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Time policies and its relevance on territorial policies

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Abstract

Over the last decade urban planners and local governments had to deal with intense and diverse transformations, especially noted in the relations of people and space with time. As a consequence, increased time policies have been designed and adopted to improve the quality of life, the people's work/life/family time balance and the quality of territories, times and schedules in different urban contexts. Time policies have different areas of intervention and levels of appropriation, going from the key idea that time is a resource, a value and an asset. However, there is not a holist perspective to time management and to temporal integration in planning. That is the case in Porto, that is discussed about the relevance of time policies for territorial development, considering literature review and field research.

Keywords: time policies; time; space; development, policies

1. Introduction: the urban changes and the “relevance” of time

Over the last decades urban planners and local governments had to deal with intense and diverse transformations, also noted in the relations of people and space with time. On this aspect and despite some important particularities, rhythms and patterns of each territorial context it is possible to identify six major trends in urban planning and urbanism, with direct or indirect effects on time planning (Fernandes, J. et al., 2015):

- Consolidation of David Harvey's entrepreneurial city principles, deeply associated to the international and regional accessibility in the “competitive and attractive (world) city” (Hall, P. 1996);
- Growing relevance of private capital interests, with multiplication and diversification of public-private partnerships schemes;
- Expansion of “laissez-faire” and neoliberal approaches to urban management, with entrepreneurial strategies seeking the profitability and optimization of time;
- Increased number and relevance of area-based initiatives of urban planning and intervention (with renovation, beautification, regeneration and touristification), with an

emphasis on the most attractive and competitive parts of the cities, especially city center and waterfront areas;

- Less stability on cities governance and planning, with strategic visions more vulnerable than before to institutional and government changes, short-term actions and opportunities that could not be predicted;
- Increased importance of multilevel planning – nor always formally recognized – as a result of metropolisation and more intense and complex suburbanization processes.

Thus, it is possible to say that European societies are experiencing demographic, economic, urban and social transformations which have a considerable impact on the daily-lives of urban city-users – not only on the traditional inhabitants – and, consequently, on people’s time in general. In the context of these changes, several time conflicts and inequalities are produced, which leads to local and regional government increasing concerns about time-space complexity and time policies.

2. Time policies

2.1. When did they emerge?

According to Mückelberger, U. (2011) time policies are inspired by the Swedish geographer Torsten Hägerstrand’s work on time-geography, though he only developed an analytical method of measuring the way people in their everyday life used city space. Time policies emerged in Europe in the end of the last century, and Italy played an important role on the development of planning instruments and concepts, especially at local level. From the 1980’s several projects and Time Intervention Programs were developed experimentally, but it would be the action of the Italian Minister of Social Affairs – with the approval of the Law 53 in 2000 – that would boost decisively time planning in Italy and all over Europe.

Thus, in this century time-policy has become a commonly used concept. The “Turco Law” enforced all Italian cities with more than 30.000 inhabitants to have a Territorial Timetable Plan, with proposals to deal with all time conflicts identified and timetable maps. A reorganization of the structure of public administration lead to the creation of Time Offices, where accessibility was assumed as the central concept, and actions for the improvement of the accessibility to urban spaces and public services in non-working times, promoting decentralization and territorial multi-functionality.

Recently, the European Council recommended local time-policies as an important strategy for increased living conditions, with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the European Council adopting Resolution 313, on the 28th October 2010. There it emphasizes the relevance of time-related policies to ensure equal rights in time management, to improve general quality of life and to achieve greater social cohesion, calling local and regional collectives to implement time policies and to create time offices. Other documents and initiatives, such as the Europe

Strategy 2020 (of the European Commission) and the Better-Life Index (adopted by OECD) also identify the balance of the private and work lives of the people as a central issue for the quality of life and urban development, thus recognizing the importance of spatial based time policies.

2.2. What do they mean?

Time policies are often associated with a new form of public action, characterized by the multiplication of plans, mechanisms and actions related with the various conflicts and ways of space appropriation, for example between those who want to sleep and those who want to have fun, or in the way the urban design conditions the uses (Kärrholm, M. 2012). The focus of these policies is based on gender and life course perspectives, making time a key issue in the analysis and action on a restrict space. Time policies intend to manage the conflicts, tensions and city-users' expectations that arise from the economic, demographic and contemporary urban changes on a concrete place, especially:

- Transformations of daily-life routines and the diversification of time and space use;
- Increased flexibility of work time and changes in the labour market;
- Generalized access to the work market by women, the increase of the average age of maternity and the decrease of the birth rate;
- Diversity of family structures and new models in gender relations.
- Increased mobility and technological advances related with mobility and social contact.

Today local time policies are mainly used on a voluntary basis in several cities, most of them in France, Spain and Germany, with the aim of creating better coordination of city functions, for instance to secure synchronicity in opening hours, to gather different public and private functions in traffic nodes in order to secure easy access to the most needed services in everyday life, or to reduce traffic jams at peak hours.

