

Associated territorial management, the way to transform the periurban area into a green belt

Abstract

La Plata, like all cities, based its territorial organization -and landscape- on the construction of an inhabited area surrounded by productive green rings. Subsequently, like all other urbanizations, growth by extension generated a fragmented and degraded periphery. Currently, the periurban area presents a growing demand, dispute and conflict between different social groups that is beginning to be included in the political and management agenda. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the construction of a new management model to transform the periurban area into a green belt, as an environmental, economic and social asset for the whole society.

Keywords: Landscape, productive belt, disorderly expansion, disputed lands, territorial strategy, associated management, green belt -productive/recreational

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Planning of the foundational territory. La Plata

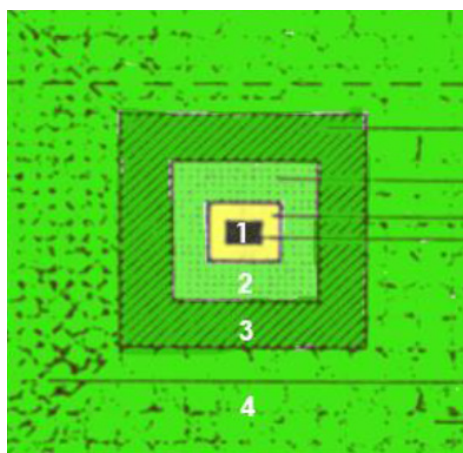
The Ordinances for the Discovery, New Population and Pacification of the Indies are a set of laws promulgated by Philip II in Valsain, Segovia, on July 13, 1573 and published in full on May 3, 1576 in San Lorenzo de El Escorial.

There, the spatial concept of cities arose, based on the late medieval traditions of construction of cities with a regular plan, brought to America by the conquistadors from Europe. Regular urban patterns such as Castellón de la plana¹ and Vila real de los Infantes² and especially Briviesca and Foncea (15th century).

These Ordinances constituted the organizing framework of the territory in Latin America in the period between 1492 and 1890. This regulation established the framework on the basis of which the towns in Argentina were founded.

The territorial planning scheme consisted of:

- (1) Institutional - residential center The green periphery, which in turn, consisted of
- (2) An area of farms
- (3) An area of farms
- (4) A rural area



Residential (1)

Quintas (2)

Farms (3)

Rural (4)

In the case of the City of La Plata, it was founded within the framework of the New Population Ordinances and strongly influenced by the prescriptions of the Brighton Congress, England, in 1879, referring to public hygiene to prevent the spread of contagious diseases. The “germ theory” proposed the need for aeration of spaces and greater use of water, the main resource to guarantee sanitation in urban centers.

In this Congress, the outstanding French scientist Dr. Sarrasin, began his speech by saying that “among the causes of disease, misery and death that surround us, there is one to which I consider it rational to attach great importance and that is the deplorable hygienic conditions in which the majority of men are situated”. At the same Congress, he proposed the construction of “France Ville, the city of well-being and health”.

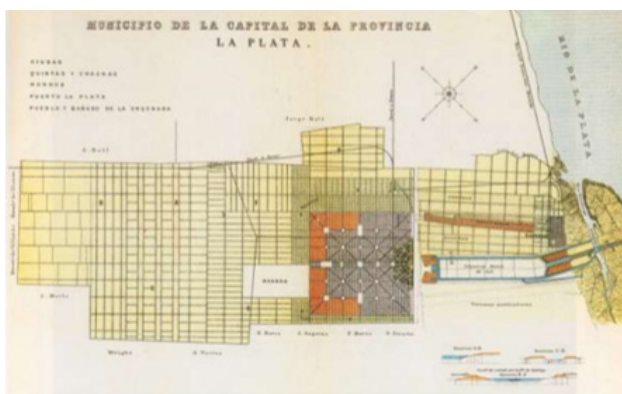
For Sarrasin, the solution to the serious problems caused by urban agglomerations was to be found in “the most powerful method of persuasion: example”, which is why he asked himself: “why don’t we gather all the energies of our imagination to draw the plan of a model city, on a rigorously scientific basis?”

This “model city”, which was to be built in the American territory on a vast unpopulated plain, based on a spatial concept consisting of:

- A regular layout, with numbered streets, crossed at right angles.
- Wide avenues every half kilometer, all tree-lined.
- Placing public gardens at avenue intersections.

