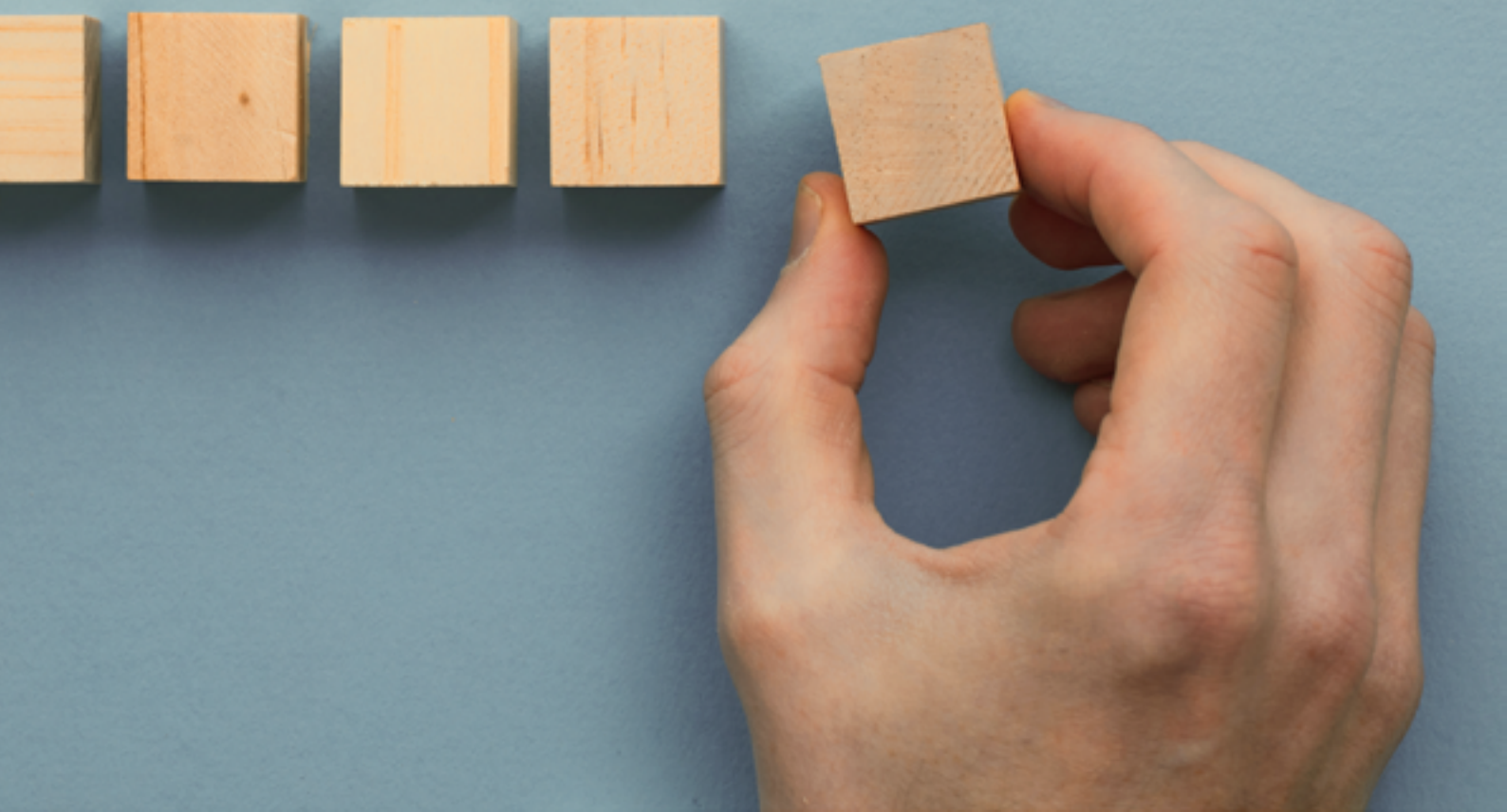
P·CUBE
Playing · Public · Policy

Introduction to Urban Innovation Game Sets



P-CUBE: Introduction to Urban Innovation Game Sets

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Coordinator of this work:
Politecnico di Milano (ITA)

Participants:
Fondazione Politecnico di Milano (ITA)
Technische Universiteit Delft (NL)
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (SP)
La Science pour la démocratie (BE)
Université du Luxembourg (LU)

