

Urban crises across the North-South divide

A comparative study of institutional transformations and
urban policy responses in Valencia and Mar del Plata

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University College London

by

Alvaro A Sanchez Jimenez

Department of Geography

University College London

August 2017

I, Alvaro Alberto Sanchez Jimenez, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Alvaro A Sanchez Jimenez

ABSTRACT

The thesis analyses how episodes of crisis have shaped local institutional transformations and urban policy innovations in Valencia and Mar del Plata over the last three decades. Spain's ongoing public debt issues and Argentina's long history of financial instability place current debates concerning local government responses to economic crises into context. The thesis engages with urban research that cuts across cities from the global North and South in order to exploit the potential of comparative urbanism to stretch conventional approaches, methods and concepts from urban theory. Drawing inspiration from literature on institutionalism, it brings into analytical scrutiny and conversation a number of formal and informal features of the local institutional environment of each city to offer a nuanced understanding of how local governments deal with economic, social and political urban issues in times of crisis. Narratives of crisis advanced by local actors provide an alternative empirical source for the analysis of the urban dimension of major episodes of crisis and reveal their multiple temporalities. The detailed consideration of different urban actors exposes the complexity of the institutional environment in which organisational transformations and urban policymaking processes take place as well as the wide variety of interests at play, and how these were differently constituted in the two case study cities. The examination of the relationship between crises and local institutional transformations reveals that crises are not simply economic in origin but are both politically constituted and politically mediated. Finally, the thesis considers in detail how specifically urban interventions and strategies were articulated by the municipal governments in response to crises. The thesis ends with an invitation to the reader to grapple with the rich experience of these and other ordinary cities dealing with multiple kinds of crises, drawing out lessons for how these might be tackled creatively and even positively in the future.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the help of many individuals over the past four years. Any attempt to say thank you to each of them is bound to be incomplete. Please allow me to name just a few of the protagonists to whom I feel most indebted.

I wholeheartedly thank my main supervisor Professor Jennifer Robinson for her caring support throughout the journey. Jenny, your professional commitment and enthusiasm is truly exemplary and an inspiration for all of us. I remain grateful not just for your academic guidance, but also for supporting me and cheering me up when I felt “down”, overwhelmed with work or in the midst of a writing “crisis”. I would also like to thank my secondary supervisor, Professor Adriana Allen for her support and guidance in the early stages of the research and fieldwork.

Professor Pepe Soribes, in Valencia, Spain and Lic. Monica Burmester, in Mar del Plata, Argentina, who cordially welcomed me in their respective university departments and guided me throughout the fieldwork period. The dozens of participants who welcomed me in their work places, who engaged with the project and the lengthy interviews with great interest and who shared their experiences and knowledge about their cities. My mother, in Valencia, Venezuela and my sister, in Nashville, United States, for their support in different ways. To my friends and colleagues at UCL Geography, London and elsewhere.

At home, in London, I infinitely thank Jan Carsten for his encouragement and support throughout this long journey, emphasizing that it will provide me and equip me for a more stimulating and fascinating life!

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	11
2. THEORISING URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR TIMES OF CRISIS	21
2.1 INTRODUCTION	21
2.2 CRISIS	24
CRISES AND CRISIS NARRATIVES	31
2.3 INSTITUTIONALISM	34
2.4 URBAN GOVERNANCE	42
2.5 COMPARATIVE URBANISM	47
2.6 CONCLUSION	54
3. METHODOLOGY – COMPOSING COMPARISONS	57
3.1 INTRODUCTION	57
3.2 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	57
3.3 VALENCIA AND MAR DEL PLATA: COMPARABILITY	61
3.4 METHODOLOGY	67
3.4.1 CASE STUDY SELECTION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES	67
3.4.2 COMPOSING COMPARISONS AND ASSEMBLING COMPARATORS	69
3.4.3 EMPIRICAL FOCUS AND RESEARCH METHODS	72
3.5 DATA COLLECTION: FIELDWORK	78
3.6 DATA ANALYSIS: WRITING COMPARISONS	81
3.6.1 THE CRISIS COMPARATOR	81
3.7 ETHICAL ISSUES AND POSITIONALITY	84
3.8 CONCLUSION	87
4. COMPARING SPAIN-ARGENTINA AND VALENCIA-MAR DEL PLATA	89
4.1 INTRODUCTION	89
4.2 SPAIN AND ARGENTINA: COMPARABLE INSTANCES	90
4.2.1 CHRONOLOGICAL TIMELINES	93
SPAIN	94
ARGENTINA	97

4.3 ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DECENTRALISATION	101
4.3.1 VALENCIA	106
4.3.2 MAR DEL PLATA	110
4.4 URBAN POLICIES AND STRATEGIES	113
4.4.1 VALENCIA	113
4.4.2 MAR DEL PLATA	118
4.5 CONCLUSION	122
 5. NARRATING URBAN CRISES	 125
5.1 INTRODUCTION	125
5.2 MOMENTS OF CRISIS	127
5.2.1 VALENCIA	128
5.2.2 MAR DEL PLATA	133
5.3 NARRATIVES OF CRISIS	138
5.3.1 VALENCIA	140
5.3.2 MAR DEL PLATA	146
5.4 MULTIPLE TEMPORALITIES OF CRISIS	151
5.4.1 LEGACIES OF CRISIS	152
VALENCIA	152
MAR DEL PLATA	156
5.4.2 EPISODES OF CRISIS REDUX	159
VALENCIA	159
MAR DEL PLATA	164
ADDENDUM: CRISIS AND RECENT POLITICAL CHANGE IN VALENCIA	168
5.5 CONCLUSION	171
 6. URBAN ACTORS AND THE LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT	 175
6.1 INTRODUCTION	175
6.2 URBAN ACTORS	176
6.2.1 VALENCIA	176
CHARISMATIC LEADERS: RITA BARBERA	176
LOCAL ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS ACTORS	179
CONSULTANTS AND EXPERT TEAMS	182

THE MUNICIPALITY	185
SOCIAL ACTORS	188
6.2.2 MAR DEL PLATA	193
POWERFUL INDIVIDUALS: ALDREY IGLESIAS	193
LOCAL ECONOMIC ACTORS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS	196
THE MUNICIPALITY	200
SOCIAL ACTORS	203
6.3 LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS AND CULTURES	207
6.3.1 VALENCIA	207
6.3.2 MAR DEL PLATA	211
6.4 CONCLUSION	214
7. LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS	219
7.1 INTRODUCTION	219
7.2 EPISODES OF CRISIS AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS	220
7.2.1 VALENCIA	221
7.2.2 MAR DEL PLATA	225
7.3 POLITICAL CRISES: DEMOCRACY AND DECENTRALISATION	232
7.3.1 VALENCIA	233
DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION	233
DECENTRALISATION	239
7.3.2 MAR DEL PLATA	248
DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION	249
DECENTRALISATION	256
7.4 CONCLUSION	262
8. URBAN POLICIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS	267
8.1 INTRODUCTION	267
8.2 URBAN POLICY INTERVENTIONS AS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MIDST OF TRANSITION CRISES	268
8.2.1 VALENCIA	269
8.2.2 MAR DEL PLATA	274
8.3 THE RISE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVES IN RESPONSE TO EPISODES OF CRISIS	280

8.4 URBAN POLICY STRATEGIC AGENDAS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS OF 2008	298
8.5 THE URBAN CONSEQUENCES OF CRISIS	304
8.5.1 VALENCIA	305
8.5.2 MAR DEL PLATA	307
8.6 CONCLUSION	310
 9. CONCLUSION	 315
9.1 URBAN CRISES ACROSS THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE	315
9.2 URBAN POLICIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS	320
9.3 THEORISING URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR TIMES OF CRISIS	322
9.4 FUTURE RESEARCH	326
 10. BIBLIOGRAPHY	 331
11. Appendix 01	357
12. Appendix 02	371
13. Appendix 03	373
14. Appendix 04	375
15. Appendix 05	377
16. Appendix 06	379
17. Appendix 07	381
18. Appendix 08	383
19. Appendix 09	385
20. Appendix 10	387

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 01. Comparative work by Clarke (1995), Savitch and Kantor (2002), Goldfrank and Schrank (2009). Chapter 2.	48
Figure 02. Formal and informal features considered in the study of institutional and urban policy responses in times of crisis. Chapter 3.	74

LIST OF TABLES

Table 01. Municipal sources of revenue and finance in Valencia and Mar del Plata.	62
Table 02. Division and allocation of competences across tiers of government in Spain and Argentina.	66
Table 03. Population growth in Valencia and Mar del Plata.	68
Table 04. Rate of Unemployment in Valencia and Mar del Plata.	68

LIST OF BOXES

Box 01. Federalism and decentralisation in Spain. Chapter 3.	63
Box 02. Federalism and decentralisation in Argentina. Chapter 3.	64
Box 03. Democratic transition and decentralisation in Spain. Chapter 4.	102
Box 04. Democratic transition and decentralisation in Argentina. Chapter 4.	104

LIST OF MAPS

Map 01. Location of the two case study cities in relation to their national and regional contexts: Valencia (top) and Mar del Plata (bottom).	71

Map 02. Location of some of the large-scale projects and community-led initiatives that have shaped the urban landscape of Valencia since the 1980s.	119

