



Source : Étude générale de la circulation à Genève, J.-L. Biermann, 1959

Evolution of transport and urban planning policy in Switzerland and France: Case studies of Geneva and Strasbourg

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Conference paper STRC 2007

STRC

7th Swiss Transport Research Conference

Monte Verità / Ascona, September 12. – 14. 2007

Title of paper

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September 2007

Abstract

Over the last two decades, urban planning has been reapplied in several European countries. Beyond common tendencies that underline the reform of planning procedures (generalization of sustainable development, reorganization of local government), large differences appear in practice, depending on political cultures, planning traditions, and local contexts. Based on the case-studies of Strasbourg, France and Geneva, Switzerland, this article discusses the role of urban planning and its evolution during the last forty decades. It focuses on the coordination between transport and urbanism policies, commonly considered a condition for success within urban sustainable development strategies.

What are urban plans used for? Are they used to guide local policies or implement urban governance? The two case-studies illustrate how planning procedures take an integral part in the policy-making process, with these procedures elaborated simultaneously with policies. Comparative analysis reveals important contrasts in the institutional factors and interests that govern local changes in the coordination of transport and urbanism. However, the similarities of the two urban areas can be contributed to the influence of widely accepted and implemented doctrines. Torn between the renewal of public policy goals and the outcome of new territories, the reform of urban planning presents several contradictions. Conversely, sustainable development particularly fails to be addressed as a true political issue, limited to a definition of norms or legitimizing local policies.

Keywords

coordination of transport and urbanism – history of planning policy – comparative analysis – public action

1. Introduction

If we consider the laws that define its framework and orientations, urban planning is a tool that aims to make public action more coherent. This coherence can first be understood at a spatial level. Urban planning documents are destined to be developed within broad perimeters, defined on the basis of functional criteria and outside the borders of local administrative organization. Subsequently, at an intersectorial level, the plan defines territorial objectives or orientations, with implementation based on the coordination of several sectorial policies. Finally, at a time level, proactive thinking allows to anticipate future needs and, more generally, incorporate long-term issues.

The renewal of urban planning procedures in European countries for the past 15 years shows the importance attached to proactive thinking by governments. This operates within a double context, consisting of objectives towards the renewal and change of urban and land use planning policy frameworks. The common concept of sustainable development is often utilized, which implies a range of tensions between short and long term issues at local and global scales, with a transversal approach of problems and solutions. Furthermore, other actors then benefit from the weakening of governmental power, like political (Europe, regions or municipalities) or economic actors (economic markets or large companies). Complex issues, the multiplication of intervention scales and the diversification of actor networks tend to assign sustainable objectives to urban planning objectives. This defines the orientations of sustainable and procedural urban development, providing a pretext, support or framework for the establishment of urban governance.

Despite a certain convergence of orientations and trends in planning renewal in Europe, differences appear in practice due to political culture, land use traditions and local contexts. In this article, we focus on the development of urban and transport planning and its role in Strasbourg and Geneva since the late 1960s.

These two urban areas of comparable size present both an urban planning tradition, due to their geographical situation at a national border, and political influences (Strasbourg, as European capital and Geneva, headquarters of many international organizations). They offer a particular situation in terms of urban development, economic growth and the organization of mobility. At a national scale, French urban planning often appears to focus on decentralization aspects, while the cantons of the Swiss Confederation have traditional autonomy in this field.

The changes are analyzed through a specific problematic appearing in the recent laws as a necessary condition to implement sustainable strategies in urban planning: the coordination of urban and transport planning policies. An analysis of administrative, political and planning

documents, including the use of academic or applied studies, allows us to reconstruct the history of these policies, and then accompany the findings with interviews of local actors. Consequently, we will be able to compare processes rather than precise moments that frequently risk emphasizing structural variables like urban morphology, political systems or local institutional organization. The comparative analysis is made up of two phases. The constitutive factors of local dynamics are initially identified and characterized through the study of institutional aspects, the comprehension of interactions among local actors and the representations that express urban and transport actions. Consequently, by analyzing the relative influence of these different factors, the second part of this paper consists of evaluating the role of urban planning in the incorporation of urban and transport policies in Strasbourg and Geneva.

2. Evolution of transport and planning policies

2.1. Strasbourg, between Rhenan culture and European ambition

The principal elements of Strasbourg's institutional framework are historically embedded within a context of centralized planning and an emergence of a national land use planning policy. Under the pressure of its mayor Pierre Pfimlin (MRP), Strasbourg was elected as an equal standing agglomeration to counterbalance the growth of the Parisian metropolis. Furthermore, the Urban Community of Strasbourg (CUS) was founded by the State in 1966¹, with around 27 enlisted communes. Finally, in order to develop the land use and urban development plan (SDAU), an urban planning agency (AUAS, then ADEUS) was created in January, 1968.

2.1.1. Technical expertise and political culture for a precursory project

Between the late 1960s and mid-1970s, the production of urban studies is particularly intense. Based on hypotheses confirming high demographic growth, the SDAU, approved in 1973, expanded urban development throughout a network of peripheral cities, beyond the CUS limits. With the precision and completion of the expressway network originally designed in past development documents, the City planned the creation of a public transport system (TCSP) in order to reinforce the access to the city center. The preliminary studies on transport infrastructures ended in 1975 with the vote on the agglomeration report. This original document is a compromise between the political vision of the mayor, fiercely opposed to car invasion, and the functional approach of road engineers in the Ministry of Public Works. The city center development project is based on three main principles: the suppression of the car transit is possible thanks to the construction of a beltway and local bypass services, the transformation of terrain into pedestrian space and the development of a tramway project.