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Urban Innovation: Introduction to the Anyville/Euroville Game Sets[1]

1. Introduction

This short document aims to introduce the game sets of the educational Game 'P-Cube' dedicated to the Urban Innovation field.
The first thing to explain regards the interest of policy analysis for the decision-making processes of the urban contexts.
The local, urban policy making was in fact the focus of the Robert Dahl research on pluralism, with his study on decision-making processes in New Haven, that started a wave of many debates (Dahl 1961; Banfield and Wilson 1963; etc.).
Moreover, urban policies constituted one of the main sectors of the policy implementation studies (see Derthik 1972; Lipsky 1980; Barrett and Fudge 1981) and of the large literature on centre-periphery relations (e.g. Meny and Wright 1985). In this area, we can consider even the studies related to administrative reforms and innovation, which find many examples and good practices in the urban environment.
Last but not least, the density of the population and the socio-economic relations explain the fact that at the urban level we find a vast array of sectorial problems with their related policy processes, interventions, and services.
In the following section the main focuses of the current debates on cities and urban environments, which are useful to contextualize the relevance of the urban policies and the related innovation processes, are synthetized.

2. Cities, urban contexts and areas of policy innovations

2.1. Urban transformations

Cities were and are at centre of innovation processes: "Today, more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas, ranging from midsize cities to megacities, and the number of city dwellers worldwide keeps rising. Many factors that affect the competitiveness of countries and regions—from innovation and education to infrastructure and public administration—are under the purview of cities." (Schwab 2016:73).

[1] Tanks to Alessandro Balducci (Politecnico di Milano, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies) for the suggestions and the opportunity to access some of his published and unpublished papers.

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Le Galès underlines that in the current times cities are seen "… to be again place of cultural innovation, economic development, places for different kinds of projects and attempts to implement new modes of governance." (Le Galès 2007: 1). Moreover, Hall (2003; see also 1998) claims that it is possible to recognize different varieties of urban transformation during the history of cities; in particular, in our times, cities are seeing the convergence of artistic and technological creativity, through the development of internet infrastructures and ICT, which are at the basis of new value-added services. Innovations continue to be the result of urban relations: a context in which we find a broad set of exchange venues and processes, existing and potential; and where technical capabilities and innovative companies, higher education and research centres, investors and financial services, arts and cultural movements, third sector organizations, all find their values in an urban ecosystem that maximizes the interaction opportunities.

These factors are emphasized by Amin and Thrift (2017); they synthetize the urban-city context or 'the dynamic of life compressed into, and run out of, two per cent of the earth's surface', as a flux of different forces: metabolic networks, infrastructures and built forms, technical systems and institutions, diverse structures of authority, power and intelligence; a combination of elite power, organized authority and social rights; the concentration of knowledge, sociality and interdependent firms in the economically most dynamic cities; the sustenance and resilience provided by well-maintained and evenly distributed urban infrastructures; the social webs of improvisation that enable survival in cities organized solely for the well-off.

This picture introduces the creativity dimension that characterizes the urban context as a particular setting of policy innovations, based on a milieu that links people and resources in proactive networks. Landry defines this creative milieu as "… a place – either a cluster of buildings, a part of a city, a city as a whole or a region – that contains the necessary preconditions in terms of 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructure to generate a flow of ideas and inventions. Such a milieu is a physical setting where a critical mass of entrepreneurs, intellectuals, social activists, artists, administrators, power brokers or students can operate in an open-minded, cosmopolitan context and where face to face interaction creates new ideas, artefacts, products, services and institutions and as a consequence contributes to economic success." (Landry 2008:133; see also Kunzmann 2005). A position developed by Florida through the thesis of the creative class that grows in places able to guarantee the 3T's of economic development: technology, talents and tolerance (Florida 2002); or defined by Kluzmann in terms of creative planning, recognizing not only the role of the 'educated class' but also the involvement of different categories, including immigrants (Kluzmann 2005).