Map 03. Location of some of the most iconic and large-scale projects that have shaped the urban landscape of Mar del Plata since the 1990s.	123

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 01. <i>Huertos Urbanos de Benimaclet</i> , Valencia (Photos by the author). Chapter 6.	191

Image 02. <i>Avance del Plan Especial de Reforma Interior: El Jardí del Turia</i> (Photos by Taller de Arquitectura de Ricardo Bofill). Chapter 8.	273

Image 03. <i>La Ciudad de las Artes y de las Ciencias</i> , Valencia (Photos by the author). Chapter 8.	290

Image 04. <i>Frente Marítimo</i> , Mar del Plata (Photos by the author). Chapter 8.	295

LIST OF ACRONYMS

MGP: Municipalidad de General Pueyrredon (Municipality of Mar del Plata)

CEyD: Centro de Estrategias y Desarrollo (Centre for local strategies and development)

HCD: Honorable Concejo Deliberante (Legislative arm of Municipality Mar del Plata)

COPAN: Comité Organizador Juegos Panamericanos (Committee PanAmerican Games)

ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (also CEPAL)

ICES: Iniciativa Ciudades Emergentes y Sustentables (Initiative for sustainable cities)

IDB: InterAmerican Development Bank

PMTT: Plan Maestro de Transporte y Transito (Master plan for transport and transit)

OSSE: Obras Sanitarias del Estado (water supply company, Mar del Plata)

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

It has been nearly a decade since the onset of the “global” financial crisis, which unleashed a series of macroeconomic challenges mainly across North America and Europe in 2008. The consequences of recession and high levels of indebtedness have been pervasive and unpredictable for hundreds of cities on both sides of the Atlantic. Although some of them seem to have endured and momentarily overcome the worst of the crisis, others continue to face significant difficulties today and to struggle in the quest for an alternative urban development path. Conversely, many cities beyond the Western world have not been directly affected by the recent “global” financial crisis, but have had to deal with different crises shaped by their own social, political, institutional and urban issues. Given the complex and pervasive nature of economic crises in recent years, and their multiple and diverse consequences (i.e. recession, austerity, political instability and social unrest) across society and the state, this thesis seeks to revisit and learn from past experiences that could illuminate new ways of understanding and dealing with the consequences of economic downturn, particularly in relation to government reconfigurations and policy responses at the local level.

In an attempt to contribute to the definition of urban crisis through the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata, this thesis moves away from the idea of the “global” financial crisis to examine how different crises have shaped local institutional transformations and urban policy innovations in cities across the North-South divide. This “global” notion of crisis has not only reduced a wide range of disparate events (economic and otherwise) into a recognisable and allegedly “global” category at present, but blurred the complexity and dwarfed the magnitude of earlier episodes of crisis experienced across both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere, particularly at the subnational level. As we will see, some of the institutional and urban challenges observed across cities such as Valencia and Mar del Plata in recent years are not unprecedented (and certainly not related to the 2008 “global crisis” in the case of the latter). For Argentina, for instance, the 1980s were difficult due to the pervasive effects of the debt crisis affecting the largest Latin American economies. It was a decade of political and economic upheavals following years of struggles to achieve and maintain democracy on the one hand and multiple efforts to stabilise chronic issues in the balance of payments and to control inflation on the other. As much as in Valencia since 2008,

the 2001 default created exceptional conditions that allowed a number of transformations across the municipal structures and dynamics of Mar del Plata to unfold. Therefore, a long term comparative approach will help us to bring into view the urban dimension of crises, and to place more recent episodes in perspective while challenging some of the assumptions informing urban analyses across the North-South divide.

The shared history of Spain and Argentina is rooted in the colonial era and continues today as they have many common cultural and political features. However, their economic, political and social trajectories have followed contrasting and diverse paths over the last two centuries. Although there is evidence of comparative research examining economic policy reforms across the two countries (see Vellacott 2007, for instance), this has considered changes at the national level and reinforced categorisations and narratives that portray Europe as the developed North and Latin America as the developing South. This type of approach, and the somewhat predictable findings it generates regarding the development status of each country, resonates with issues identified in urban studies more broadly where dichotomies reinforcing hierarchical categorisations – e.g. developed and under-developed, core and periphery, capitalist and socialist – and developmentalist views have shaped the field (Robinson 2011b).

Nevertheless, many different events in Spain and Argentina, including multiple processes of economic and political transformation over the last three decades provide relatively unexamined and potentially fruitful empirical grounds for more robust analytical comparisons. In the 1980s, for example, Spain underwent a phase of rapid deindustrialisation, characterised by a slow and uneven shift towards tertiary economic activities and the introduction of policies inspired by neoliberal orthodoxy (Velasco and Plaza 2003), while Argentina had to deal with the consequences of a debt crisis that was accompanied by a series of conditional structural adjustment reforms including deregulation and privatisation (Lewis and Torrents 1993); these in turn resembled the macro-economic policies introduced in Spain in order to pave the way for its entrance into the European Union in 1986. In Spain and Argentina, these and other similar processes of economic and political transformation at the national and local levels have never been smooth. On the contrary, they have been accompanied by a mixture of

structural and cyclical crises that have not only had significant and long term consequences for the lives of millions but also affected the institutional structures and arrangements that shape and sustain the government systems of each country.

As has been pointed out by urban scholars engaging postcolonial approaches, and discussed further below, urban research has been traditionally dominated by western-centric views and ideas derived from a limited and somewhat familiar number of case studies from North America and Europe. In order to contribute to a more international and inclusive urban studies discipline that attends to processes of global urbanisation in the twenty-first century, there is a need to broaden the scope of research by considering a wider number of cases beyond the North. This not only requires that scholars find inspiration from the diverse experience of places across the global South but also that they move beyond the developmentalist frameworks that categorise and/or render such experiences as exceptional to the 'norm'. This research builds on comparative urbanism, departing from the idea that comparisons offer a basis for the construction of knowledge about cities and aspects of the urban which opens *a priori* theorisation to critical interrogation (Robinson 2011). The main focus of interest is on urban crises, their multiple local dimensions, and their impact on processes of institutional transformation as well as urban policymaking. This involves the study of both institutional change and policy shifts in times of economic downturn, drawing, for example, on urban literature dealing with the impact of structural adjustment programmes in the South (Whitson 2007) as well as with austerity urbanism in the North (Peck 2013) through an international comparative approach.

Argentina's long history of economic instability and Spain's ongoing public debt issues will help to place current debates concerning local government responses to economic crises into context, thinking across time from a comparative and historical perspective. The governments of Valencia and Mar del Plata will serve as case studies. They both share similar degrees of autonomy according to their respective national constitutions and thus have considerable powers to decide upon a wide range of economic, social and political matters within their political jurisdiction. This does not mean that they function entirely independently from regional or national levels of government but that they enjoy similar relative powers to set up their own urban policy interventions and strategies. As we will see, the municipalities of Valencia and Mar del Plata have been

directly responsible for delivering responses and strategies to mitigate the consequences of different episodes of crisis, and local leaders and officials have worked closely with higher levels of government in order to secure sufficient resources. In broad terms, both cities have favoured policies fostering tertiary economic activities such as leisure and cultural tourism, commerce, and real estate development over the last decades. Economic and social infrastructure have increasingly become essential elements of the urban interventions and strategic plans designed in both cities. They share demographic similarities, with a local population of approximately 700000 inhabitants.

Following years of state devolution and decentralisation, the governments of Valencia and Mar del Plata have become increasingly autonomous and responsible for the procurement of local services, public infrastructure, and the design of policies aimed at local economic development over the last three decades. Therefore, they present novel empirical grounds from which to examine both local institutional transformations and urban policymaking processes over a reasonably long period of time in which various episodes of crisis have occurred. The comparison of these two cases, from the global North and South, builds on postcolonial approaches and seeks to inform theoretical conversations in urban studies eager to consider a wider range of cases beyond the West.

This project does not aim to decipher best practices, strategies or policy outputs *per se* but rather to instigate insights about the local institutional settings, arrangements and processes through which these are formulated and implemented. The study suggests that examining local actors, changes in the configuration of local government structures and the dynamics shaping the local institutional environment, and urban policy shifts across the North-South have the potential to illuminate broader global debates concerning the processes and mechanisms through which diverse institutional as well as urban policy innovations and agendas are devised, negotiated, adapted and decided upon in times of crisis. Geddes (2014), for example, examines the economic conditions in which particular local-urban policy interventions have emerged in Latin America and argues that similar conditions are increasingly apparent in the global North after the 2008 crisis. This approach does not aim to underestimate the value of earlier work on the causes and consequences of crisis (e.g. Gottdiener 1985), but to explore the potential of comparative urbanism to examine how a mixture of economic, social and political

forces might influence the formulation, approval and implementation of urban policy interventions aimed at mitigating the multiple and unexpected consequences of recurrent economic crises, dealing with routine issues of infrastructure and service provision, reorientating the vision of the city, or a mixture of the above.