Thus was founded La Plata, a national and international utopia of planning, land use and previous design. Its unique features were:

1. The condition of capital,
2. The regular grid crossed at right angles, crossed by diagonals,
3. A macro-block system, with wide avenues and boulevards every 6 blocks;
4. The location of public squares or urban parks at the intersection of avenues, with a predominance of vegetation;
5. A green infrastructure system consisting of public trees, boulevards and squares; and
6. The peri-urban green belt of horticultural production (farms, farms and extensive rural). Figure 1



Julio. City of La Plata: Three decades of reflections on a unique urban space.²⁰

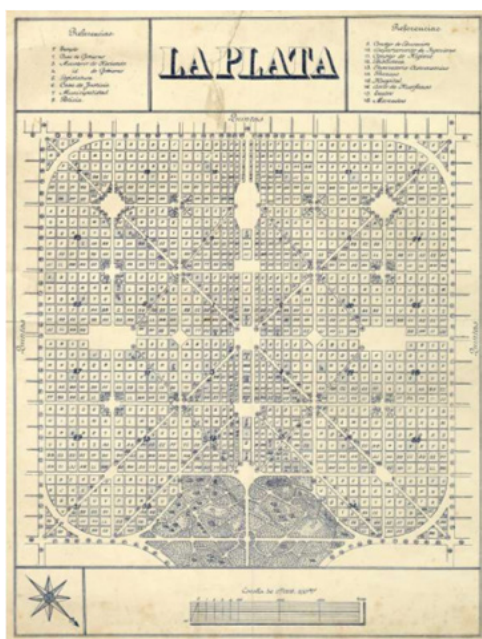


Figure 1 Foundational plan of La Plata. 1882. General Archive of the Nation.

In synthesis, the planning and landscape of the foundational territory was based on a totalizing vision of the territory, and materialized from an inhabited hull surrounded by productive green rings.

Argentina, an urban country

From the 20th century onwards, the world context changed and the urban sphere took precedence over the rural sphere, as a result of:

- a. The urbanization of the economy, which generates a market (supply and demand) for goods and services.
- b. Improvement of living conditions in cities (infrastructure + industries).

Thus, in this era there is an unprecedented growth of urbanization.³ even more so in the context of globalization which, with the opening of markets to international exchange -trade, financial flows and technological knowledge- has determined a continuous increase in urbanization rates, reinforcing the processes of population concentration in cities, especially in the formation of large metropolitan areas.⁴ Figure 2

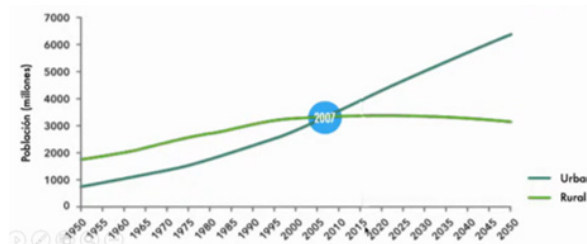


Figure 2 Inclusive and productive CITY.

- a. Since 2007 the world is urban
- b. Latin America is urban since 1961
- c. Argentina is urban since 1912

The growth of cities in Latin America and Argentina in the last two decades has had the following characteristics:

- Large cities with more than 1 million people concentrate close to 50% of the total urban population and the main city in each country is disproportionately large in relation to the rest. According to the World Bank,⁵ several of these cities already exceed 20 million inhabitants, such as Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.

- The housing shortage at the end of the century was estimated at between 17,000,000 and 21,000,000 housing units, according to different criteria as proposed by Mac Donald and Simioni.⁶

- There is still a high percentage -between 40 to 50%- of the population¹ of large cities in developing countries living in neighborhoods made up of informal peri-urban settlements with precarious constructions, progressively built by self-construction and informal provision of basic services.

- The urban civilization that is being consolidated is mostly made up of inhabitants with low, scarce or no income, who make up the new majority of the population.³ They present unsatisfied basic needs, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, malnutrition, infant mortality and illiteracy, among other deficiencies and are settled in urban areas or zones, neighborhoods and housing located in degraded environments, which constitute a threat to the life and health of the population.

- To the increase and deepening of structural poverty have been added “the new poor” made up of those middle sector groups that the crises and adjustment policies have displaced from their economic and social positions, although Clichevsky⁷ has stated that it is extremely difficult to determine the magnitude of informality -how to quantify irregularity- due to the fact that national censuses do not yet register them as a unit of analysis.

- In the Province of Buenos Aires, 64% of the population, more than 10 million people, are concentrated in the Greater Buenos Aires agglomeration, which is disproportionately large compared to the rest of the cities.