2.1.2. Decrease in proactive perceptions and rethinking car use in the city center

In the mid-1970s, the oil crisis and the financial withdrawal of the State led to a postponement of the transport projects associated to the SDAU, as well as a decrease of the urban planning

¹ The State favors, in large agglomerations, the creation of intercommunal structures that are able to deal with urban development challenges at pertinent scales. The law of December 31st, 1996 creates four urban communities: in Lille, Lyon, Strasbourg, and Bordeaux.

activities. The difficulty to obtain a political consensus, the large support of the population for the tramway and the delay in the beltway construction made the city center development project possible. Marcel Rudloff, elected as mayor (RPR) of Strasbourg in 1983, was less opposed to cars and supported the vote of a light automatic metro by the CUS council. This project had the advantage, from the perspective of car associations, that surface traffic was principally not disturbed.

2.1.3. Planning for a political project?

In 1989, Catherine Trautmann (PS) was elected mayor of Strasbourg. In a context that questions the European position of Strasbourg², the new team developed proactive reflections to define a political program at the CUS scale. The tramway, as a pioneering measure of the urban area development project voted in 1990, represented the solidarity of the agglomeration and reinforced the European influence of Strasbourg. With the urgent realization of the TCSP, the studies then lost their importance. The election of Fabienne Keller as mayor of Strasbourg in 2001 did not question the intermodal policy.

Pursuing the objectives of densifying the tramway network and developing rail radial links (including a tram-train project), the SCOT, voted in 2006, endorsed the idea of an urbanization conditioned by the public transport service. The ambition of a European metropolis was then strongly reaffirmed in Strasbourg at an interregional perspective, rather than at a cross-border scale, as shown through their priorities to the connection projects of the German high speed railway lines, reactivated with the imminent *TGV-East*.

2.2. Geneva : Dense car city and a cross-border outreach to France

Geneva has an old tradition in urban planning, due to the lack of space of the cantonal territory (283 km²), high pressure demographically and to the will to preserve the green agricultural belt, protected since 1952. The canton of Geneva, which has all prerogatives in urban planning and the organization of mobility³, has already realized several master plans

² Since 1985, a proposal exists to transfer European Parliament headquarters to Brussels, in order to avoid the dispersal of employees. The struggle to have the headquarters in a single place (about half of meetings take place in Luxembourg) will be laborious and long.

³ This is a particular situation. In other Swiss cantons, communes benefit from larger prerogatives, in particular in urban planning.

before the legal obligation that emerged from the Federal law on land use planning (LAT) of 1979.

2.2.1. A modernist claimed heritage

During the 1960s and 1970s, Geneva varied little from the modernist city model, combining the densification of the city center to an important growth of car traffic. The cantonal master plan of 1966, marked by a technical ideology, insisted on the necessity to adapt the city to car mobility, based on Biermann's⁴ recommendations in his general traffic study published in 1959. Expressways would structure the city in a circular pattern, organized in accordance with the principle of separation of functions (housing, activities). The plan was to develop the urban area in a compact way and strengthen the principal poles in the periphery, in order to preserve the green belt and maintain the industrial areas outside the agglomeration.

2.2.2. Emphasis on environmental issues

The 1970s marked the awareness of urban problems generated by the growth of car traffic (pollution, congestion, deterioration of the quality of life). The master plan of 1975 ceased the car euphoria of the previous period, insisting on the necessity to build the city on the city and oppose urban sprawl. After the vote of the LAT, the canton began to develop a new master plan. However, the early 1980s experienced an increase of environmental concerns, which influenced federal legislation on environment protection (LPE) in 1983. The same year, a popular initiative called "For Efficient Public Transport" is presented to the canton of Geneva by five ecologist associations. This initiative inaugurated the reform of rail public transport development across the city and canton, in particular the redeployment of a tramway network. The master plan of 1989 insists on these changes while reaffirming the principles of densification and protection of the green agricultural belt.

2.2.3. The cross-border planning as subject of political negotiation

In the early 1990s, the increase of commuting travels between Switzerland and France also pressured urban planning to make cross-border apertures a priority. The development of the new plan, Project 2015, emphasized the principle of differentiated urbanization, recommending the diversification of activities in the green belt. It then provided flexibility of urbanization constraints in the agricultural area, causing a modification of the LAT in 1999. In areas that had high development potential (including four areas that require a cross border cooperation), perimeters of coordinated development benefited from strong planning efforts.

⁴ The engineer Jean-Louis Biermann was appointed by the State Council to conduct this study.

In the field of transport, the major project became the CEVA rail line (Cornavin - Eaux-Vives - Annemasse) linking the right bank of Geneva to France. Launched once again in 2001 by a feasibility study published by the canton of Geneva and the CFF, this century-old project⁵ was the subject of harsh financial negotiations between Geneva and French public authorities. Several other planning documents, including a French-Vaud-Geneva agglomeration project, aimed to make this cross-border territory emerge and consolidate its international vocation.

