

## **Territorial planning: challenges for capacity building and transformative praxis in Brazil**

Mariana Mencio<sup>1</sup>, Sandra Irene Momm-Schult<sup>2</sup>, Silvana Maria Zioni<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1-2-3</sup>UFABC

<sup>1</sup>*marianamencio@terra.com.br*

<sup>2</sup>*sandra.momm@gmail.com*

<sup>3</sup>*silvana.zioni@ufabc.edu.br*

The objective of the article is to analyze how processes of productive-economic and political restructuring and broader societal transformations generate a series of challenges and opportunities for building up the necessary human capacity as well as the transformative professional practice (praxis) that are required for urban and regional planning in Brazil.

Countries of the global south in general, and Brazil in particular, have faced intense social-spatial contradictions in their development trajectories that have compromised their territories at multiple scales. Therefore, the urban-regional planning agenda in those countries represents an even higher level of complexity than in the *global center*. Territorial planning in the global south cannot be separated from issues such as inequality, informality, the scale and proliferation of precarious settlements and the clientelism and patronage that mark the relationships between private actors and the State.

To make the scenario even more complex, it should be recognized that urban-regional planning is also confronted with new, and often contradictory and complex dynamics, such as: the synergies and conflicts between environmental and urban issues and the multiple projects and strategies that are articulated by both public and private actors around the broader agenda of sustainability; the transformation of the agenda of the Millennium Goals into the Objectives of Sustainable Growth in the period after 2015; the need to overcome the legacy of the techno-bureaucratic model of planning (marked by the instrumental rationality) and to improve on the many forms of participation and collaborative planning, including the experimentation with new

communicative rationalities; the possibility to establish further progress in relation to the agenda that was structured around the right to the city in order to move towards a perspective focused on the transformation of the city; the latter to be articulated with new insurgencies and subjectivities which have been proliferating, particularly in the Global Urban South; the interconnection between multiple scales of planning and the variegated forms of territorial restructuring and rescaling of the State and its consequences for urban and regional planning.

More specifically in relation to the Brazilian scenario, and based on the above mentioned elements, the paper initially highlights how the transformations in the post 1970s period generated new societal demands regarding competencies, skills and awareness expected from territorial planning that stretched the field way beyond its boundaries framed around traditional human resource formation, capacity building and professional practice.

In a subsequent stage of the paper, we will analyze how this triggered specific pedagogical innovation and led to the creation of a new federal university in the ABC region (an industrial heartland in the outskirts of metropolitan São Paulo) with a quite different conception on learning, innovation and transformative praxis. Since the 1980s, the ABC Region has undergone an intense process of productive and economic restructuring as a consequence of the demise of the national developmental regime. The Federal University of ABC (UFABC) was created in 2005 in the midst of these transformations and also as a direct result of broader mobilization in the region as to the need to democratize the access to university education. Entrance into the UFABC is organized around two interdisciplinary bachelor's courses: either the Science and Technology Bachelor (STB) or the Science and Humanities Bachelor (SHB). The proposal of a Territorial Planning Bachelor (TPB) was elaborated by a strategic decision from the SHB in 2010 regarding the need to create complementary follow-up graduate courses after students completing their SHB. The TPB shares contents and specific disciplines with other courses such as Economics and Public Policies. Another feature of the course is its dialogue with Post-Graduate Research and Teaching in the thematic area of Urban and Regional Planning as defined by the National Ministries of

Education and Science and Technology (CNPq/CAPES) and with the specific Post-Graduate course in the same area that already existed in the UFABC.

The final part of the paper explores the tensions between these ongoing national and local innovations and the existing institutional structure that guides Brazilian planning education and practice. The mismatches in the field of planning education and practice are evident and represent a paradox, particularly considering the fast transitions in the development trajectory of the country that were analyzed in the previous parts of the paper. As opposed to the international trend, the Brazilian institutional framework that is supposed to guide the building up of capacity and human resources as well as progressive-transformative professional practice is still fragmented and with limited outreach to incorporate these new demands - from civil society, social movements, public policies and the market - that surround the urban and regional planning of the country. Thus, a challenging scenario emerges characterized by intense transformations, contingencies and broader issues surrounding capacity building, the formation of human resources and professional practice in the field of urban and regional planning. The social-spatial and environmental contradictions that surround Brazilian cities and regions force us to urgently design and discuss an agenda aimed at mobilizing Brazilian society in order to find answers and create a “new planning for a new Brazil”.