Despite different approaches and concepts of time policies which were developed along the last decades, it is possible to consider three types (Fernandes, J. et al., 2015): i) urban time policies (Mareggi, M. 2002) that have a relation to all the public policies that deal with timetables and the organization of human relations; ii) time-related policies or conciliation policies (Delfour, C. and Dommergues, P. 2003) directed to reduce the temporal dysfunctions of cities, namely by regulating the rhythms of the city (supply and demand in terms of time) and the rhythms of people (working and non-working time, for example), and iii) local time policies, especially concerned with the coordination of working times, timetables of public and private services, and urban schedules with the individual and collective social needs. It is also possible to distinguish between the explicit (actions that deal directly with the problem of time use) and implicit (which have an indirect action) time policies.

2.3. How relevant are they?

Time policies are especially aimed at improving the quality of life, the people's work/life/family and city time balance, the quality of the cities and the spatial based social cohesion by plans and actions. Time policies have different areas of intervention (accessibility to services, school times, working times, mobility and public transports, shopping and public services hours, time banking, ...) and levels of appropriation (neighbourhood, local, metropolitan, ...), which differ from city to city. They are based on the key idea that time is a resource, a value and an asset. According to the Charter of the Network of European Cities on Time Policies they are used to:

- Plan the timetables and uses of services and facilities, considering the different lifestyles and necessities, especially those addressed to families, children, youth, the elderly and dependant people;
- Improve work time and work-life balance, implementing solutions between companies and economic and social agents of the territory;
- Ensure the proximity of the administration with the citizens, providing a more humane treatment and offering a differentiate welcome to different user profiles/sectors according to their skills and abilities;
- Promote accessibility and mobility, taking into account the diversity of use and necessities of the people, the need for good public transport network and for relating and living together spaces;
- Improve the public awareness and social agreement, developing strategies to collaborate with all the agents of the city, especially in the areas of education and labour.

3. Some notes from Portugal

Contrary to what is happening in other European countries in Portugal there are no explicit time policies, as measures for time management are still very much related with national regulation and modernist-functionalist paradigms. National directives as DL 48/96 are directed to the regulation of the opening hours of shops, grouping activities into five types and establishing the operating hours for each group, without any consideration for the spatial dimension or specificities of each city. Municipal regulations should respect these guidelines, although small differences can be introduced, with the local decision on this matter considered as final.

There are also important informal bottom-up initiatives. Although "slow movements" ("slow cities" and "slow food") are gaining importance, urban policies don't take into great account time-space issues, as it happens in significant public led urban spaces rehabilitation and regeneration processes (Fernandes, J. & Chamusca, P. 2014), where some recognition of the different uses of spaces, along the day and the week, and the numerous time-space conflicts have no consequences in project and action.

Generally, time policies and the concept of chrono-urbanism remain unfamiliar to most planners and politicians in Portugal. As a result, although different cities (and Oporto and Lisbon in special) present new dynamics, planning ignores the regulation of work schedules, the association of the characteristics of public spaces with their use at different times of day and different days of the week, the social rhythms of supply and demand, and the articulation of individual rhythms of work and leisure.

4. Final thoughts

Time-space diversification is characteristic of contemporary cities, where everyday lives and city-users interests are greatly heterogeneous. As many authors point out, as Lefebvre, H. (2004) and Ascher, F. (2001), besides social and economic dimensions, recent processes of urban transformation with a relevant spatial dimension have also a very important temporal dimension, associated with a transition from an industrial standard of synchronized rhythms to a more heterogeneous society in which the everyday life experiences are more individualized where a growing number of people have atypical agendas and working hours and supposedly an increasing freedom of space-time choice.

In the context of these transformations, time, and in particular the management and planning of the temporality of spaces, becomes essential. Public policies show greater concern with the multi-temporality of the territories, which is especially evident in a new set of policies that have emerged and try to promote a more adequate coordination of problems in time-space associations.

In opposition to different European contexts (see Fernandes, J. et al., 2015), in Portugal there is not a holist perspective to time management and to temporal integration in spatial planning, at least not something similar to the Italian time-plan experience or other important initiatives developed across Europe since the 1990's. Anyway, even if there are no explicit time policies, and neoliberalism is not the best of the context for spatial planning, it is possible to say that public authorities are encouraging time use diversity, as they seem favorable - or at least tolerant - to the enlargement of opening hours of shops and bars, promoting an increased deregulation of economic activity. That is specially noted in the most "touristified" spaces, where economic interests seem to dominate politics. Therefore, policies tend to see (practically) all that sells as favorable for local and regional development and time deregulation as part of an increased attractiveness for private investment and visitors expenditure, which comes along different forms of privatization of public space and increased heterogeneity of space use a longer time of the day. In this context, we consider that in the development of collaborative and strategic local initiatives, the consideration of multiple times, spaces, uses, rhythms and interests, as well as the establishment of urban governance schemes is a key element. Therefore it seems essential to promote: a) the articulation between urban planning and transportation networks, taking into

account the temporal dimension of accessibility and the global coherence of polycentric regions; b) a permanent conciliation of public and private services timetables, considering municipalities, associations and civil society, to promote a better response to relevant individual needs and interests that are less and less standardized; c) the creation of urban spaces of multiple uses with good choice of design and rehabilitation of public spaces with respect for local culture and history, responding more efficiently to different uses and needs, in distinct periods of the day, week and year; and d) the urban management of the balance between the times devoted to work and leisure, including the encouragement of initiatives of “temporal saving”, such as time banks or shared travelling.

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