This thesis aims to bring the comparison of Valencia and Mar del Plata into wider theoretical conversations concerning urban crises, local institutional transformations and urban policymaking processes while seeking to contribute to a more international urban studies discipline. In broad terms, it seeks to analyse how different episodes of crisis have shaped local institutional change and urban policy innovations across the two case study cities over the last three decades. More specifically, the research deals with three main objectives: 1) to examine the meanings of urban crisis through exploring local experiences, interpretations and narratives; 2) to analyse the institutional implications of political crises, including processes of decentralisation as well as the actions of the multiple actors that form part of the local institutional environment and culture; 3) to assess the longterm impact of episodes of crisis on urban policymaking processes and the urban strategic agendas implemented in Valencia and Mar del Plata since the 1980s.

These three objectives and main building blocks of my research (crisis – institutions – urban policies) are strongly intertwined and thus might be thought of together rather than one at a time. They all become explanatory variables at some point in the analysis of the urban development experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata. As we will see, neither of them is completely independent from the others and it would be impossible and perhaps questionable to establish a single independent variable for the entire analysis – which is not the aim of this research. On the contrary, my aim is to bring out the complexity of long term urban development processes by using the notion of crisis to understand both local institutional change and urban policy shifts across the two case study cities as well as by recognising the ways in which institutions and urban policies themselves might become agents of crisis. As the research and analysis unfold, we learn how the formal and informal features of institutions and the content and direction of urban policy agendas not only provide alternative paths and/or opportunities for the resolution of different episodes of crisis over time, but become explanatory variables of crises themselves. It is precisely such an intertwined and complex relationship between the three main blocks of analysis what makes it difficult, if not impossible, to provide a

more precise or fixed distinction between the explanatory and independent nature of each variable.

The thesis is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical considerations inspiring and framing the research. It builds on wider literature dealing with crises, political economy, urban governance, new institutionalism and comparative urbanism. The notion of “crisis” is introduced as both an open-flexible concept and an empirical phenomenon that might be particularly helpful as a lens through which to study local government transformation as well as urban policymaking processes. The chapter also explores conceptual ideas from new institutionalism, and New Institutional Economics in particular, to argue how an urban comparative project that is attentive to the formal and informal features intertwined in local government institutions might help us to generate more nuanced understandings of urban crises and urban politics, as well as the local institutional transformations and policy shifts that accompany wider crises. The last two sections of this chapter discuss different aspects of urban governance and bring together a combination of traditional and emerging contributions in comparative urban politics to provide a mixture of rigorous and creative research strategies to ground the analysis of the cases of Valencia and Mar del Plata, and indeed to formulate more global understandings of local politics.

Chapter 3 deals with methodological concerns. It outlines the research aim and objectives as well as the reasons why Argentina’s long history of economic crises and Spain’s ongoing sovereign fiscal crisis are both useful cases through which to place the idea of “crisis” in context. It establishes the rationale behind the selection of the cases, the empirical focus and the process of composing the comparison. The chapter also provides a detailed account of the research methods as well as the process of data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 introduces the research setting. It examines the wider economic, political and institutional context of Spain and Argentina from the early 1980s until the late 2000s, a period characterised by significant transformations across all areas of national life in both countries. These transformations are important to understand local processes. The chapter provides a chronological account of events that help us to start thinking comparatively across the two cases. These events are presented in a simplified format that facilitates the identification of themes of empirical and theoretical relevance and thus of the main lines of comparison; both of which are important methodological steps in this thesis. The economic, political and urban policy

implications of decentralisation for Valencia and Mar del Plata are also discussed in this chapter in order to establish the basis for the comparative analysis of urban crises, local actors, institutional transformations and urban policy shifts that follows.

The next four chapters provide a substantive discussion of the main themes of the comparative analysis. Chapter 5 moves beyond macroeconomic analyses and objective events that have shaped ideas such as the 2008 “global” crisis to focus on contextual features and non-economic challenges that emerge or become more visible across cities in times of crisis. Drawing on the time and place specificities of the recent experiences of crisis in Valencia (2008) and Mar del Plata (2001), the idea of “moments of crisis” is used to trace and capture the urban dimension of major episodes of crisis in which multiple challenges, uncertainties and opportunities arise across the economic, social, institutional and political domains of cities. It also examines some of the narratives of crisis advanced by local actors in an effort to account for and make sense of the contextual specificities (i.e. social, political and local institutional aspects) shaping their views. Locally specific narratives of crisis open wider analyses to the local interpretations, responses and theorisations of different actors and provide us with a rich empirical source for the analysis of the urban dimension of major episodes of crisis.

Inspired by the notion of the *longue durée* of Fernand Braudel (Guldi and Armitage 2014), the chapter discusses the importance of taking a long term view in the analysis of recent episodes of crisis. However, at the local level, some of the institutional and urban challenges observed across cities such as Valencia and Mar del Plata in recent years are not unprecedented (and certainly not only related to the 2008 “global” crisis in the case of the latter) and have their roots in longer term trends/issues. Therefore, a long term view helps to understand the urban dimensions and multiple temporalities of crises as well as to place more recent episodes in perspective. It is argued that some institutional and urban challenges attributed to more recent episodes of crisis are not entirely new but are the combined result of earlier rounds of crisis and path dependencies.

Chapter 6 examines how and to what extent different political, economic and social actors might be able to influence institutional decisions and urban policymaking processes. Indeed, local actors are essential to the institutional transformations and urban responses developed in the light of crises. Their individual and collective

experiences can help us to better understand: the complexity of the environment in which urban policies are formulated and decided upon; the role which a diversity of government structures and dynamics play in such processes; the wide range of interests at work; as well as the multiple ways in which municipalities might navigate federal systems in times of crisis. The analysis attends to a mixture of public and private actors that range from charismatic leaders and powerful individuals to a wide variety of businesses, professional associations, municipal technical and administrative staff and social groups. The chapter also examines the institutional environment of both Valencia and Mar del Plata and how the combined actions and interactions of local actors have contributed to the consolidation of distinctive political landscapes and institutional cultures in each city.

Chapter 7 examines the relationship between crises and local institutional transformations. It draws on the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata following democratisation, decentralisation as well as several episodes of crisis since the 1980s. It explores how major episodes of crisis might be actually translated into changes in local government structures and wider institutional dynamics, according to the interests and abilities of different actors to mobilise and induce change. Here, crisis is presented as an exceptional condition that might enable or hinder institutional adaptation and/or innovation within municipal structures as well as the reconfiguration of relationships amongst socioeconomic and political actors introduced in the previous chapter. Furthermore, the chapter examines the wider institutional transformations driven by political crisis. Indeed, political instability and crisis feature among the main drivers of changes in the broader structures within which local institutions are located. The relatively recent history of cities like Valencia and Mar del Plata provides us with valuable evidence for analysis of these wider processes. The political and social tensions of democratic transition as well as the ongoing challenges of decentralised administrations (which tend to become more evident in times of economic downturn) are essential to understanding the long term path of local institutions and urban development. The operational complexities of federalism and the importance of navigating intergovernmental relations in articulating responses to episodes of crisis as well as formulating urban policy agendas are also clarified. The experience of both cities demonstrates that institutional agility and the ability to make use of cross-scalar relations have been essential for municipal operations, particularly because greater

autonomy has often meant more responsibilities but not necessarily more resources.

Chapter 8 draws on insights from Chapters 5-7 to examine the relationship between crisis and urban policy outcomes. It analyses a number of actual urban interventions and strategies articulated by the local governments of Valencia and Mar del Plata in response to crises. It deals with the emergence and development of urban policy agendas that aimed to mitigate some of the issues inherited and/or exacerbated during the transition crises of the 1980s and navigates through a number of strategic responses introduced in each city over the last three decades. Three broad periods of urban policymaking are devised and schematised in the urban policy evolution of the two cities since their transition to democracy to 2015, which will aid comparative reflection.

PLANNING PERIOD	OPPORTUNISTIC	STRATEGIC	POST-2008
VALENCIA	1979-1993	1993-2012	2012-2015
MAR DEL PLATA	1983-2001	2001-2013	2013-2015

Finally, the chapter examines the urban consequences of crises from a longterm perspective. In contrast to the direct and swift impact that crises are often assumed to have on the configuration of local institutions and the dynamics of municipal departments responsible for urban strategic and regulatory decisions, I argue that their consequences on the urban landscape of cities can hardly be reflected immediately. Instead, they only become visible after the critical juncture has passed and, crucially, after municipalities have assessed the situation and introduced the necessary measures.

Chapter 9 concludes by drawing together the overall findings of the thesis and offering some reflections on how an institutionally embedded and long term comparative approach can help us to think through and bring into analytical conversation different experiences from cities across the North-South divide. Even though the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata highlighted different events and processes over time, it does not mean that incommensurability ensued. Instead, these differences revealed precisely one of the advantages of international comparative research, the value of thinking through differences, absences as well as the multiplicity of shared processes that take place across different cities. The chapter offers an invitation to grapple with the rich experience of these and other ordinary cities dealing with multiple kinds of crises,

institutional and urban challenges and considers the opportunities for future research in these areas. Finally, it considers some of the wider theoretical implications and the possibilities of theorising urban governance for times of crisis, suggesting how we might need to start seeing crises much more creatively and even positively in the future.