⁵ Since 1858, a rail line connects the Eaux-Vives station, on the left bank of the Geneva Lake, to Annemasse, in France. The connection of Geneva to France necessitates a line extension towards the Cornavin station, via the Praille station. In 1912, a 100 years valid agreement between the canton of Geneva, the CFF and the Swiss Confederation, where each partner would finance one-third of this connection line, is signed.

3. Changes and continuities in the coordination of urban and transport planning

Over the past 40 years, we have seen that the history of urban planning in the agglomerations of Strasbourg and Geneva is characterized by an alternation of periods with contrasted dynamics.

This retrospective allows us to grasp the connotation of the modification in public policies and better identify this change (Fontaine et Hassenteufel, 2002), in particular the elements of continuity and rupture in the development of successive planning procedures. We also are able to relate national and local policies.

Recent studies of political science have shown the interest to combine, in analysis processes of public action, aspects that are often used in an exclusive way (Palier and Surel, 2005). This analytical framework, known as the three “i”, consists in examining successively, without classifying them in a particular hierarchy, three categories of explanatory elements relating respectively to *institutions*, *interests* and *ideas*. This approach first gives a particular attention to institutional aspects, cumulative effects of systems and decisions. It then analyzes the strategic dimension of collective action, illustrating how local actors express their interests and negotiate their representation. Finally, this approach focuses on the intellectual dimension, through an analysis of values, beliefs or norms, which underlie the formulation of problems or the choice of solutions. Based on these three sets of factors, we will estimate the changes of urban planning in Strasbourg and Geneva, particularly focusing on the relationships between transportation and urban planning.

3.1. Institutional aspects

3.1.1. Strasbourg: communal protectionism and the segmentation of expertise

As the ancient capital of the Reichland Alsace-Lorraine, Strasbourg has historically possessed large competences in the field of urban planning since World War II. While providing Strasbourg a strong ability to defend its interests in planning, this characteristic also creates certain rules of execution within the urban community or sharing of expertise, which influences the methods of incorporating transport and urban planning. There is first segmentation in the execution of planning and transport competences, which were established after the foundation of the CUS in 1966. The authoritarian creation of this intercommunal structure faces strong opposition by neighboring mayors, due to the “bad memory” left by the communal merging imposed during the German occupation (Bachofen, 1994). Submitted to

the unilateral decision of the State, elected representatives have agreed to preserve their communal autonomy as much as possible.

Pierre Pfmilin expressed his good by deliberately limiting the representation of the center-city within the community council to ensure the representation of each commune. The defense of the communal prerogatives in urban planning exceeds considerably the symbolic plan. While land use planning is part of the legal competences of urban communities, Strasbourg's CUS delegates this competence to each member of 27 communes. Therefore, each commune can manage its own land use plan. While the exceptional regime of Strasbourg in which the building field is legislated in the common law in 1992, the consequences of this operation continue to influence current decisions. Despite the recent recommendations of a law strengthening solidarity and to urban renewal (SRU law), there is still no community PLU. In addition, the political demand for a global vision of the land use planning of the CUS emerges with difficulty. Except parking managed by the communes, the agglomeration possesses the expertise of organizing mobility, generally composed of managing road and public transport offers. Therefore, despite the existence of an institution with legal competences in transport and urban planning, the action in these two fields has always been disconnected.

With its extensive and qualified technical services, the city of Strasbourg has developed a particular expertise in the field of urban planning. When the urban grouping plan was created in 1965, the State architect Pierre Vivien and Pierre Pfmilin decide to create an urban planning office within the municipal administration (Bachofen, 1990). The operation of this service is clearly not limited to the distribution of tools and methods from the functionalist approach to which the plan attaches a greater importance. It also allows the mayor of Strasbourg, who has a more cultural vision of urban planning, to be opposed to State interference within the respective territory. At the time of the CUS's creation, the municipal services were opposed to the new community administration. To solve these conflicts, Pierre Pfmilin decided in 1972 to merge the services. However, this decision did not affect urban planning and its execution remained at a municipal level. Other tensions soon opposed CUS services to the urban planning agency. From the development of the SDAU, this agency became in charge of urban planning. This mission is presently not truly accepted by the urban planning service, who feels disconnected from a part of its previous competences.

Moreover, the operational sphere remains the domain of the CUS and a mixed economy planning company, the SERS. This strict limitation for the agency to strategic studies sometimes weakens its credibility with elected representatives. In the actual context of redefinition of political projects at different levels, the elected representatives of the CUS prefer the establishment of internal expertise. The legitimacy of the agency rather asserts itself in its independence towards various local communities and its ability to implement analysis at

a regional level, as shown with the study recently mandated to the agency by the Region, the Department, the DRE and the CUS on the concept of urban structure. The implementation of strategic orientations, described in the SCOT, is assigned to communal technical services within a competitive, rather than cooperative climate, limiting the impact of the planning document.

3.1.2. Geneva: the importance of traditions and the legitimization system tool

The cantonal government (State Council) in Geneva is the main actor in the local political land use planning. Since the 1950s, five master plans were developed within a context that has gradually institutionalized the monitoring and the decennial revision of planning documents. The City of Geneva has very little influence to impose its preferences, including transport planning, since the roads stretch outside its communal borders. Moreover, the semi-direct democracy system confers a significant importance on the population and associations in the local actor relationships. The initiatives and referendums influence decisive orientation changes in the priorities of cantonal planning. Considering the occasional harsh opposition and the risk to challenge the cantonal policy, the role of the State Council is not simply to develop, coordinate and implement development projects. It also has to arbitrate the contradictory interests that can occur with the initiatives or referendums. The near non-modifiable cantonal law of 1952 protecting the green agricultural belt offers a first example of the continuity in the planning options of Geneva's territory. There are no master plans adopted that have questioned this decision, due to the risk of being exposed to an immediate appeal from environmental associations. Even if the land use planning federal law, amended in 1999, plans a liberalization of urbanization constraints in agricultural areas, enforcing this principle in the agglomeration of Geneva would foremost imply a reform of the cantonal law, which is not presently on the agenda.