Following these suggestions, some specific urban policy areas can be explored, even if in a synthetic way:

- Infrastructures and the urban smartness
- New urban economy and the innovative ecosystems
- Urban societies
- Built environment and the sustainable city
- Culture, tourism, and city branding
- Urban governance

2.2. Infrastructures and the urban smartness

One of the main characteristics of the urban contexts is the organization of different infrastructures networks that constitutes the nerves of the urban life and regard mainly: mobility grids as streets and roads, cycle lanes, public transport – railways, underground, buses and trams, etc.; garbage collection and waste management; gas, water supply and sewer systems; streetlights, electricity, renewable-energy networks; telecommunications as pipes and cables for telephone and broadband internet WI-FI connections, and GPS; etc. These networks augment the affordances of the places they serve, and, thus, they support activities that would not otherwise be possible there. Furthermore, they allow greater concentration of human activities by connecting urban locations to distant hinterlands.

Researchers observe that the specialization needed to manage, maintain and develop these infrastructures (and also to assure the ways in which multiple networks interact to produce joint effects) is at the basis of the specific organizations, which have become progressively more autonomous from the traditional municipal governmental institutions (see for example the emerging role of agencies and hybrid organizations based on public-private partnership; see Pollitt et al. 2004; Schmitz and Glänzel 2016). This phenomenon creates new actors in the decisional arena, with a role that often is not only limited to the local level, due the extension of the services networks and their economic value. In fact, often these networks overcome the institutional boundaries of a city, and the connected policies and plans should be decided and implemented with the intervention of more complex actors' arena and multi-level processes.

Moreover, the development and modernization of infrastructures is at the basis of conflicts due to the social, environmental and economic impacts of these interventions. For example, their accessibility influences the quality of life, increasing the inequalities that characterizes some not served peripherical areas; or their realization could diminish or improve the value of properties (depending on the type of impacts), with different consequences on tenants and owners. On the other side, the expansion of the grids can be associated to the regenerations of ex-industrial and the improvement of sustainability. For example, during the Sars-Cov-2 pandemic, the availability of Internet broadband connections fostered smart-working and on-line teaching, a way that can be maintained also in the following times to challenge environmental issues.

Considering this last focus, for example, the many ICTs application and infrastructures (e.g. the so-called IoT, Internet of things) are at the basis of the digital, smart city concept: the digital technologies are able to create a radically new logic governing the mix and distribution of living space, workspace, service locations and accessibility, within the urban fabric (Mitchell et al. 2000; Morandi et al. 2016; European Commission 2017). At the same time these phenomena are posing new issues, as for example those regarding privacy, cybersecurity, and digital divide.

2.3. New urban economy and the innovative ecosystems

Many cities are knowing in the current times a new industrial renaissance. Starting from the 1970s and during the final decades of the last century one of the main problems of city governments and planners in Europe was how to mitigate the abandonment of the urban areas by the manufacture factories (delocalized to reach more convenient sites, to avoid pollution in densely settled contexts, etc.) and the de-industrialization processes caused by the globalization of the economy (see Clark et alii 2019). In fact, also today the management, clean-up and reuse

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of old manufacturing areas represents a significative problem. This phenomenon was replaced by the emergence of new Europewide sectors led by financial and professional services; by the 1990s, the service sector has become by far the most important source of employment in European cities. The services economy has provided new work conditions, which are cleaner, more comfortable and occupy less space than the one occupied by manufacturing activities.

In the recent decades the development of ICTs infrastructures and solutions is modifying the scenario and is considered at the basis of the new urban manufacture. A radical shift in the ways goods have been produced and consumed has been triggered by the advancement of the digitally based additive production processes, driven by emerging technologies including 3D printing, the internet of things, cloud computing, big data and blockchain. This shift has been coined 'Industry 4.0' in recognition of its comparable significance to the three previous industrial revolutions (the first was driven by steam power which moved labour from the sweat of people and animals to the use of fossil fuel powered machinery; the second took place at the end of the 19th Century and consisted of using electricity in the mass production of consumer goods; and the third revolution occurred in the post-war period, as computing technology enabling global communications and connectivity): "These technologies are opening up new possibilities for manufacturing. Whereas previous revolutions centralized and standardized production, this looks set to redistribute it and allow for 'mass customization' - individually tailoring items at scale" (Cities of Making 2018, p. 21). In other terms, the manufacture activities have been reinvented, and are focalized on circular economy and on sustainability, and in these terms, cities are now recognized as a favorable milieu for innovative industrial activities. Industry and making are considered more sustainable, social, better distributed, quieter, non-toxic and adaptable to existing urban conditions.