- The situation is exacerbated by “...the lack of adequate metropolitan planning and management instruments to coordinate the actions of the respective local governments”...⁸

Today, the demand to inhabit the city is one of the most transforming trends of the 21st century, requiring the repositioning of the State to formulate and implement urban policies based on consensus and

¹GTZ. Land tenure in areas of informal settlements in large cities of developing countries -Examples from Latin America and Africa- Faculty of Geography, Philipps-Universität Marburg Nov. 1998

rationality, capable of providing cities with a project that responds to the dual requirement of combining the productive city, the green city and the inclusive city, economic development -with sustainability of non-renewable resources- and social cohesion, that is, employment, access to urbanization -land and/or housing, services and social facilities- and cultural integration. Figure 3



Figure 3 Historical archive and newspaper El Día.

In short, unlike the foundational stage, as Argentina became an urban country, the city of La Plata -like the rest of the urbanizations- grew in a fragmented and turbulent way, on the green belt. During the 21st century, cities will continue to grow in the same conditions as they have done so far, especially in developing countries.³

The periurban area of La Plata. Social tensions and land in dispute

The peripheries of the cities of the developed landscapes, especially in the United States, are built from a set of residential areas inhabited by middle-high income social sectors, connected by a road infrastructure where the use of automobiles is privileged. Meanwhile, in the suburbs of Latin American cities, in general, and in Argentina in particular, urban sprawl is characterized by poverty, informality and lack of infrastructure, equipment and basic services. In addition, during the last decades, new information and communication technologies have modified the spatial configuration with new modalities of urban expansion, which generate social polarization, residential segregation, fragmentation of the urban structure, etc. This results in a current periphery characterized by the addition of fragments, which generates social and spatial disintegration.

In the Partido de La Plata, especially in the last two decades, there has been a notable change in the morphology of the city that mainly affects the so-called peri-urban space, understood as the strip of territory between urban and rural areas.

Urban residential expansion towards the periphery translates into competition for land between different land uses and activities: increased occupation of new areas on the physical limits of the city and the retraction of intensive agricultural land -open-air and greenhouses- that are giving way to occupation related to residential use -permanent or weekend use-, recreational or leisure use, and industrial use, among others.

This situation means that the peri-urban area is highly heterogeneous, environmentally fragile, with imbalances and conflicts in the society-society and society-nature relationship, as large facilities and industries, garbage dumps, precarious settlements, dwellings, gated communities, etc. coexist in the same space in a complex manner, with patterns of behavior of the social actors involved - real estate agents, companies and inhabitants of the areas under transformation - who adopt their own strategies in accordance with their dominant logics and interests.

In the expansion process of the La Plata district, the transformation of agricultural land into urban land has shown a strong dynamic in recent decades. The reduction of rural land is particularly important if one considers that the district is the leading horticultural producer

in Argentina, standing out nationally in the production of tomatoes, artichokes, celery, lettuce, strawberries and carnations. La Plata's green belt consists of a strip of land 6 to 12 km wide and more than 36,000 hectares in area, a third of which is productive - horticultural and floricultural activities, which extends between the city and the suburbs, on the one hand, and the rural area, on the other. According to Bozzano,⁹ of the total municipal territory of La Plata (94,200 ha), 15% corresponds to urban areas, 39% to periurban areas and 46% to rural areas. Figure 4

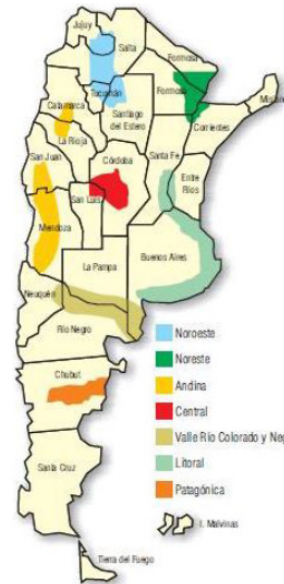


Figure 4 Main agricultural belts in the Argentine regions.

Thus, in the current landscape of the Platense green belt, the following uses can be identified as coexisting in the same territorial area:

1. Intensive peri-urban production: horticulture, floriculture and other intensive production;
2. Second homes and recreation: country clubs, gated communities, park clubs, recreational and sports associations and entities;
3. Irregular urbanizations: informal settlements, shantytowns and irregular neighborhoods;
4. Localities: service sub-centers of various ranks.
5. Peripheral urban economy; industries, warehouses, stockyards and wholesalers in the urban periphery.
6. Large facilities: airfields, military units, hospitals and others.
7. Vacant periphery of use: underutilized or unused rural plots and scattered vacant urban lots. Figure 5 & 6

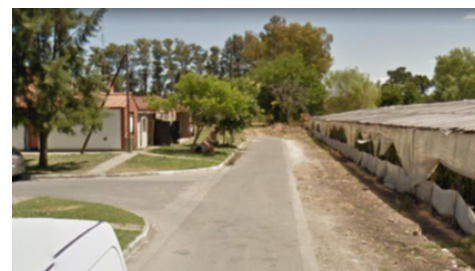


Figure 5 Google earth. Urban fragmentation: intensive residential and productive use.