CHAPTER 2: THEORISING URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR TIMES OF CRISIS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The ongoing and recent ‘global’ economic crisis started in the US in late 2008 from where it travelled across the Atlantic, affecting virtually all European countries. Eight years later, the crisis appears far from resolved and there is no clear indication as to whether the US or European countries are able to address the socioeconomic and political pressures brought about by recession. This wave of financial and debt crises has sparked a significant amount of research across social sciences, including urban studies. Urban researchers dealing with responses to/consequences of crisis have mostly focused on austerity and neoliberal urbanism, the local impact of recession and fiscal adjustment, the rise of social movements and unrest as well as various aspects of urban resilience (Peck 2012; Peck 2013; Castree 2009; Richardson and Copus 2010; Kaika 2012; Castañeda 2012; Muller 2010).

However, crises are not new. The capitalist world, including places across the global North and South, has seen multiple kinds of crisis in the past centuries and research has frequently looked at their causes, consequences and the transformations to which they have led (see Gottdiener 1985; Whitehead 1986; Whitson 2007; Ponticelli and Voth 2011). In addition, some places could be said to be in permanent crisis and therefore are used to dealing with very frequent socioeconomic and political changes (Becker and Raza 1999; Peck 2012). Crises and their aftermath might therefore be narrated in many different ways, as they reflect virtually infinite combinations of economic interests, political compromises, social (and sometimes environmental) sacrifices and uneven power relations that together determine the context in which state-led solutions and interventions are devised and decided upon while consequences are distributed among different groups (see Panizza and Philip (2014) for a wide range of examples and perspectives).

Although the current crisis has been largely narrated as ‘global’, it is important to emphasise that it has not been a ‘worldwide’ crisis. On the contrary, it has mainly affected the US and European countries and there are in fact many places around the world that have not only not experienced major financial or debt crises over the last

decade but have instead recorded growth (Deutsche Bank 2006; Campanella 2008; Fernandez Jilberto and Hogenboom 2010; Veltmeyer 2010). As Wainwright and Rodgers (2013) usefully note, this ubiquitous macro-narrative of global crisis could be better understood as a series of interrelated crises. In other words, distinguishing the US subprime crisis of late 2007, the ‘global’ credit crunch that followed and the ongoing sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone from one another could yield more insightful understandings of crisis as a worldwide phenomena than trying to understand them as a bundle through a single global lens. Nevertheless, such differentiation would still leave us to deal with the problem of generalisation about the nature of crisis, a classical issue of mainstream urban studies too, in which knowledge produced to understand global phenomena rests on a limited number of case studies that are deemed important.

As it appears in current research, analyses of crisis and its effects on cities seems to continue the traditional practice of universalising empirical trends, findings and experiences exclusive to the West. In the case of the 2008 crisis other regions around the world have remained relatively unaffected or have been challenged by different kinds of crisis – i.e. neither subprime nor financial *per se* but a different kind of economic crisis that might be linked to social, political, institutional or environmental issues such as political change, unemployment and/or natural disasters. Therefore, if we are to work towards a more global understanding of crises and of the multiple implications these might have, whether in economic, social or political terms, it would be most instructive to consider a wider range of contexts and outcomes from which new grounds of inspiration could be identified and possibly new analytical insights be constructed. In my view, one of the best and most recent studies of crisis to do this, although from a monetary and fiscal perspective, has been produced by Panizza and Philip (2014). Their study not only draws on multiple episodes of crisis and outcomes, but provides us with rich analyses and insights that are relevant to different experiences observed in the global North and South.

If we look back at the late 1970s and 1980s, it could be said that economic and political crises were more globally widespread and synchronised than they have been over the last few years. In both Europe and Latin America, for example, there were widespread concerns regarding the causes and consequences of a mixture of financial and fiscal crises at various times (Alesina *et al* 1998; Alesina *et al* 1998). Nevertheless, the

economic and political transformations that occurred in these regions of the world at the time have been normally studied from disciplinary perspectives (such as development studies) that favour analyses of macroeconomic events, monetary and fiscal reforms at a country scale, and that portray subnational experiences as consequences of policy decisions made by national governments. Whereas research in Europe and the US had already produced interesting analyses about the impact of macro economic crisis on local government institutions in the 1980s (see Clarke et al 1985; and Gottdiener 1985 – special editions in *Urban Affairs Review*), in relatively less decentralised Latin America the main focus of attention had been on macroeconomic policies at the national level and the rapid rise of poverty and informality across cities (see Gilbert and Ward 1985; Thomas 1995). More recently, however, some comparative analyses of urban governance in Latin American cities have emerged (see Goldfrank and Schrank 2009; Kanai and Ortega-Alcazar 2009; Geddes 2014).

This chapter introduces the theoretical considerations inspiring and framing the research, building on wider literature dealing with crises, urban governance, new institutionalism and comparative urbanism. The following section introduces crisis as both a flexible concept and an empirical phenomenon that is particularly helpful as a lens through which to study local government transformation as well as urban policymaking processes. The notion of crisis also helps us to examine and better understand the conditions in which important socioeconomic and political changes and policy decisions might occur at municipal levels of government, across contexts from the global North and South. The third section explores conceptual ideas from new institutionalism to argue how an urban comparative project that is attentive to the formal and informal features intertwined in local government institutions might help us to generate more nuanced understandings of urban crises, urban politics as well as the local institutional transformations and policy shifts that accompany wider crises. The last section brings together a combination of traditional and emerging contributions in comparative urbanism, which provides us with a mixture of rigorous and creative research strategies that are necessary to ground the analysis of the cases of Valencia and Mar del Plata, and indeed to formulate more global understandings of local politics.

2.2 CRISIS

The notion of crisis plays an important role in this research because crises are or have been a common concern for the cities under analysis. However, it is important to consider how crises can (re)appear in various different ways across time and space. In this respect, crisis should not be seen as a predetermined concept that travels around the world presenting itself under a given set of characteristics in every instance, but rather as a guiding concept, in which particular circumstances, processes and actions that are specific to particular places shape the ways in which a “crisis” might be recognised, experienced, interpreted and dealt with. Following crisis as both a concept and an empirical phenomenon across multiple different locations around the world can help us to understand the conditions in which important socioeconomic and political transformations at municipal and regional levels of government occur, which in turn could illuminate wider debates concerning urban governance. In addition, in relation to the current study, focusing on crises will enable us to recognise particular local institutional transformations and urban policy interventions that emerge in times of uncertainty and most importantly how they are negotiated and/or decided upon – considering the structures, processes and actors involved in their making. This section aims to outline some of the meaning(s) of crises, the way(s) they might become known to us, what they might signal and why the idea of crisis might be particularly helpful as a lens through which to study local government transformations and urban policymaking processes.

From the etymological perspective, the Greek word *krisis* means a moment of stress where a decision must be made. In this project, “crises” are understood as moments of chance and opportunity that bring about possibilities for both rapid and long term change (I discuss and substantiate this in chapter 5). Indeed, there are many definitions of crisis and different literatures engage with the notion of crisis in multiple different ways – focusing on particular characteristics, narratives, causalities and effects. While it is important to remember that a single conceptualisation might not be suitable for comparative research dealing with urban crises, given the multiple and diverse experiences to be accounted for, it is of course helpful to recognise existing contributions and to seek inspiration from a wider literature.

In an effort to theorise the structural economic changes observed in advanced capitalist societies in Europe during the 1970s and 1980s, for example, several French scholars developed an analytical framework that aimed to identify and formulate an alternative understanding of the norms and mechanisms behind the functioning of capitalist economies, challenging mainstream neoclassical explanations (see Dunford 1990 for good intellectual history). The regulationist approach, as it became widely known, offers explanations of growth and crisis from a ‘critique of capitalism’ perspective that help us to understand the movement from one stage to the other – i.e. from growth to crisis and/or vice-versa (Dunford 1990). For regulation theorists, crisis refers to conflicting situations in which the fundamental social relations sustaining capitalist societies – the commodity relation and the wage relation (see Aglietta 1979 for extended discussion) – escape the coherent and normalised conditions that characterise them in periods of stable economic growth. Instability and crisis tendencies reappear prominently on the surface of society until conflicts characterised by divisions, rivalries and contradictions between different social groups are resolved, at least partially or temporarily. Two types of crisis are possible: “crises *in* a mode of regulation which are cyclical in character, and crises *of* a mode of regulation that require new regulatory procedures and a new type of productive system” (Dunford 1990:301). While both types of crises result from a fall in the rate of profit within a given economic space and a specific productive system (whether in a city, a region or a country), the former refers to crises in which variables that fluctuate in the short-medium term such as the price of goods and technology become *temporarily* adverse to the capitalist process of profit maximisation and the latter refers to crises in which variables such as population growth and changes in capitalist social relations lead to more *permanent* struggles that requires the intervention of state institutions and a new socioeconomic consensus. This distinction is important not only because it shows that crises – even within a political economy framework – might have different meanings and implications but because each crisis, whether cyclical or structural, entails processes and characteristics that are specific to time and space.