In analyzing these phenomena, cities are now considered the engine of 'innovation ecosystems', the complex relationships that are formed between actors, activities, artifacts and services whose functional goal is to enable technology development and innovation (Jackson 2011; Moretti 2013; Grandstrand and Holgersson 2020). They are providing the 'trading zones' (Gorman ed. 2010; Balducci and Mäntysalo 2013) that support the interaction among different actors, e.g. researchers, start-ups entrepreneurs, private investors, public institutions, etc. that provide the nourishment of the innovation processes.

These hubs of innovation (Schwab 2016) find in the 'triple helix' metaphor the description of the relational networks among different actors; it interprets the shift from a dominating industry-government dyad in the Industrial Society to a growing triadic relationship between university-industry-government in the Knowledge Society. The Triple Helix thesis (nowadays defined as a 'quintuple helix', with the addition of the societal and arts actors, and then the natural environment, to underline the sustainability objectives) is that the potential for innovation and economic development in a Knowledge Society lies in a more prominent role for the university and in the hybridisation of elements from university, industry and government to generate new institutional and social formats for the production, transfer and application of knowledge (Etzkowitz 2008; Carayannis and Campbell 2019).

The digital platforms are another example connected with the innovation ecosystems and the urban environment; they are supporting the development and evolution of the so-called 'platform economy', a family of business models based on the online networks that facilitate digital interactions between people (Gower and Cusumano 2014; Cusumano et al. 2019). There is a large variation between the function and type of digital platforms available in today's

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marketplace, ranging from platforms providing services (e.g., Uber and Airbnb), to products (e.g., Amazon and eBay), to payments (e.g., Square, PayPal), to software development (e.g., Apple, Salesforce) and many more. The strength of the platform economy lies in its ability to eliminate trade barriers by using increased information sharing between different players and circulation of data to its advantage. This creates a much more open economic system, with much greater participation of its users.

Moreover, the 'social innovation' concept emphasizes the need to direct innovations, especially technological, in meeting social needs of, or delivering social benefits to, local communities – the creation of new products, services, organizational structures or activities that are 'better' or 'more effective' than traditional public sector, philanthropic or market-reliant approaches in responding to social exclusion. A direction that highlights the importance of creating 'bottom-linked' institutions for participation and decision-making, as well as for the production and allocation of goods and services (Moulaert et alii 2010 and 2013; Juan et alii 2020).

These new economic models are able to manage relations through the global economic actors, but at the same time, are strongly based on urban ecosystems, due the necessity to use the knowledge and professional capacities to progressively adapt to the technological advancements and business innovations. Moreover, economic platforms are able to create values for a variety of production activities, not only for mega-companies, but also for start-ups, makers, shops, small artisan activities, cooperative and non-profit organizations, etc. (Antirroko et alii 2020).

One of the effects derived also from the platform economy organization, due the alteration of the connection between the place and the production activities, is the extension of some urban territories to form metropolitan areas or mega-city-regions, where the different forms of production and residential settlement are located (Priemus and Hall 2004)[2].

Also, negative impacts are emerging in urban contexts, as for example the case of the workers and precarious jobs of the so-called gig economy (e.g., Uber, Deliveroo, etc.); or the case of the home-sharing platforms, like Airbnb, and the pressure on housing provision and prices, especially in relation to the central and touristic city areas.

Public policies and decision-making processes are, obviously, part of these economic innovation dynamics in urban environments. First of all, many of these technological evolutions are based on public financial support and on research realized in public centers (Mazzucato 2013). In more specific terms, these economic waves, frequently also labelled as 'the creative economy', the 'sharing economy', the 'gig economy', or the 'peer economy', are integrated with policy objectives as the regeneration of old industrial areas, labour market interventions, services development. Furthermore, they are often associated with the strategies to develop the competitiveness of the cities in a national and international scenario.

[2] See, for example, the pictures collected by the Catalan Joaquim Campa and posted on Twitter: "Thread of Cities at night from Space": https://twitter.com/JoaquimCampa.

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2.4. The urban societies

The dynamic trends that are challenging the urban society in the European cities are the demographic decline, the migration fluxes, and the increasing inequalities.

While population is expected to continue growing exponentially across most of the globe, Europe (as other countries) is challenged by the phenomenon of shrinking cities (Richardson and Nam 2014; Audirac 2017). This demographic decline or stagnation is associated with the population ageing in many cities, only partially mitigated by the immigrated people. Only the innovative cities and metropolitan areas are experiencing a more positive trend (European Commission 2019).