Figure 6 Presentation of the 41st Argentine Congress of Horticulture. (Peri-urban: discontinuous and fragmented mosaic landscape, with little value for the social collective).

In summary, urban dispersion that generates a discontinuous and fragmented mosaic landscape -with little social valuation-, is the main characteristic of the current peri-urban urbanization, with social tensions and land in dispute, as a result of the weakness of territorial public policies as opposed to the strength of the (real estate) market.

Associated territorial management, the way to transform the peri-urban area into a green belt.

For many years it was assumed that the role of the State, through its urban public policies, favored diverse forms of social integration, the search for lowest common denominators within heterogeneity. If it is not the State, which sector of society is responsible for urban integration in the context of globalization? Could it be that current urban policies tend to consolidate a fragmented peri-urban area, with social tensions and disputed land?

In a first propositional approach, it is basic to reaffirm that the periurban area is a territorial space in constant transformation, which presents as a central problem the strategic value of its location. Therefore, it is essential to adequately characterize the land market:

- Land is a market good, it has a price -commodity exchange-.
- It is an economic asset, an investment alternative, similar to the capital market,
- The market is regulated in production, not in marketing.
- There is no single land market, but rather a sum of submarkets.
- Both public and private sectors are involved in the production of urban land.
- The price of land and its availability depends on the immediate environment.
- It is a market with little transparency, a high speculative component and multiple players. Figure 7

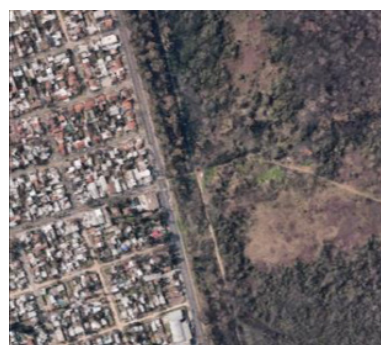


Figure 7 Presentation of the 41st Argentine Congress of Horticulture. (In order to modify the logic of a century of conformation of the peri-urban, there is a unique opportunity. “Society resignify the periphery as valuable green areas for urban áreas”)

In a second approach, it is important to explain three basic concepts for a new management:

- I. Territory is a social construction, a space where a set of actors with intentions and projects interact. It is not the physical support, but the “sphere” of construction of the past, present and future.
- II. The landscape is any part of the territory as perceived by the population, resulting from the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.¹⁰⁻²⁰
- III. Territorial development, understood as the desired and realistic future scenario, consistent with local structural conditions. Product of synthesizing the position of all stakeholders. Figure 8



Figure 8 Presentation of the 41st Argentine Congress of Horticulture. (Territorial associated management, the way to transform the peri-urban into a green belt. articulation process)

The associated Territorial Management -GAT- to transform the current periurban area into a green belt, should be understood as:

1. A complex process, based on active articulation among stakeholders, as opposed to the “normativist” management of the territory.
2. A scenario that integrates and coordinates multiple and diverse initiatives of actors with different dynamics (conflict generator).
3. It requires strategies to overcome conflicts -political and technical tasks-.
4. It is a multiscale process.²¹⁻³⁰

In summary, it is necessary to move from the current normative-based urban public policies to those that promote associated

management processes, in order to strengthen public policies and achieve territorial integrity in the peri-urban area.

Conclusion



Presentation of the 41st Argentine Congress of Horticulture.

Urbanization -productive capacity

- With the same management model, the results will be the same as today.
- A new management model, with three strategies:
 - To go from the particular to the general.
 - To go from the general to the particular.
 - Mixed intervention

What is the real challenge?

Given the current situation, it is necessary to build a realistic project for the development and territorial (and landscape) planning of the peri-urban area, with a totalizing vision that is capable of synthesizing the multiple positions of all social actors and not only of those who have more power or capacity to impose their projects.

A new green belt concept, with the following objectives:

1. Strengthen the food supply system;
2. Provide ecosystem services (wetlands, water regulation, biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration, etc.), and
3. Create a green infrastructure system with regional parks for periodic recreational use by society.
4. Other uses where the vegetation component predominates (residential, industrial parks, etc.).

Expressions of gratitude

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To the Unit for Promotion, Research and Development - Landscape Engineering (UPID-IP). Faculty of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences. National University of La Plata. Avda 60 La Plata. La Plata, Argentina.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest with respect to the publication of this article.

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