While regulationist theory might satisfactorily explain recurrent crises of capitalism, the necessary reconfiguration of social relations to overcome conflicts and struggles that arise when regimes of accumulation change, and the relationship between social stability and economic growth in broad terms, it is difficult to imagine that the same

analysis could accurately explain socioeconomic and political transformations associated with crisis in universalist terms. Indeed, the experiences of industrialisation and capitalist development in many southern contexts might be somewhat different from the experiences that informed the French scholars writing about regulation and crisis in the 1970s. This is not to say that regulation theory has not been analytically useful, as many scholars have continued to use its original insights to understand crises well beyond the sites that inspired French theorists four decades ago (see Allen 2011; Jäger 2003; Becker 2002; Dunford 2000; Becker and Raza 1999 for good examples), but to recognise that it would be virtually impossible to account for the historical variety of experiences observed across time and space within a capitalist approach alone. The histories of state-led industrialisation, import-substitution and trade liberalisation across Latin America, for example, entail a wide diversity of processes, opportunities and challenges that differ from country to country. Each individual story rests on a combination of multiple factors such as resource endowments – whether these are energy resources in the case of Andean countries, or agricultural capacity in the Southern Cone – strategic position – the case of Central America in relation to the US – as well as particular economic, social and political struggles and conditions (Remmer 1978; Sachs and Warner 1995; Eguizabal 2010).

Indeed, numerous processes of socioeconomic and political change across the global North and South over the last decades have been accompanied by a mixture of cyclical and structural crises. Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to assume that such transformations – and particularly those at the local level – have been always lined up with (or could be explained by, or being seen as) “crises *in* the mode of regulation”. Multiple levels of government in the global South, for example, are more than agents to resist capitalism, neoliberal logics or the crises associated with them. In fact, some cities and municipal administrations might not even be challenged by crises of capitalism directly, instead being occupied with issues derived from rapid demographic growth, chronic poverty, natural disasters, violence, authoritarianism, corruption and so forth. Hence, understanding crises in relation to sometimes autonomous state transformations across place and time as well as considering their implications at the national, regional and local level are important to better inform theoretical understandings and future policy alternatives concerning local states in times of economic downturn.

More recently, social science scholars dealing with financial and debt crises have been inspired by cases from the US and Europe, where their repercussions have been more visible since 2008. The main topics of research include austerity, social movements and unrest, as well as different forms of mobilisation and resilience. While the work of urban scholars such as Peck (2012) takes us through the consequences and implications of austerity urbanism by illustrating the situation of American cities under ‘extreme economy’, political economists such as Ponticelli and Voth (2011) discuss the extent to which societies become unstable after expenditure cuts by surveying several European cases. This research has been helpful to understand how an initial financial crisis was transformed into a state crisis and subsequently into an urban crisis – although one might argue that in the US, the issues started at the urban level with the sub-prime crisis in late 2007 but did not become official until the financial sector was deeply affected (Harvey 2012). These studies have also helped to understand emerging forms of sociopolitical resistance. For Peck (2012), austerity has helped to press for further government downsizing and rolling privatisation as both fiscal necessities and measures required to regain budgetary confidence in the context of already neoliberalised state institutions and urban politics. The comparative work of Ponticelli and Voth (2011) reveals that austerity measures – and not economic downturn *per se* – have been the cause of social instability in Europe, whether in the form of riots, anti-government demonstrations, general strikes or even attempted revolutions and assassinations, from the demise of the Weimar Republic in Germany in the 1930s to Greece since 2010. For these reasons, policymakers and political leaders often delay the implementation of fiscal consolidation and particularly of budget cuts. They not only fear the massive and often violent civil unrest that follows cuts in entitlement programmes, but also the possibility that macroeconomic conditions deteriorate further and faster in the attempt to control public expenditure and a political/institutional crisis is unleashed simultaneously.

However, political scientists have increasingly acknowledged the multiple dimensions of crises as well as the analytical importance of considering a wider range of worldwide experiences in order to understand not only the ways in which they might become known to us across time and space, but also the implications of different ways of narrating crises. For Panizza and Philip (2014:xvii),

“crisis narratives aim to understand what is the crisis, what caused and will cure it (simple policy tinkering, structural changes, cultural transformation), and how the costs of the crisis and its resolution should be distributed [...] Crisis narratives are also “real” in that they are understood within the conflict of group interests and through institutional structures. The emphasis on the relationship between the political agency of human beings and the institutional structure they encounter, aim to change, and which aims to modify their behaviour, is a fundamental element in knowing crises”.

These authors set out a research agenda that combines the conceptual tradition and interdisciplinary base of comparative politics to study the origin of the latest [and ongoing] crisis in the US and its rapid spread to Europe since 2008, where it has become not only a financial problem but a threat to democracy and development. In an effort to illuminate broader understandings of crisis as well as the reasons for the wide variety of prescriptions and alternative solutions, Panizza and Philip (2014) bring into analytical conversation a number of cases from earlier crises – Mexico 1982, Venezuela 1994, Russia 1997, South Korea 1998, Argentina 1999-2002 and Uruguay 1999-2001 – and examine the diversity of the narratives that have emerged in particular places and times from a comparative perspective. Although the cases mainly draw from economic and political experiences at the national level, the international approach to understanding instances of crisis and the multiple processes associated with them is consistent with the kind of comparisons that the current research aims to pursue at the local level.

In regards to Argentina, for example, Panizza (2014) observes how the 2001 default and subsequent fiscal adjustment measures led the country into a series of crises that not only affected its economic performance, but created the conditions for intense social unrest and political and institutional instability at virtually all levels. Similarly, in Spain, Hopkin (2014) tracks the transformation of what started as a banking crisis into a sovereign debt crisis that has exacerbated multiple social and political issues across Spanish autonomous regions and localities and therefore threatens the social and political stability of the country. Although the authors start the analysis of each crisis from an economic perspective, they quickly realise that such conjunctures are not easily explained in purely economic terms and observe how multiple narratives and

interpretations of crisis emerge from different points and struggle to gain wider recognition in the midst of uncertainty. Indeed, crises that ‘start’ in the financial or banking system might travel very quickly across different levels of society and government with unforeseen consequences. This is not to say that economic and/or financial explanations of crises are unhelpful, but that it is important to recognise that crises involve a much wider range of challenges concerning the organisation of the state, the strengthening of policy-making capacity, the articulation of different political sectors, the reconciliation of diverse social groups, the generation of revenue, the allocation of scarce resources and so forth. As Gonzalez (2005:103) notes, following Habermas’s (1975) concept of the ‘logic of crisis displacement’, crises that initially manifest within the economy might be transferred into political domains in order to facilitate decision-making concerning projects that would be difficult to advance under stable conditions.

Having considered some possible ways to think about the meaning of crises, their economic, social and political implications, and how they might be narrated and make themselves known to us, I would like to outline how and why the notion of crisis (and indeed of insights derived from research on crises) might be particularly helpful as a lens through which to study local government transformations and urban policymaking processes across the global North and South from a historical perspective. According to Gonzalez (2005:110), “[episodes of crisis] are moments beyond bad economic performance or temporary adjustments; they are times of confusion, decision, energy, anxiety and dizziness when the institutional arrangements regulating our economy and political systems come under question”. Gonzalez’s understanding of crisis is helpful and suggests that if we consider local governments’ functions and dynamics in times of crisis more closely, during critical moments that bring out local choices which are shaped by the uneven and specific impact of the crisis, new grounds for analytical inquiry could emerge – whether in institutional or sociopolitical terms.

The use of crisis as a lens through which to analyse institutional and urban policy decisions at the local level, particularly locally developed responses and strategies formulated in times of economic difficulty, ensures that we must approach “crises” in a broad sense, beyond the notions of scarcity, austerity measures and fiscal retrenchment *per se*. After all, local government strategies and policies aim to address pressing issues

that are not only economic in nature but a mixture of social, political, and institutional matters. As Panizza and Philip (2014) point out, moments of critical juncture might be temporary but crises often overlap with other challenges produced by *non-crises*. For instance, whether or not they are in the midst of economic downturn, local governments confront and must respond to a wide range of social demands concerning the provision of public goods, services, and infrastructure, as well as multiple conflicts between social groups and business elites – while having to maintain a perspective on the vision for the future of the city and a responsible approach to public finances. Although these challenges indeed exist under normal and stable economic circumstances, they seem to exacerbate in times of crisis – which means that the function and purpose of local governments might become more ‘visible’ in moments of economic downturn and sociopolitical instability. This is one reason why exploring “crisis” in local government structures and dynamics could be analytically rewarding.

Certainly, there are many different reasons why local government organisations might undergo particular processes of transformation and/or restructuring as well as different reasons why they might decide upon and implement significant changes in urban policies and strategies – whether these are political ambitions, renewed or shifting city visions in response to transnational policy changes, governing coalition agreements, and/or promises made by local leaders during electoral campaigns. However, some form of socioeconomic and/or political crisis features among the main motivations for major changes and decisions quite frequently (Cities Alliance 2006; Parnell and Robinson 2006; McCann 2001; Crot 2006; Robinson 2011a; Zhang 2002). As Boyer’s (1992) work on regulation theory suggests, the time of crisis is a time for heterodoxies as orthodoxies can no longer explain the complexities of social phenomena. It is a time of experimentation when lower levels of governments, for example, might seek to gain further autonomy (or are actually delegated greater responsibilities) from their national counterparts in order to deal with local socioeconomic challenges. And it is a time when new rationales and government technologies such as new ways of organisation, administration, and management might become ‘necessary’ and appealing. French and Leyshon (2010) see times of crisis as opportunities to advance ideas and practices that, although they might be defined by relatively powerful groups with particular economic and political interests, would be difficult to justify and introduce under stable circumstances. Indeed, “political spaces become more porous and flexible during crisis

– they are moments in which what is envisionable as a truth expands and during which there might be wide shifts in what is perceived as desirable” (Panizza and Philip 2014:xvii). Thus crises intersect with the ‘background story’ of local institutional transformations and urban policymaking processes, where the articulation of rationalities, negotiation and translation of ideas into actual strategic or policy documents take place.