More generally, the importance of oppositions relating to the successive plans has led the State Council to create, since the 1960s, tools that are designed to legitimize land use planning policy. This is especially the vocation of the sectorial consultative commissions, which groups together representatives of State Council, experts, operators and representatives of associations. The urban planning commission has been established in 1961 to follow up the master plan. It also gives updates on development projects. In 1973, the French-Geneva Regional Committee (CRFG) is created to address issues relating, for example, to cross-border commuters. Currently incorporating issues on urban planning, the analyses of the CRFG are associated with those of the Land Use Planning Commission, established in 1994, at the time of the plan's revision of 1989. Finally, from 1990, the Consultative Traffic Commission Groups, the OCM, the TPG, representatives of the city of Geneva and associations are jointly active in the field of transport. In practice, the influence of these

various commissions is rather limited. As a stated policy, the State Council particularly aims to prevent untimely demonstrations of diverging interests and contradictions neither emerge nor are solved through the discussions within the commissions. The role of these consultative commissions is then rather characterized by inertia than thematic or methodological innovation.

Finally, as in Strasbourg, there is a strong sectorial division in actions relating to transport and urban planning. Unlike the agglomeration of Strasbourg, this segmentation is not associated to a geographic fragmentation of competences, since all the competences in both fields, including the management of parking, are concentrated at the cantonal level in Geneva. However, this concentration had not been enough to coordinate transport and urban planning policies. This is the case, for example, with the production in the early 1980s of specific planning documents for public transport and traffic. Moreover, the transversal approach of the French urban mobility plan has no equivalent in Geneva. The separation of competences within the Departments of the State Council also reflects the strong division of technical cultures, not only between urban planners and transport engineers, but also within the field of transport between road experts and public transport specialists. Consequently, until 2005, three Departments of the State Council were concerned by the urban and transport planning policies: the Department of Urban Planning, Facilities and Housing (DAEL), which developed the master plan, the Department of Justice, Police and Transport (DJPT), in charge of the road and rail transport policy (including parking) through the Cantonal Traffic and Transport Office (OCT) and the Department of Interior, Agriculture, Environment and Energy (DIAE), in charge of environmental protection policies (against air pollution, noise, waste and protection of the agricultural area). Furthermore, before the creation of the Traffic and Transport Office (OTC) in 1989, transport belonged to three different departments. Nevertheless, since 2005, the cantonal government has expressed the need to incorporate planning and transport issues to stop strictly technical approaches to mobility. The institutional implementation of this change is the recent merging of competences relative to urban and transport planning into a single department, the Department of Territorial Affairs, and the transformation of the OTC into the Cantonal Mobility Office (OCM).

3.2. Interests and relations between local actors

3.2.1. Strasbourg : from the centre-city to the juxtaposition of territorial visions

In the agglomeration of Strasbourg, the impact of decentralizing competences decentralization clearly emerges on the analyzed period through the progressive withdrawal of the State, both in terms of controlling urban planning procedures and technical assistance to local authorities or funding for studies and projects. However, we should avoid any simplified vision about the

impacts of this reform, which would oppose two key periods; first one when the State still had the principal power to make decisions and a second when the State is totally absent from the actions of local communities.

Thus, between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s, while the State interventionism reaches its highest point, the city center exerted a significant counter-power facing the State. Its ability to negotiate the urban planning priorities on its own territory evolved during this period, due to the mediation provided by the planning agency. This trend emerged in particular from the comparison between the SDAU, approved in 1973, and the agglomeration report of 1975. In the first case, it is a classic planning procedure, led by the State services, that focuses on the organization of urban peripheral development and issues about access to the city centre, generally ignoring existing urbanization. This scale feature, which is not specific to the SDAU in Strasbourg, is reinforced by the protectionist attitude of Strasbourg. Until the early 1970s, the urban planning agency did not succeed in entering "the sanctuary of Strasbourg", which remains the privileged field of technical services that possess municipal competences in construction rights. The context then changed with the arrival of the new agency director, corresponding to the start of studies on transport infrastructure programs. Pierre Pfinlin, opposed to sacrificing the city to cars, understood the benefits of this independent study structure, not only in terms of expertise, but also of direct access to government services. As the urban planning service of the city began to reveal its political views (to remove the car transit from the city center), the agency developed a solution that guarantees its feasibility (to achieve a beltway and local bypass services). By diverting the procedure of the agglomeration dossier, the agency also demonstrated its ability to surpass the conflict between urban planners and road engineers from the Ministry of Public Facilities in the comprehension and analysis of urban issues.

