), as well as identifying aspirations and possibilities, through the co-production of pertinent information (Decleve et al. 2002; Vilela & Fernandez de C., 2013). A main dynamic applied in the project workshops is the experience of urban trails, where the guides involved are civil servants, authorities or local leaders who tell the story of the places to other neighboring residents and students; this urban experience allows to re-learn their places and raises a different debate. So, participants do plans and schemas of the urban trails and the seen problems and possibilities.
- b. Discussing territorial occupation (pic. 2), negotiating and reaching agreements with the premiss of reestablishing urban and territorial relations (Forray, 2010; Reese, 2011).
- c. Building proposals, guidelines, approaches and prospective aspects collectively (Takano & Tokeshi, 2007).

These activities done jointly are not necessarily sequential, parallel nor concluding. Likewise the execution implementation activities must go with complement and guide the formulation activities (McTague & Jacobowsky, 2013). This way knowledge is linked with action (Friedmann, 1992; Vidyarthi, 2012; McTague & Jakubowski, 2013).

A central tool for the pedagogical experience is the participative workshops with sequential theme (pic 3). These workshops are the backbone of the strategy and assure the theme continuity relating academic activities with the actors' experience in

the coproduction of planning and projects. This way, the strategy is to relate and integrate: actors, activities and places, (Gobaerts et. al., 2002); methodologies and pedagogies; and planning with minor urban projects that dynamize the whole process. (Vilela & Fernandez de C., 2013).

Just as neighbors, local leaders, civil servants, local authorities, university students and teachers all take part in each workshop activity with different roles. This relationship generates a round trip in where everyone learns and searches from their own concerns and experiences generating synergies that leads them to new visions and projects. The University student looks to put into play his learning and teaching tools, while the actors turn to their experiences, their places and memory. Everyone participates in a collective debate, where positions are discussed and listening is learned. Each workshop's intervention space is identified in its different territorial scales, concentration and integration variables, and spatial distribution (Uribe-Echevarria, 1983).

In the project context "Transversal (2011-16)", this reflection has allowed us to start to consolidate a social and political local network. Such reflection would not have been possible without the existence of product continuity of concrete urban challenges that demanded answer. So, the components from different parts of the planning will be made from the results of the participatory workshops' activities. In that sense, it allowed the participants to be initiated in the planning experience. Having as central reference each workshop's completion, there are university courses involved in this process and adapting their methodology in accordance to the workshop's objectives<sup>1</sup>. The carried out effort was according to the specific competence of each specialty produced collectively, for example, a social economic base line and public place urbanistic projects that were incorporated into public investment projects (pic. 4).

In sum, the workshops allowed the formulation of shared objectives between the population, the political representatives and the university actors. The university's teachers and students learned to put into play their abilities and challenge themselves creatively through the experience of the discussion with the citizens and their

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<sup>1</sup> Involved courses from Sociology (Práctica de Campo: 2012-2; 2013-2), Geography (Ordenamiento territorial: 2014-1) and Urban planning (Seminario de urbanismo: 2013-1, 2014-1, 2015-1)

representatives that at the same time learned to go beyond the day by day to discuss the future, experiencing planning as a relevant tool for their territories.

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## Pictures



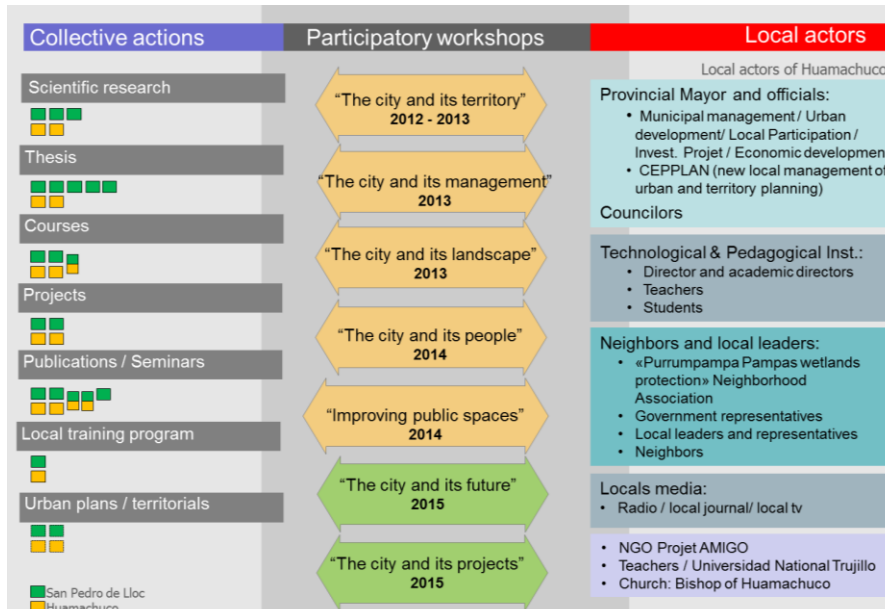
**Picture 1:** Important changes in Huamachuco's urban morphology since the year 2000.

Source: Transversal, 2012

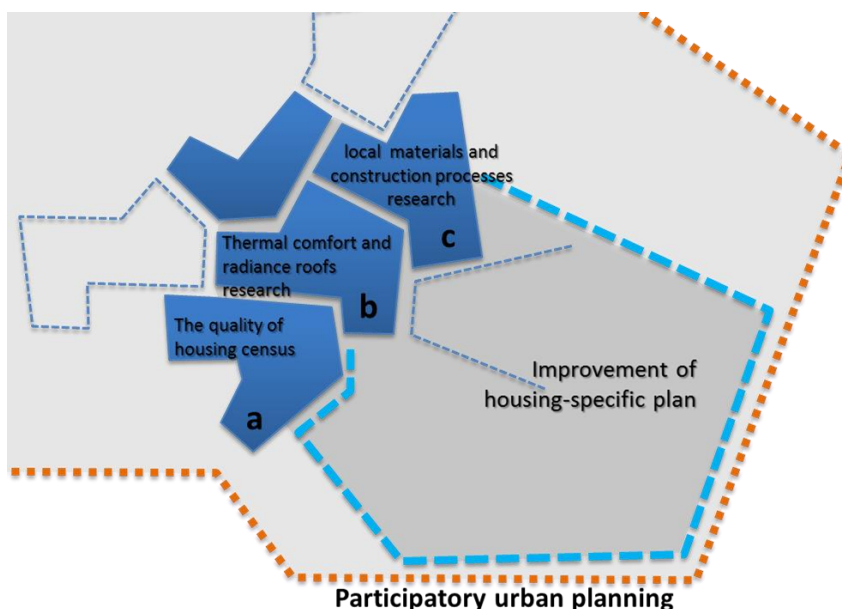


**Picture 2:** The participative workshop working group: Neighbors, local leaders, municipal officials, students and teachers participating in the discussion on problems in the wetland-urban sector of Huamachuco city: the Purrumpampa Pampas.

Source: Transversal, 2014.



**Picture 3:** General outline of the strategy for learning and teaching urban planning within the framework of the Action-Research project "Transversal, actions of integration in the Peruvian territory (2011-2016)". Source: Transversal, 2014.



**Picture 4:** Relationship diagram between partial products a, b, and c, as projects components and/or specific plans in participative urban planning. Source: Vilela, 2015.