CRISES AND CRISIS NARRATIVES

Following the financial crisis of 2008, and the sovereign debt issues it unleashed across many North American and European cities, a number of geographers have written about the *urban* nature of such major episodes of crisis. In the course of a decade, a financial crisis has been transformed into a state crisis, and that state crisis has been transformed into an urban crisis. This argument is at the core of David Harvey’s work (2012), who observes that such a process has not been only at work but clearly exposed in cities like New York City, where neoliberal policies have long protected the risks and interests of investment banks and people have been forced to pay up through the restructuring of municipal contracts and services. According to Peck (2012), the downside and injustices of the transformations identified by Harvey are also evident in countless ordinary cities across the US, with many of them facing unprecedented budgetary pressure as well as limited opportunities for raising revenues and/or for restructuring municipal capacities.

For Peck (2012), devolved governance and downloaded responsibility have long been hallmarks of neoliberal regimes, but the economic conditions to which many American cities have been driven under austerity since 2008 have exacerbated such a phenomenon of ‘scalar dumping’. He argues that cities have been confronted with a succession of budgetary choices and notes that, although some of them have been able to muddle through by cutting corners and still provide a number of basic services, many cities have continued to experience fiscal restraint and service retrenchment and therefore have had to reconfigure their operational environment more permanently. Therefore, austerity is becoming a new urban condition in many parts of the US. Peck (2012), following the work of Harvey, also agrees that struggles over austerity and its alternatives exhibit an intensely urban form, as cities clearly become the battle grounds for both fiscal revanchism and progressive forms of counter-politics.

According to Harvey (2011:12) the *urban* nature of crisis is not a new phenomenon as

“urbanization has been a key means for the absorption of capital and labour surpluses throughout capitalism’s history [...] It has a very particular relation to the absorption of over-accumulating capital for very specific reasons that have to do with the long working periods, turnover times and the lifetimes of investments in the built environment. It also has a geographical specificity such that the production of space and of spatial monopolies becomes integral to the dynamics of accumulation [...] This activity is clearly speculative in the long term and always runs the risk of replicating, at a much later date and on a magnified scale, the very over-accumulation conditions that it initially helps relieve. Hence the crisis-prone character of urban and other forms of physical infrastructural investments”.

The consequences of crisis, then, have a very long term rhythm. Furthermore, as Harvey (2012) argues, urbanisation processes are not only geographically but also socially uneven. He claims that, in the US, this can be measured by looking at the distribution of the income streams of different segments of the working class. While the white working class has flourished, in relative terms, inner-city minorities and African-Americans in particular have not. Suburbanisation during the 1950s and the 1960s was not only a matter of new infrastructures, but entailed a new lifestyle in which the consumption of new products and services also helped to absorb the capital surplus in the post-war years. However, it also entailed the hollowing out of many city centres, which soon became the scene of the so-called “urban crisis”, defined by a number of inner-city uprisings and revolts across the US, and the assassination of activists such as Martin Luther King in 1968. After 2008, Harvey (2011:17) notes that “the assault on the well-being of the people is palpable and it is taking place for political and class reasons [...] The rapidly degrading qualities of urban life, through foreclosures, the persistence of predatory practices in urban housing markets, reductions in services and above all the lack of viable employment opportunities in urban labour markets almost everywhere [are all signs that] the crisis now is as much an urban crisis as it ever was”. In his book *Rebel Cities*, Harvey (2012:105) points out “from California to Greece, the 2008 crisis has produced losses in urban asset values, rights, and entitlements for the mass of the population, coupled with the extension of predatory capitalist power over low-income

and marginalised populations”. He concludes that urbanisation has clearly played a crucial role in the absorption of capital and has done so at increasing geographical scales, but at the price of processes of creative destruction and the dispossession of the urban masses of virtually any right to the city.

In order to expand our understanding of the urban nature and/or dimension of crises, the definition of crisis narratives adopted from Panizza and Philip (2014) is very important because it opens academic analyses to the interpretations, responses and theorisations of different actors. The analysis of urban crisis in this thesis begins with the conception of crisis as a flexible concept, open to local narratives and specificities, which then help us to explain the complex and diverse processes shaping changes in local government institutions and urban policy agendas. Local narratives are essential to understand both the origins of and the possible solutions to a crisis. As Hay (in Panizza and Philip 2014:7) points out, “those who are able to define what the crisis is all about also hold the key to defining the appropriate strategies for its resolution”. Narratives, then, shape reality in the sense that different actors with different interests, degrees of power, economic and political influence, will assess and interpret a particular critical situation differently and hence will compete with one another and sometimes struggle to impose their views. In turn, some of these views will be favoured and reflected upon the proposed institutional transformations and/or the urban policy agendas that will be adopted to solve the crisis.

The narratives accounted for in this thesis include the multiple interpretations and understandings of crisis of different local actors, their experiences at dealing with both the immediate and long term challenges of episodes of critical juncture. The narratives reflect some of the difficulties, pressures and uncertainties faced by municipal officials, politicians, business as well as social and community actors at times of rapid economic and political change. Appendix 01 provides an example of the interview schedule used for the collection of data concerning crisis. The interviewees were free to engage with the notion of crisis from their own perspective, personal experience and from both a general and an urban perspective. The analysis of their multiple answers not only considers the vulnerabilities and challenges exposed by a particular episode of crisis, but how their views and interpretations were translated into actions – whether political strategies, economic lobbying and/or social mobilisation – and how different narratives

of crisis might in fact coexist.

2.3 INSTITUTIONALISM

In the 1970s and 1980s neoclassical and Keynesian approaches to understanding the relationship of politics to economics became increasingly problematic and indefensible. Persistent economic crisis, high inflation and widespread unemployment across many advanced capitalist societies could not be explained by orthodox models built on rational individual action, mechanistic logics and deductive reasoning. Policy responses drawing on these forms of analysis and abstract models did not provide feasible solutions to reverse such adverse economic circumstances and decline. While their failure might have been unsurprising for scholars who had been insisting on the importance of accounting for the political, social, legal and even cultural institutions governing everyday life in the analysis of economic phenomena and the articulation of policy responses (see Coase 1998; Williamson 1975, 1998; and North 1990), monetary and fiscal policy decisions continued to be largely dominated by econometric models that dismissed their value. In this context, multiple theoretical projects aiming to advance alternatives to then dominant neoclassical views, to analyse ongoing structural changes, and to account for the persistence of crisis started to emerge. These intellectual efforts were important, not only because they advanced strong criticisms of orthodox economics and its associated modes of analysis but, more pragmatically, because they offered an alternative approach to understanding the decline of the Keynesian welfare system beyond the idea of market failure as well as a critical lens for the analysis of the neoliberal policies that began to emerge as a response to the economic downturn.

New institutionalism does not constitute a single and/or coherent body of theory, but comprises several streams of debate. According to Lowndes (1996), each social science discipline has its own new institutionalism and such a variety makes it hard to pinpoint what characterises the new concern with institutions. On its sociological wing, she notes, the new institutionalism investigates the role of institutional elements in defining values, norms, interests, identities and beliefs. On its rational choice, historical and sociological varieties, political scientists have expanded the empirical scope of their work since the 1990s – focusing on institutions of all sizes at the local, national and international levels and exploring the impact of long term social, economic and political

processes on distributions of power and/or policy outcomes across places (see Fioretos *et al* 2016). While these three versions of institutional analysis have areas of overlap, each of them offers a different approach and explanation to complex questions of the social and political worlds, particularly those concerning the origins, evolution, and consequences of humanly created institutions across time and space (*ibid*). Meanwhile, on the economics wing, the recognition that social and political structures could block and distort normal economic processes has become increasingly accepted over the last decades. Therefore, scholars such as North (1990), Coase (1998) and Williamson (1998) have insisted on the adoption of an interdisciplinary approach to economic problems, which draws on insights from sociology, politics and law. It is precisely such an open and multifaceted approach what makes New Institutional Economics (NIE) a highly suitable and productive analytical framework for this thesis.

NIE emerged as an interdisciplinary project that not only brought institutions back into economic debates, but aimed to answer new questions regarding the origin and nature of the institutions shaping economic and political life by uncovering specific analytical features concerning law and social organisation (see Arrow 1987 for a fuller discussion about the difference between older and newer institutionalist schools). Although NIE scholars have normally dealt with national institutions and how they might contribute to the formation and evolution of economic models and development paths in different ways (see Olson 1982; North 1990; Acemoglu and Robinson 2011), new institutional approaches have been increasingly used to study urban politics, urban resilience, and planning policies and practices (see Davies *et al* 2009; Lang 2008; Taylor 2013).