Only in the early 1990s, due to a majority change within the municipal team, did the city center reaffirm its political intention through urban planning, this time as an innovator. During the planning reflections of the 1960s, the development plan was a framework for the implementation of local policies. Conversely, it was the political project that caused the renewal of urban and sectorial planning procedures. However, in this reversed relationship between plan and project, the political urgency limited strategic ambitions. The achievement of the tramway arrived before the Urban Mobility Plan (PDU), which then weakened its proactive vocation. The local resistance, which emerged around the same time as the revision of the development plan, also underlines the difficulty to reveal the reorganization intentions of the local power, expressed in the agglomeration project of 1990.

In the year 2000, the impacts of the second wave of power decentralization appeared through a refocusing of the community actions, in particular the Department and the Region, around

their new responsibilities. The consequences are twofold: on the one hand, each community redefines its priorities for action on its own territory; on the other hand, the difference between these priorities or the certain action frameworks generates political tensions between public authorities. The Urban Community was not directly affected by this redeployment of local competences, but the lack of political vision at the community level, particularly in the urban planning, placed it in a delicate position towards the Department and the Region. For the Department, which was traditionally in charge of facilities for rural communes, the territory of the CUS, which represents more than 40% of the population of Bas-Rhin, could no longer be ignored. It intended to assert its role, not as a simple finance provider, but as a defender of its interests. Furthermore, the approaches of these communities tend to deviate from traditional planning procedures, with its prescriptive scope considered insufficient. Thus, the Region abandoned in 2002 the idea of finishing a regional and transport development plan, in order to develop a strategic document in the form of a road map, intended to guide public action (Ollivier-Trigalo and Zembri-Mary, 2006). In this context, the SCOT has apparently not been used for the negotiation of local issues. The choice of center-towns, for example, reduced political sensibilities and attempted to satisfy law orientations in the field of public transport supply. This institutional withdrawal caused, in particular a lack of information sharing and the autonomy of transport projects (each community defends its own project), which have not been discussed nor truly reintroduced in a strategic territorial reflection.

3.2.2. Geneva : from the conciliation of internal interest to external negotiation

In the middle of the 1960s, the recognition of problems caused by the automobile prompted the State Council to put on the agenda of the master plan the improvement of public transport. However, the car access to the center was not truly questioned and investments took a long time to materialize in the field of public transport. The popular initiative of 1983 for a renewal of public transport caused protests from motorist circles that feared the negative consequences of a redeployment of the tramway network on the traffic. Faced with this contradiction, the State Council appointed a research office to examine a counter-project, which led in 1988 to the cantonal law on public transport networks in Geneva. The success of this counter-project, adopted by 79% of voters, derived from compromise. While suggesting the expansion of the tramway network, the text reduced concerns of associations by proposing two possibilities: the creation of an express regional network, supported by the initiators, and the creation of an automatic subway, supported by the motorists.

At the end of the 1990s, the cross-border outreach demonstrated a significant change in the organization of local interests. Despite the traditional mobilization of the local associations on cross-border planning issues and the support of the European Commission via Interreg

programs, bringing together public Swiss and French authorities had been continually limited to studies and intentions.

We should note, in this regard, that the configurations of the employment areas in Strasbourg and Geneva are very different. While the attraction of Strasbourg is particularly weak on the German territory, the one in Geneva goes far beyond the cantonal limits on the French side. According to the INSEE definition of urban area, 70% of the population in the peri-urban ring of Geneva resides in France. Since the late 1980s, the aggravation of urban sprawl has led to an important increase of commuter flows between Switzerland and France, causing important congestion problems on the roads towards Geneva. The development of a public transport between Switzerland and France is therefore considered urgent. The French local communities demand a better employment distribution on their own territory, essentially focused at the moment on the cantonal perimeter. The scale change of the cantonal master plan concretizes around this negotiation between mutual interests of various partners. This is the case with the pressure that Geneva puts on the Departments of Ain and Haute-Savoie in France, so they can contribute all or a part of the fiscal retrocession paid by Geneva from the wages of cross border workers.

3.3. The link between city and transport: stratification of global doctrines and territorial implementation

Considering values, representations and norms that underlie the action in the fields of urban and transport development, the evolution analysis of urban planning in Strasbourg and Geneva reveals significant similarities deriving from the global doctrines, widely spread at an international scale. Thus, three moments mark the evolution of the public action doctrines, which are very present in the planning documents of Strasbourg and Geneva. During the 1950s and 1960s, the functionalist urban planning was the dominant model. This planning is based on principles of functional separation (housing, work, leisure, travel) and the importance attached to the travel function, both inspired by the Athens Charter of the early 1940s. In Strasbourg, as well as in Geneva, this vision corresponds to the image of modernity attributed to the car, in contrast with the obsolete image of the tramway, whose networks have been almost entirely demolished in both cities. Car accessibility therefore became the major issue of transport policies. Road engineering, which uses methods and models imported from the United States, was widely present within public institutions, such as private planning offices. In Geneva, the plan of 1966 was closely related to modernist approaches, with these modernist doctrines particularly present. The densification of urban habitat was a major orientation in this plan. Locally, it corresponded to the double political issue of land use planning within a small territory and protection of the green agricultural belt.