A significative influence of these trajectories is on the fiscal base and on the educational and social services provision. In front of a reduction of financial resources, the local governments should attend a demand conditioned mainly by the urban population of single families, aged population, and an increasing number of immigrants, the majority of them in a poverty condition.

The recent migrant and refugee flows have been massive, including refugees and people from regions affected by the climate changes; the majority of them reside in urban and sub-urban areas, because of the opportunities offered for jobs and the aids coming from relational resources. At the same time, this population, particularly those with lower skills and those in undocumented or irregular situation, faces problems related to poverty, inequality, segregation and overstretched public services, (see Migration Data Portal 2021). Moreover, the presence of immigrants is at the basis of conflicts with local inhabitants and the insurgence of populist parties, the latter claiming the defense of the local identity and habits, the preservation of the religious values, and the attribution of economic and social privileges to the local citizens against the crises due the economic globalization.

Another factor that characterizes urban contexts nowadays regards the increasing inequalities. The disparities in income and wealth that disfigure many cities are driven by geographies of capital that go beyond the urban scale, but they emerge at the urban scale in terms of spatial, economic and social factors. In spatial terms, the increasing of special zoning is strongly improving the heterogeneity of the city districts. Financial capital investments are localized in some areas, with the result of their gentrification and the concentration of infrastructures and specialized services, which means easier access, better services, higher quality spaces; on the other side, this can result also in higher imbalances between territories and in particular between central and peripheral areas.

Considering the economic inequality, the contemporary organization of urban economies in diverse regional settings rests on labour and property markets that see increasing wage disparities between high and low-paid workers along with exaggerated returns to capital of big corporations. Moreover, social inequalities are experienced around housing, education, environment and health, information and infrastructure, vulnerability and safety, including the 'existential' inequalities (Therborn 2013) that sustain unequal distributions of respect, recognition and rights between different urban actors (Tonkiss 2020; Balducci et al. 2020).

These social transformations are at the basis of the debates on the welfare and health services configuration, organization and financing into the urban sphere, considering these new needs and, on another side, the ICT opportunities and the social innovation initiatives (Subirats 2020; Pasi and Misuraca 2020).

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2.5. The built environment and the sustainable city

There are many factors that are characterizing the transformations of the physical urban space. A first trend is associated with the enlargement of the urbanized landscape; a dense infrastructured territorial system incorporates many centres that were previously autonomous. In other words, cities are spreading (see the so-called urban sprawl), and in some cases they assume the characters of a mega-city-region (Hall and Pain 2003; EEA 2006). In fact, it's a phenomenon caused both by the economic dynamics and by the strategies and choices of families in search of affordable houses and a better quality of life (considering also the environmental conditions).

A connected feature regards the reorganization of space through the increased role of special zoning, which is applied in order to attract specific global flows and to perform specialized global functions in the global digital economy, such as free trade zones, science parks, financial districts, logistics zones, outsourcing hotspots, thematic urban districts (health care, education, design, arts etc.), and wellness communities, each having their own appeal to international business, investors, talent, visitors, and wealthy residents. Potential conflicts are growing due to the different interests involved, the gentrification of regenerated urban areas, the localization and accessibility of the different services and infrastructures, etc.

This phenomenon is accompanied by the fragmentation of settlements and *in-between spaces*, the not utilized, abandoned, wasted and leftover spaces (with the so-called 'non-spaces') between the "islands" of the city (Luz 2006).

These conditions underline the increasing relevance of the communication and interconnection infrastructures and services to support the mobility and behaviours of urban actors; this challenge is well explained by the proposals on the chrono-urbanisms and the '15-Minute City' (Moreno et al. 2021; Schläpfer et al. 2021) and the smart-cities area of studies and interventions.

These dynamics should be strongly connected with the sustainability needs and policies. The focus on the environmental problems and the climate change, which is threatening not only the urban environment but also the whole life of the planet, is at the basis of the efforts to transform some characteristics of the urban fabric, and its infrastructures, behaviours and living environment. Themes that are clearly in this direction are, for example, the reduction In the cars usage, and the development of e-mobility and public transport; the construction of more ecological, energy saving buildings; the improvement of green areas; the food policy intervention; the management of scarce resources as water; the limitation regarding the soil consumption; etc. At the same time, conflicts among competing interests and the many cases of NIMBY processes show the difficulties to decide and implement the needed innovations.