In general terms, this thesis is concerned with the study of the institutions of local government. More concretely, it examines local institutional transformations and urban policymaking processes in times of crisis from a comparative and historical perspective. This implies the exploration of a variety of structures and functions that constitute the formal institutions of local governments as well as alternative processes and dynamics that might be regarded as complementary and informal (e.g. political cultures, party alliances, clientelistic networks and so forth), but that together shape the environment where urban policy alternatives are devised, negotiated and decided upon. They require appropriate understanding of the history and evolution of the local government institutions considered as case studies, which have not only absorbed (or been delegated

with) an ever increasing number of responsibilities and functions over the last three decades but which have also undergone various episodes of crisis. The analytical emphasis of NIE on the history of economics and its commitment to explore the influence of sociopolitical factors in the origin and evolution of institutions make it a suitable approach to study some of the nuances behind economic, political and urban processes normally conceptualised within the canons of traditional political economy in urban studies. With these considerations in mind, and building on ideas introduced in the section on crisis, I would like to highlight some of the theoretical insights of new institutional economics in order to indicate how they might productively complement the comparative analytical base of the research agenda.

The term new institutional economics (NIE) was coined by Oliver Williamson in 1975 and aimed to advance a dynamic theory of change that, unlike neoclassical economic theory and associated orthodox models, could account for the evolutionary nature of processes shaping the relationships between markets, society and the state in everyday life. Its origins can be traced back to Ronald Coase's article *The Nature of the Firm* (1937). Indeed, many of its main concepts stem from earlier writings on the nature of the firm and, particularly, from the analysis of their internal structures – which brought into view the wider importance of the organisation of firms and a sharper focus on the strengths and weaknesses enabled by particular arrangements rather than on their productive or technological functions alone (which had been the conventional focus of neoclassical economics). Therefore, it is unsurprising that logics and ideas expressed in terms of efficiency, productivity, constraints and incentives are incorporated in the analysis of institutions and organisations beyond the firm, somewhat influencing and shaping conceptual ideas coming out of this approach as to how state organisations might be efficiently or optimally managed.

Nevertheless, the NIE movement has developed strongly beyond the study of the firm and the field of economics over the last few decades (Williamson 2000). It has articulated valuable ideas from disciplines such as law, political science, sociology and anthropology, which have not only helped us to rethink traditional economic questions regarding resource allocation or supply and demand but to formulate new questions and answers that together help us to advance our understanding of the welfare of human society and the institutions governing everyday economic, social and political relations.

Therefore, NIE provide a holistic and interdisciplinary approach for the research of urban crises, institutional transformations and urban policy outcomes, departing from the neoclassical assumptions that initially inspired it.

Although the dictionary defines ‘institution’ as an established law, custom or practice, and normally refers to an organisation founded for a religious, educational, economic, professional, political or social purpose, Lowndes (1996:182) notes that “institution is a slippery term because it is used to refer to social phenomena at many different levels – informal codes of behaviour, written contracts, even complex organisations. Institutions are ‘more’ than they appear – they are special procedures and practices”. For this reason, the various new institutionalism(s) reflect a common commitment to the significance of institutional arrangements and to the study of a number of assumptions that are not always explicitly specified. For Lowndes (1996), one of these core assumptions is the recognition that institutions have formal and informal aspects: “they involve formal rules or laws, but also informal norms and customs. Unlike formal institutions, informal institutions are not consciously designed nor neatly specified, but are part of habitual action”.

According to North (1990), formal rules are consciously designed and clearly specified – as in the case of constitutions and property rights (and/or urban planning regulation). Informal rules, on the other hand, are not specified in writing – they refer to routines, customs, traditions and conventions that are part of daily interactions. For North (1990), the most powerful institutional constraints are informal, overwhelmingly defined by codes of conduct, norms of behaviour and conventions rather than legislations and/or contracts that can be redrawn overnight. In this thesis, informal institutions refer to bureaucratic dynamics, public-private relationships, and intergovernmental interactions. The analysis provided in section 6.3, for instance, explores a number of unexpected similarities between the local institutional environments of Valencia and Mar del Plata that would have been impossible to identify if the focus of research had been restricted to the organisational structures, hierarchies and formal functions of the local/municipal administrations.

The holistic approach of the NIE to institutions, broadly understood as informal societal features (i.e. customs, norms, traditions and religion), formal rules (i.e. polity, judiciary,

laws and property rights) and modes of governance (organisational structures and/or networks subject to continuous negotiation), has been significantly important for the study of complex forms of organisation beyond firms as well as different processes of state restructuring, public policymaking and privatisation (see North and Weingast 1989; Levy and Spiller 1994; and Spiller and Tommasi 2007 for a variety of examples). As North (1990) notes, the consideration and study of both formal and informal rules, as well as their interaction, is essential to achieve a greater understanding of institutional change and/or institutions themselves.

Although the use of some economic approaches to study social, political or institutional phenomena might be deemed insufficient or inadequate by many social scientists, due to the high level of abstraction and lack of concern with reality observed in econometric models, there seems to be great analytical potential behind the research agenda advanced by the New Institutional Economics. There are several reasons to support this claim; I explore three here.

Firstly, unlike the abstract models of orthodox economic approaches, the NIE is concerned with reality and committed to the empirical analysis and comparative assessment of actual institutional settings. It also emphasises that policy analysis should be guided by comparative institutional analysis (Klein 2000). This means that real world market or welfare outcomes, for example, should not be compared with hypothetical benchmarks. In other words, rather than verified models, more attention should be given to alternative policy arrangements and organisational frameworks that despite presenting flaws might provide feasible solutions in practice (see Williamson 2000 for details on the ideas of the *remediableness criterion* and *superior feasible alternatives* in public policy). Indeed, the analytical implications of distancing from abstract situations and optimising models, normally associated with economic modes of interpretation, are significant – particularly as modelling often redirects policymakers' attention away from the main questions and issues to be addressed (Coase 1964, in Klein 2000:2). Accordingly, policymakers and analysts, for instance, might find it increasingly difficult to justify the reasons why they might support or reject particular policy projects or choices when presumably optimal yet hypothetical models are removed from the actual pragmatic options available through decision-making processes of institutions.

Secondly, NIE recognises several levels of social analysis that help us to better understand the multiplicity and complexity of factors shaping the structures, performance and outcomes of institutions (Williamson 2000). These levels of analysis not only acknowledge the existence and influence of formal rules – constitutions, laws, and property rights – on everyday life activities, but also the seemingly constraining (yet potentially productive) effect that informal institutions – social conventions, norms, customs, and traditions – can have on the everyday dynamics and performance of both private and public organisations, and more generally on the character and direction that economies and societies take in the longterm. According to North (1990), the challenge remains in understanding why informal institutions seem to have such a pervasive influence over longterm economic development which makes the task of understanding the mechanisms through which they arise, remain, change direction or disappear an important one. In analytical terms, scholars have increasingly started to acknowledge the implications of informal institutions in a wide variety of economic, social and political processes (Pejovich 1999; Lauth 2000; Helmke and Levitsky 2004; Williamson 2009). The recognition that political and social structures are able to distort, obstruct or hinder economic activities and the policies that foster them in the real world represents a significant departure from orthodox economic models.

Thirdly, NIE is concerned with institutional arrangements or what Williamson (1998) calls institutions of governance. This is an area from which insightful analytical features have emerged, opening up new windows for the study of the role of institutions in crafting order, mitigating conflict and realising mutual gains. Here, the notion of transaction-cost economics is very important. It helps us to explore the organisational logics and purposes served by institutions, beyond the typical transaction-cost economising functions normally examined in technical analyses of the firm. According to Klein (2000:13), “all but the simplest transactions require some kind of mechanism to protect the transacting parties from various hazards associated with exchange”. His statement not only applies to transactions within a given firm, but to a wide variety of incomplete transactions that are subject to complex contracts and multiple practical issues concerning law enforcement, future uncertainty and other hazards. This means that public-sector transactions, for instance, might be subject to hazards associated with particular weaknesses of the institutional environment in which they are performed. Conversely, some transactions might actually depend on such weaknesses. The

inclusion of transactions and governance structures in the research agenda of the NIE is both original and important. Analysing the institutions of governance helps us to focus on practical issues deriving from real world constraints and conflicts, which indeed interfere in the ability of public organisations (which are normally subject to the threat of conflicting relations) to accomplish pre-given goals.

The analytical insights offered by NIE, and the wider literature examining the role of institutions in processes of longterm economic development and growth across different countries (Acemoglu *et al* 2005; Acemoglu and Robinson 2012), can illuminate urban comparative research. The work of Torgler (2003), for instance, examines how different levels of credibility and stability across national institutions dealing with fiscal policy matters seem to affect the extent to which they are able to successfully implement (or not) measures aimed at improving their performance and functions – i.e. enforcing tax collection. His study of institutional features that are not determined by constitutional norms or law is important because credibility and stability are certainly not only desirable for institutions dealing with fiscal policy, but also for local government institutions that might seek to gain consensual agreement between multiple social and/or business groups in order to pursue particular planning strategies, for example (see Bocker 2005). Furthermore, Torgler's work suggests that it is only through comparisons that the role of less formal institutional features in shaping different outcomes across places might become visible and therefore constitute new grounds for analytical inquiry.