A second doctrine emerged in the 1970s that questioned the car dominance characteristics of the previous period. The major concerns were about the congestion of road networks that prevented access to the city, and then necessitating a development of public transport. Other issues accompany the promotion of urban public transport other than the automobile, such a guarantee of an equal access to the city, a better quality of life in urban areas or the maintenance of the city centers attraction. In the agglomeration of Strasbourg, the latent confrontation of two action aspects, the promotion of urban accessibility, supported by road engineers, and the protection of heritage and urbanity values by the city of Strasbourg, was fully revealed at the time of the agglomeration dossier development in 1975. The territorial compromise of the agglomeration dossier emphasized the fact that the questioning of car dominance is limited to the city center perimeter. In Geneva, the plan of 1975 is developed in a specific context: the downward trend of population growth predictions and concerns about the peripheral urban sprawl trend. The necessity to promote a compact development of the agglomeration that strictly respects the green belt, referred to the historical tradition of land use planning. The link between transport and urban planning was not specified: public transport development was only considered to limit the use of individual cars, with the idea of a balanced mobility distribution not incorporated in a global planning policy.

A third moment corresponds to the increase of environmental concerns and, more generally, the generalization of the concept of sustainable development. It is a new way to deal with urban and transport development issues, emphasizing the problems of non-renewable resources, extensive growth of urbanized areas and the increase of car traffic around the cities. Solutions are not only thought in terms of rebalancing the modal split in favor of pedestrian, bike and public transport, but also in terms of an urban development restructuring in areas that have a good access to public transport. The concept of sustainable development consequently brought an additional degree of complexity by insisting on the simultaneous management of economic, environmental and social issues. Applied to the planning of urban territories, it increased the need for intersectorial coherence for all urban policies (mobility, habitat, housing, social policy, etc.). It was probably during this third moment, characterized by more complex issues, that the differences between the two agglomerations are the most evident.

The environmental issues were not totally absent from the political debates in the 1970s, as the Alsace was one of the French regions where the environmental sensitivity became part of local culture. However, the strongest mobilizations dealt with issues at a national (nuclear power) or regional scale (establishment of heavy industries along the Rhine). Yet the achievement of a green plan (which plans the connection of green spaces along rivers) and a bike policy showed the true impact of this environmental concern in the urban project. The resistance of the city center towards the car model became to weaken in the 1980s. In the 1990s, the new political project emphasized the values of urbanity, solidarity, but also

economic attraction of the agglomeration. The link between city and transport was based on different scales. For the city, the development of public spaces and road sharing were associated with the idea of urbanity. The performance of the public transport network was intended to strengthen the solidarity within the agglomeration and its attraction. Finally, the improvement of international connections (TGV-East, airport transformation into an international airport, development of highways with Germany) is legitimized by the status of European capital of Strasbourg. With the SCOT, the priority of urbanization in areas with good access to transport was widely accepted, even if difficult to implement this objective. Furthermore, we can note the continuity of priorities in the field of transport at the scale of the urban region. The achievement of the west beltway of Strasbourg, already planned at the time of the SDAU in 1973, was now considered as being more necessary than thirty years ago, due to the permanent increase of logistic transport flows. Here, the development of transport infrastructures once again correlates with the evolution of mobility, while the environmental argument insists on the necessity to deviate heavy goods vehicles from the center.

In Geneva, the environmental issue appeared earlier than in Strasbourg in the field of urban development. At a national level, it had been institutionalized almost 15 years before the vote of the law on air and rational use of energy in France. At the local level, the role of environmentalist associations is particularly important, both for the preservation of natural or agricultural spaces and the promotion of efficient public transport. However, the urban culture in Geneva, marked by the modernist heritage and favorable to individual cars, contrasts with this early and involved sensitivity for the environmental issue. This limited the acceptance of a drastic car traffic reduction strategy, as it is the case in Bern. In the 1990s, the debate on land use at the federal level focused on urban issues, mixing ideas of liberal inspiration with sustainable development. Faced with demographic pressure and urban sprawl problems, the Swiss Confederation recommended both a liberation of construction constraints in the agricultural areas and a land policy that promotes densification. A federal law for the creation of a fund, intended to guarantee a contribution from the Confederation for the financing of transport infrastructure projects (rail and road) in the agglomerations, emerged in 2006. The Project 2015, for Geneva as well as the for the French-Vaud-Geneva agglomeration project, expresses this double rhetoric of sustainable development and territorial attraction. The symbolic dimension of the cross border outreach towards European integration in Switzerland is also based on a strictly functional argument, legitimized by the necessity to manage travel flows, control urban sprawl or fight against socio-spatial disparities.

4. Urban planning as an orientation or public action governance tool?

The identification of change or continuity factors in urban planning in Strasbourg and Geneva allows us to identify some comparative findings about the role and the scope of this instrument.

4.1. Differences and similarities: planning in the local political organization

The differences between the French and Swiss political systems clearly appear when comparing the dominant functioning in the two communities.

In Strasbourg, the role of elected representatives, and more specifically of the mayor, is decisive. The first mandates of Pierre Pfimlin and Catherine Trautmann are marked by a will to adapt the planning content to priorities or policy issues defined respectively at the city center and at the agglomeration level. In contrast, the lack of involvement from Marcel Rudloff to launch again a proactive reflection (and more generally from elected representatives of the CUS) and the uncertainties of territorial redeployment strategy expertise regarding the CUS, the Department, and the Region from early 2000 allow us to understand the temporary interruption of urban studies. This also illustrates the difficulty of local communities to be involved in “classic” planning procedures.