2.6. Cultural city, tourism and city branding

Cities are at the forefront of culture-led development and constitute a strong milieux for experimentation, anticipating trends and exploring models of social and economic innovation.

Cultural heritage is a strong asset for local communities, be it tangible cultural heritage, such as buildings, monuments and public spaces, or intangible cultural heritage such history, music, theaters, museums, literature, etc. or digital (be it born digital or digitized). It is at the basis of the local identity and social capital relations.

At the same time, cultural resources and the related contemporary productions, entertainment venues, events and facilities, are strong assets for economic activities to tempting different audiences, also in a global competition with other cities and regions: power brokers, investors, industrialists, shoppers and international tourists' fluxes, property developers, talented people and workers, etc., contributing to local economic development (Florida 2005, Landry 2008). In fact, they are one of the main ingredients to construct the image of a city and to promote it (Kunzmann 2004).
For example, in Europe, being the European Capital of Culture is a label no city would refuse. Getting the accolade means an enhanced image, with more financial support for cultural activities, more tourists to support the local economy.
A similar function in terms of image is attempted through the organization of mega events as EXPO, sports, etc. (Burbank et al. 2002; Busetti e Dente 2018).
An evident sign of these strategies is the choice to construct iconic buildings (signed, when possible, by archistars). Cultural events open also the opportunity for urban regeneration and social innovation initiative.
However, cultural heritage can also bring about conflicts: on the one hand conflicts between Its preservation and conservation and its economic valorization and on the other hand conflicts related to changes over time in societal values shaping it (e.g. toppled monuments).

2.7. Urban innovation and governance processes

The claims for a creative city regard also the governance capacity to deal with the many collective problems through innovative policies and interventions; as underlined by Landry, "… decision-makers can repeat past policies…, or they can seek to reinvent their city as a vibrant hub of creativity, potential and improving quality of life. Undoubtably, for the most part, old approaches do not work. We cannot solve 21st-century problems with 19th-century mindsets: the dynamics of cities and the world urban system have changed too dramatically" (Landry 2008: xi).
Studies on the centre-periphery relations and on local decision making underlined the relevance of the local governments in promoting and managing urban transformations during the second half of the last century. However more recently, research on urban innovation shows the relevance of complex governance structures for the success of interventions. One line of analysis stresses the positive role of the plurality of actors operating (or that can be involved) in an urban context; here the focus is on the resources that can be mobilized through the network and cooperation between different actors, which encompass not only the traditional governmental institutions but also the diverse categories of economic and social actors: "the level of innovativeness seems to be associated with a more complex and compact governance structure in which actors coming from different territorial levels and different worlds interact among themselves." (Dente et al. 2012: 49). Another, related, focus of analysis regards the role of innovators, the so-called policy entrepreneurs; in some cases, the actor promoting and/or managing the innovation process is mainly a member of a local public institution (e.g. mayor, bureaucratic managers), but in many situations he or she represents private economic interests, public-private organizations, or social groups (e.g. NGO, non-profit organizations, voluntary associations).

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In any case, the previous synthetic sections explain the potential of conflicts among the plurality of urban actors in dealing with contemporary problems and challenges. Some examples can be mentioned.

Urban associations and movements constitute a relevant actor to maintain and improve social capital and collect resources of different types (information and knowledge, financial, etc.), organising – even if in a temporary way – citizens, economic entrepreneurs, experts, etc. Often these social energies are at the basis of innovation from the bottom, as in the case of the development of green spaces and urban agriculture, the monitoring of the environment and urban ecosystems, the constitution and management of makers hubs, the delivery of some public services through non-profit organizations, the collaboration with public institutions through ICT devices, etc. Although this type of groups can be allies and supporter for innovative interventions, they are able, at the same time, to mobilise resources to protect their interests against infrastructures, as the Nimby literature has shown; to collect consensus against immigrants under populist or religious flags; to protest against economic globalization claiming for the defence of the local identity. To describe the fragmentation that characterizes this context, Le Galès distinguishes four types of citizens' groups: a) residents' movements: the Nimbys; b) movements of independent professionals, craftspeople, and shopkeepers, whose activities are linked to city development: the petty bourgeoisie; c) movements and associations that form an intrinsic part of a broader perspective ('cosmopolitan'), made up of people who are interested in economic issues, the environment, sociability, culture, and the common good; and d) citizens who act as volunteers in relation to their various interests and hobbies (Le Galès 2002).