In Geneva, by comparison, urban planning is strongly institutionalized. The negligible influence of political debate (limited to developing plan methods), the perpetuation of authority intervention, the development of procedures and monitoring of master plans, as well as the permanence of certain issues (moderated soil use and agricultural area protection), frame the content of master plans. The essential factor lies within the State Council – or, more specifically, the State councilor in charge of the file – and resident, environment or green areas protection associations, which are permanently, and sometimes harshly opposed to master plans, as well as transport plans. Therefore, the creation of multiple consultative commissions and the extension of their composition (territorial and thematic extension, and also to private actors) appear to legitimize land use public action and avoid hindering the direct democratic system (Joye and Kaufmann, 1998).

However, this time analysis leads us to qualify this opposition. The institutional functioning is not absent from the development of planning documents in Strasbourg. We have discussed the political functioning of the CUS that maintains the preeminence of communal prerogatives in

the field of urban development, which halts urban projects at the community level. The competence decentralization clearly shows practice changes and the ability of local communities to appropriate local issues. In the agglomeration of Geneva, the development of the last master plan, Project 2015, attests a stronger political involvement. The presence of the cross-border outreach in several recent documents (including the French-Vaud-Geneva agglomeration project) and the CEVA project show a change from good intentions into concrete implementation of an active partnership, bringing Swiss and French public administrations together. In this context, urban planning in Geneva is no longer limited to a simple update of sectorial development projects and a control of territorial compatibility. It is then an element of a negotiation process between a large number of public and private actors at different scales.

Thus, beyond institutional and political differences that characterize both agglomerations, urban planning is involved in a recomposition movement of public action spaces that favors the agglomeration scale. What are the consequences on the role and scope of urban planning and its ability to integrate urban and transport policies?

4.2. Territorial coherence, between norms and the project

As defined in the SRU law in France, territorial coherence, combined with the renewal of urban planning procedures, refers to a double issue: the relevance of action perimeters and the coordination of sectorial policies. In Switzerland, the Federal law on land use planning (LAT) of 1979 expresses the objectives of master plans, which are the coordination of all activities that have an impact on the territorial organization. The rapid evolution of urban development and planning issues since the 1960s leads us to question the way these spatial and intersectorial coherence issues have been considered.

In Geneva as well as in Strasbourg, the plans from the late 1960s to the early 1970s have been developed on the basis of a strong demographic growth hypothesis, which explains the large perimeters that were considered. Territorial planning is then in search of “optimum dimensions”. In Geneva, the necessity to consider a larger analysis perimeter outside the cantonal territory is expressed, but not materialized, due to the institutional obstacle of the cross-border cooperation. In Strasbourg, as there are few topographical constraints, the development of the agglomeration depends less on cross-border initiatives.

In the 1980s, the spatial coherence is inseparable of urban sprawl and its consequence, the increase of daily mobility, is related to increased travel time. The problem of the difference between institutional and functional perimeters becomes recurrent, particularly in France, where the communal fragmentation is considered a major cause of local policies dysfunction.

The role of urban planning seems then to be torn between norm definition and local governance organization. Facing rapid and multiple changes of urban issues (trade globalization, urban sprawl, permanent growth of motorized mobility, etc.), it is more than ever in search of anticipation capacities and coordination criteria for public action, suspected to be hindered by a short term valorization search, local interests or sectorial aspects. Moreover, related to the local power recomposition movement, it is a potentially strategic tool for many actors that are directly involved in the territorial improvement. In this respect, both agglomerations present relatively different dynamics.

In Strasbourg, the early 1990s are characteristic of a reversal between public action and plan. The (political) agglomeration project reactivates proactive reflection on housing, mobility and urban development, while in the hierarchical and centralized conception of the 1970s, planning procedures were intended to frame and guide public policies. However, the instrumentization of procedures in aid of new political intentions faces tensions and uncertainties in the local political organization, which explains postponements around the master plan revision and hesitations around the choice of the SCOT perimeter. Furthermore, the SCOT organizes with difficulty the negotiation between different actors within the urban region in Strasbourg, while distinguishing itself from former master plans, marked by a normative and centralizing planning approach. The strengthening of their sectorial competences disturbs the support from local communities for planning approaches. This leads local communities to legitimize themselves by supporting transport projects and independent planning visions.

In Geneva, the presence of cross-border initiatives in the master plan marks the outcome of a long process, where the importance of political reason prevails over that of functional rationality. This outreach, which is based on the necessity to manage increasing cross-border flows, is not the subject of harsh oppositions within the canton. Most important local oppositions were related to liberal conceptions that promote a liberalization of urban constraints, like the green agricultural belt. The major role of the State Council is illustrated by launching once again the CEVA project. The urgent decision to create a rail connection, because of the imminent expiry of the convention of 1912, is made without consulting French authorities, which had invested since several years in studies on a light automatic metro construction. Moreover, changing transport mode causes a recomposition of decision makers' organization, in favor of the Rhône-Alpes Region (rail transport organizing authority), but to the detriment of communes (in particular Annemasse) and the Department of Ain, involved in urban transport organization. In this context, the master plan of Geneva, Project 2015, rather ratifies than creates political decisions, with the environmental argument around public transport development at a cross-border scale used rather to legitimize than guide public action. If the necessity to coordinate urban and transport issues is expressed several times in

the document, its implementation, in a cross-border context, seems to be problematic. The creation of employment zones on the French side, which is the subject of negotiations between French and Geneva authorities, does not seem to be truly connected to mobility issues.