A second example concerns the economic actors and the related associations, as shopkeepers, big or small property developers, small artisan, conglomerates, supported by banks, insurance companies, other financial institutions, all form an articulated assortment of interests, often in tension among them. They can help public institutions in the realization of relevant interventions, through the mobilization of financial resources, capabilities, etc. through public-private partnerships; at the same time, conflict can arise because of the gentrification risk resulting from the regenerations of urban areas, the soil consumption, the loss of local identity, the lack of compliance with the traditional uses of the urban spaces, etc.

Other conflictual cases regard public institutions and service providers. Local governments are often prividing many services through semi-autonomous agencies and public-private, hybrid organizations. This choice pursues the goal to manage services with the needed competences, avoiding the red tapes; but this set up can result in policy drifts, i.e. various organizations use their discretion to follow different priorities (e.g. the Increase in profits against the coverage and quality of services), contributing to the urban inequalities if not properly submitted to accountability processes. Another case regards the scale of infrastructures that often need to exceed the administrative boundaries to follow the development of the economic trajectories and the urban sprawl, as described by the city-region concept (Balducci and Kunzmann 2004); a situation that results in a complexification of the institutional networks involved, with the need to reach agreements between municipalities with different characteristics (population, territorial resources, political power, etc.) and often the constitution of new institutions to manage problems, solutions and the connected actors' interests and values.

Finally, the multilevel character of many policies discloses the conflicts that can arise not only between institutions of the local, horizontal, level but also among public organizations at

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different levels (local, regional, national, supranational); in fact, they represent different collective interests and operate to affirm their point of view.
To overcome these decisional problems, the successful cases of urban innovation show that urban policy entrepreneurs use different strategies and instruments. Here is relevant to underline that the types of urban innovations are not restricted to physical interventions, but include also the transformation of governance processes and the related instruments.
As an example, in the recent decades, through urban projects, the city governance has been considered a procedural innovation used by local institutions to develop a more proactive, flexible and strategic instrument in comparison with the traditional planning models, able to mobilize the urban experts and élites and to play into the cities and regional competition (Pinson 2009). On the other side, the wave of strategic planning experienced by many cities in Europe can be considered a way to construct and consolidate complex networks, allocating resources in a more rational way in times of economic restriction. Participatory planning, participatory budgeting, and the family of deliberative democracy tools (now supported by the ICT platforms and devices) are ways to densify relations and provide information to experts, mobilize neutral actors through the collection of proposals from the bottom, improve trust among citizens to develop a durable cooperation over time. The use of mediation procedures plays a role in managing NIMBY conflicts regarding infrastructures with socio-economic and environmental impacts. The recourse to referenda can be considered a process to mobilize the whole population. Moreover, the recent literature on welfare services underlines the co-design and co-production processes, with the users' involvement, as a way to reach a better customization and to improve trust in institutions. The list could even be longer, encompassing also the regulatory transformations, the use of communication and narratives strategies, the organizational reforms, etc. Its role is just to remember the relevance to understand processual instruments into the set of urban transformations.

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3. The P-CUBE educational game and the Urban Innovation Game Sets

The educational digital game P-CUBE will be organized, in its first edition, in four different policy areas: Urban Innovation, Social Inclusion, European Union policy making, Cases of decision making with high level of scientific contents. Each policy area includes a variable number of game sets. The idea of the project is that the P-CUBE can be developed over time, introducing new policy areas and also new game sets in the existing areas; or to locate a policy area in another context (for example, in Latin America or in Asian Country, etc.).

The plan of the Urban Innovation package includes 15 game sets. Each set consist in one or more missions (levels): the player should finish with success the first mission to pass to the next level of the same set, and so on. A mission of a set is dedicated to a specific decisional strategy that the policy entrepreneur should use to overcome the opposers.

The setting of the Urban Innovation game is a European, medium sized, city called Anyville-Euroville. The location in Europe allows to limit and specify the relevance of some issues that currently characterize the European urban policy making, avoiding an unfitting generalization. Students are faced also with ethically complex situations, which involve interests and values, as in the current European reality.

The introduction of the game set (see Annex) provides the players with the needed information about the context. All the game sets are fictional, but with a basis on real cases.