4.3. Considering time issues

Nevertheless, the proactive dimension, inherent in planning practice, does not seem to be present, to a large extent, in local actions.

Neither in Strasbourg nor Geneva, master plan developments do not result in patterns of possible or desirable evolution in the fields of urban and transport planning, which could be a base for debates. Planning approaches are strongly dependent on hypotheses of continuation of past trends (particularly the case of traffic forecasting that underlie the road infrastructure programming in the 1960s and 1970s), but also closely related to current planning projects or short-term planned projects. The proximity of project and master plan is traditional in Geneva, where the regular development of master plans first aims to update current planning operations or to make sure of its mutual compatibility. They also emphasize delicate and important planning options, like green belt protection. In Strasbourg, the role of planning seems to be structurally less fixed, in particular because of the ambiguity related to the recent legislative context on nature, and respective objectives of the agglomeration project and the SCOT. Yet in practice, the proactive ambition of planning can be limited by the implementation contingency of a pioneering project. It is the case in particular with the urban mobility plan, which is completed several years after the circulation of the first two tramway lines.

However, the considered period of time allow us to enlarge a little this evaluation of specific moments. We could first note that urban planning local practices sometimes anticipate the legislation at a national scale. This is the case in 1990 in Strasbourg, when the team of Catherine Trautmann takes the initiative for developing an agglomeration project, which reminds the Orientation law on territorial planning and sustainable development of 1999, and its systematic procedure. The State Council of Geneva also precedes the Federal law on land use planning of 1979 by developing and monitoring cantonal master plans since the 1960s. Moreover, the implementation of projects, particularly in the field of transports, comes often after its appearance in a plan. We can consider that, basing on line studies that follow the agglomeration dossier of 1975, the team that realizes the tramway in Strasbourg in the early 1990s limits the innovation capacity of the project and of related studies (PDU). On the contrary, we can note that the planning project of 1975 was particularly innovative, but needed 15 years to fulfill the conditions of its implementation. In other words, the proactive

capacity of the plan cannot be analyzed without considering the maturing or project development phases, characteristic of collective action construction process.

This explains that the way of developing the plan and its attribute of being a reference to local actors is just as important as its content (Offner, 2006). The time of action and reactions with its approval are part of the public action development process, like collective objectives present the plan. In this respect, the example of the SCOT in Strasbourg provides a pertinent example. Several actors are unanimous in underlining the lack of knowledge (for example on urbanization capacities within the CUS or the concept of urban structure), which could be useful, in an idealist vision, for the document development. However, recognizing this lack leads some actors to start studies, either in a coordinated way (with the urban structure) or in an autonomous way (by collecting potential development areas), which will possibly *a posteriori* discuss its implementation.

Finally, it depends on the monitoring methods of master plan implementation. In Geneva, we could notice that the monitoring and revision of the plans were institutionalized since 40 years. In France, the systematic presence of intercommunal structures that developed the SCOT (mixed syndicates) were created by the SRU law. This is from functioning conditions of this monitoring involvement by authorities and their capacity to create a territorial expertise production. We are consequently able to estimate their capacity to maintain political orientations, defined with the consideration of long-term issues.

5. Conclusion

Over the last forty years, the content, practices and uses of urban planning in Strasbourg and Geneva have considerably changed. Focusing on spatial issues in the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s is characterized by ambition to coordinate different actors within larger perimeters. Furthermore, local dynamics are portrayed by important differences in the interests organization and institutional aspects. The analysis of concepts and representations that underlie policies shows important similarities, but also a tendency to stratified dominant action, leading us to question a real change of ways of thinking and acting on the coordination of urbanism and transport.

If forms and uses of urban planning have changed, why do doctrines change so little?

A first element consists in illustrating the technical nature and the strong institutionalized production mode of these procedures. Faced with complex challenges and actor organizations, these procedures rather tend to escape and find a solution, rather than formulate new issues. It would ignore the reflection process during document development, omitting potential useful debates (in particular in the field of studies). We rather assume that planning documents cannot present all current changes, because they refer to consensual challenges and action strategies in order to be legitimate.

A second element consists of questioning more precisely the consequences of current evolutions. On the one hand, the awareness about social costs of urban sprawl (increase of traffic flows, socio-spatial segregation, and environmental problems) and the rise of environmental challenges at a global scale creates actions and reforms at a national level. Legal obligations and regulations, with local communities often reticent when associated to a recentralization movement (particularly in France), accompany the need of planning. Conversely, the strengthening of the agglomeration scale as a criteria of priority action and its corollary, the recomposition of local political spaces, lead to the invention of new planning forms that have more of a strategic than normative scope. These changes are related to a trade globalization dynamic and the increase of territorial competitiveness, that logically lead new territories and its actors, to stress on attraction challenges and accessibility. In this context, transport is mobilized with the help of stronger territorial identities, both internal and external. The link between urbanism and transport is limited to challenges of habitat densification in surrounding areas of rail or public transport stations. The reshaping of territorial planning would then reduce a major contradiction; limiting sustainable development to the expression of norms and the legitimization of public policies, instead of establishing it as political problem.

Acknowledgements

This article is based on a study financed by CNRS and Ademe, on a comparative analysis of the coordination of urban and transport policies in Switzerland (Geneva and Bern) and in France (Strasbourg and Bordeaux). The research team is affiliated to LaSUR-EPFL, LVMT-INRETS and IUP-CRETEIL.

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