The transformations that constitute the issue of the decision-making processes regard both physical and processual elements: for example, the conflicts raised by the construction of a mosque, or the use of participatory processes. The cases selected encompass many of the aforementioned areas of urban innovation: infrastructures, built environment and abandoned sites, social issues, mobility and sustainability, culture and city branding.

As explained in the “Stand Alone” document, the rationale of the game underlines the relevance of continuous innovation at the urban level. The possibility to achieve sustainable development and fight environmental, economic and social issues is linked to the innovation ability of urban contexts. For many of the most severe problems (see the debate on ‘wicked problems’) it is often hard to find appropriate solutions, but, even when the solutions are available, the ways through which they are able to enter the public agenda, to reach the decisional stage and to be adopted are full of twists and bumps.

The Urban Innovation game-sets (and the course in which the education game will be used) try to address this really big question: "how is it possible to design decisional processes able to overcome the obstacles likely to arise in the attempts to introduce an innovation in the solution of collective problems at the urban scale?".

The player will be asked to put himself or herself in the shoes of a policy innovator (who could be a politician, a bureaucrat, a member of economic organizations, a social activist, etc.) who tries to steer a proposal through the complexities of public policy making. In this journey he/she will meet a large number of characters who in some cases will fight against the innovation and in others will help. He/she will be confronted with a series of choices between different alternatives until the end of a journey that, in the vast majority of cases, will be successful.

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ANNEX – INTRODUCTION TO THE URBAN INNOVATION GAME SETS

ANYVILLE-EUROVILLE

This is the presentation of the context into which the cases are located

Anyville is a medium sized city, with a population of 400.000 and covers an area of 140 sqkm. It is the regional capital, and its metropolitan area includes 14 municipalities with a population of approximately 300.000. The city sits across a river in a plain bordered in the south by hills.
It is located in one of the largest countries of the European Union, and the surrounding region boosts a prosperous agriculture and a modern industrial base.
The Constitution of the country forecasts three levels of government: National, Regional and Local, to which obviously the European level should be added.
The city has a long history and a rich and varied cultural heritage. It has an international airport and a large and prestigious university.
The presence of a large student population accounts for a vibrant cultural life, as well as an interesting nightlife. Tourism is an important economic sector, but by no means the only one: even if most factories are by now located in the outskirts of the city or in the surrounding municipalities, their headquarters represent a significant part of the urban workforce. The health and public sector are also well represented as are the banking industry, the different profession sectors and the trade.
The city has two local newspapers and a certain number of local tv and radio channels.
The city government is at present controlled by a center-left coalition, but historically has been electorally competitive. The opposition includes a militant left-wing party, a conservative party and a far-right populist party. The city government provision of the basic services is reasonably efficient, and the level of infrastructure is good (there are 2 subway lines).
Due to its strong economy the region and the city have attracted in the last 30 years a large number of immigrants. In the city they represent 8% of the total population coming mainly from North Africa and the Middle East (35% of the total), East Europe (26% of the total, half of them from outside the EU), Far East (10% mostly from China and the Philippines) and South America (10%). Sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent are underrepresented in comparison with the rest of the country.
Because of its reformist tradition the city has mostly avoided spatial segregation in ghettos, but this does not mean that there aren't tensions with the local population. This phenomenon has been exacerbated by the progressive aging of the population and the economic downturn generated by the international financial crisis and by the 2020 pandemic that has disproportionately affected a part of the middle class.
The COVID 19 pandemic has put the urban economy under stress because of the total stop to tourism (both business and pleasure) and the shrinking student population due to the diffusion of distance learning and the restrictions to national and international travel. The city government has been busy with the emergency, but now it must think about the post-pandemic phase and how to stimulate a quick recovery. The importance of the urban innovation processes is therefore clear.

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Website

For further and updated information about this project please see:
www.p-cube-project.eu

Contacts

Report coordinator
Giancarlo Vecchi, Politecnico di Milano
giancarlo.vecchi@polimi.it

Project Coordinator
Matteo Uggeri, Fondazione Politecnico di Milano
matteo.uggeri@fondazione.polimi.it

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Project partners:

Fondazione Politecnico di Milano

POLITECNICO MILANO 1863

TU Delft

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SCIENCE FOR DEMOCRACY

alda European Association for Local Democracy

P·CUBE

Playing • Public • Policy

The goal of P-CUBE is to build an educational strategy game (the Policy Game) aimed at teaching to different types of pupils the theory and the practice of public policy making.

More information on the website:
www.p-cube-project.eu

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