As Chudnovsky and Lopez (2007:13) note, “the rediscovery of institutions by economists, and the efforts made to analyse their influence on growth and development, and to face the challenge of implementing the institutional reforms required for developing countries is certainly good news”. This observation is particularly important, because despite suggesting that institutional reforms might be a challenging yet necessary requirement for developing countries alone, remaking institutions in order to advance policy interventions aimed at dealing with crisis, promoting growth and/or attracting investment might be equally challenging in developed countries too (Fourcades-Gourinchas and Babb 2002; French and Leyshon 2010). The point I would like to make here is that institutions, understood as a complex set of formal and informal rules that structure human interaction (North 1990), play a key role in the economic and political life of cities since they might or might not foster coordination

and cooperation among local actors, and (mis)shape the incentives structure faced by those agents (Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007:13) – whether we look at developed or developing countries/cities (Vasquez Gonzalez 2013). Institutions, then, are central to explaining urban development policies.

Insights from wider economic development literature and NIE, therefore, seem to support a research agenda that advocates both more attention to institutions and more comparative work in urban studies. Firstly, they underscore the importance of recognising and understanding the role of institutions in the analysis of processes of economic growth, of responses to crisis, of policymaking and more generally too. Therefore, we should take more seriously and explore more thoroughly the implications and unrealised potential of incorporating institutional-related variables in economic, social and political research – perhaps in the form of *comparators* e.g. formal/informal relations in institutions could form the ground for comparative urban research (see Robinson 2014). Secondly, although economic development literature seeks to explain growth at the national level, the same approach could be helpfully adopted to study institutional variables at the subnational level and their role in explaining different local experiences/outcomes in terms of economic performance and visioning, political transformation, urban crisis and related policymaking processes – focusing on formal/informal institutions, local governments, and local economic policies and strategies, for example. More generally, comparing the role of institutional-related variables in shaping urban policy interventions, planning strategies and/or responses to crisis across cities from the global North and South, will help us to research and better understand the formal/informal structures and dynamics shaping policy visions, policy outputs and interventions across cities (see Spiller and Tommasi (2007) for detailed discussion of policymaking environments; and Lember *et al* (2011) for a study on strategies of public procurement for urban policy innovation).

Finally, considering the themes and the case studies framing this research project, what could urban scholars take from NIE to understand the different experiences of local governments dealing with political transformations and economic crisis, and the multiplicity of policies and strategies they might formulate and implement during such periods of intense change? In line with the ideas advanced above, researchers might be able to identify and explain changes in a wider set of processes and/or functions that

shape city governments responses to moments of crisis – e.g. temporary and yet rapid changes in formal duties and routines; or prioritising certain interventions – which might go beyond those established in regulations, laws and constitutions but which might be essential to dealing with pressing urban issues more effectively. Thus, scholars could learn from comparing the role and assessing the importance of informal practices, mechanisms, and tools that are not necessarily written as part of formal institutions but form part of social norms and conventions of specific contexts and cultures. Moreover, these practices equally shape formal structures and subsequently influence the decisions and actions of actors who perform in/around them. Indeed, the comparison of formal/informal institutional-related processes between the local governments of Valencia and Mar del Plata help to explain some of the qualitative variations in urban policy responses and strategies adopted in these two cities to address both the needs of local populations and broader strategic issues that became more visible in times of crisis.

2.4 URBAN GOVERNANCE

Influential literature in urban governance and important reference points of analysis in wider urban debates have been produced by comparing aspects of urban politics across Western cities – mainly from North America and Europe (Stoker and Mossberger 1994; Kantor et al 1997; Keil 2000; Denters and Mossberger 2006; Theodore and Peck 2011). This tradition has not only produced but also consolidated the status of conceptual ideas such as urban regimes, neoliberal governance, neoliberal urbanism and urban regulation that have travelled beyond their sites of inspiration and become somewhat hegemonic in urban analyses at a world scale, although with little attention to the experience of urban governments beyond the North (see Brenner *et al* 2010; Veron 2010; Peck 2011; Guarneros-Meza and Geddes 2010; Tomaney et al 2010; Geddes 2014 for a variety of examples).

Although research dealing with local government dynamics and transformations has traditionally considered a limited number and, after several studies, somewhat familiar cases from the global North, it has remained largely unchallenged and therefore able to continuously shape major social, economic and political urban debates. In this respect, McFarlane and Robinson (2012) observe that as researchers have only compared most

similar cities, a kind of methodological orthodoxy has consolidated in the field of comparative urbanism. Unfortunately, urban research in the global South has not had the same privilege. On the contrary, it has remained somewhat isolated, meaning that similar transformative processes, features, challenges and issues at the local government level have not illuminated global urban debates (certainly, not as much as the northern experiences) and have instead remained at the margin of western-centric theory. The diverse experiences of the South have normally been studied through developmental approaches and seen as ‘peculiar’ instances of processes defined by empirical and theoretical trends derived from the North (Robinson 2006). This is not to say that mainstream urban governance literature is unimportant – indeed it has contributed to the development and advancement of urban studies in several ways and continues to provide new insights for further research. However, before continuing to produce knowledge by following the same western-centric approach, it is suggested here that it would be useful to reflect and take more seriously the implications and potential of incorporating multiple experiences of urban governments from a wider range of locations, particularly from the global South.

Governance is a complex notion that not only refers to political units exercising authority in cities or regions, but also refers to the manner of governing and the processes, mechanisms and actions through which those units effect public administration. Pierre (2005) understands governance from three different perspectives – as theory, as a normative model and as an empirical object of study. From his theoretical position, governance constitutes an analytical framework, more than a concept *per se*, which helps to identify aspects of urban politics that are worthy of study by looking beyond the formal institutional structure of local governments and states. In other words, concentrating on the deconstruction and examination of the different processes and mechanisms through which social, economic and political objectives are met at the urban level. The idea of such an analytical framework to guide the study of urban politics is indeed most useful, and has inspired work in other contexts beyond those where original conceptualisations were conceived (Diaz Orueta 2010). In addition, it opens up the possibility to consider, for example, a mixture of formal/informal features that are normally intertwined within government organisations and which shape the relationships amongst the broad array of actors considered in a governance framework, and which might not be easily visible at first sight (North 1990; Williamson

2009). Nevertheless, even such a wide ranging framework might not escape the parochial foundations of its concepts, ideas, approaches and/or theoretical ambitions. For example, it might serve as a normative measuring stick to explore and conceptualise similarities and differences across non-western contexts in relation to ‘models’ and experiences of urban governance derived from specific cases, largely in the North.

In regards to the idea of governance as a normative model, Pierre (2005) understands governance as a political strategy of resource mobilization in itself, where public and private sectors work together in order to achieve collectively defined goals. The normative model interpretation provides a more tangible and pragmatic definition of urban governance. This perspective has inspired valuable work concerning local government coalitions and how different kinds of political alliances emerge to take forward particular agendas. Pierre’s own argument, for instance, derives from a model that emerged in the UK in the 1980s whereby the central government encouraged public-private cooperation at the local level and according to which corporate actors were expected to play a more prominent role in the provision of public services. In the US, researchers on local economic development and urban politics have also considered the normative implications of governance for several decades (see Cox and Mair 1988; Stoker and Mossberger 1994; and Kilburn 2004).

Cox and Mair’s (1988) study on the politics of local economic restructuring across US cities in the 1980s, for instance, is mainly focused on the emergence of business coalitions and their tactics to harness the power of local governments, to ward off opposition to their plans and to compete with other localities. Their analysis is certainly helpful to understanding the role of *capitalist* firms at stimulating investment in a context of intense economic transformation, but fails to account for the diversity of local actors and the complexity of the institutional processes that take place alongside economic change. Stoker and Mossberger (1994) identified the limitations of the empirical scope of research dealing with the politics of urban economic change in the US at the time and the need to draw analytical parallels not only between cities within the same country but also across borders. As a result, they proposed a theoretical framework to understanding ongoing processes of global change and which encouraged comparative urban investigation. However, their work is exclusively built on insights of regime theory that, although they claim to have ‘cleansed’ of ethnocentric assumptions

and therefore suitable for cross-national comparisons, retain key tenets and components inspired by the experience and conditions of North American cities. Unsurprisingly, this literature is heavily focused on US-style actors and government models, where the bargaining power of the local state vis-a-vis the private sector is almost exclusive to the context and therefore, as Kantor and Savitch (2005) note, debates are of limited relevance to understandings of urban governance in Western European cities. While the public-private actors identified by Cox and Mair and the typology of urban regimes offered by Stoker and Mossberger might both be useful to explore aspects of local economic change in different places, this thesis will argue that their analytical approach is too narrow to understand (or even account for) the variety of actors as well as the complexity of urban politics and processes of local institutional transformation observed in cities such as Valencia and Mar del Plata, whether we look back at the 1980s or the 2000s.

Finally, for Pierre (2005), governance also constitutes an empirical object of study, a political phenomenon that results from particular institutional interactions in a given urban setting and which therefore must be compared with other urban models and experiences in order to understand the different social and economic forces that shape them. Why do more informal “governance” arrangements emerge in some cases and more hierarchical or state-led institutional arrangements in others? I consider this perspective the most appealing and the most suitable to advance an urban comparative agenda that is attentive to a wider range of urban experiences. Furthermore, this approach seems to support experimental yet rigorous comparisons that although they might begin with seemingly contrasting and disconnected places, might generate important shared analytical insights in relation to a diversity of local processes of institutional transformation or policymaking. This kind of work is perhaps best represented by Salskov-Iversen *et al* (2000) in their original study of governmentality, globalisation and local practice in two municipalities across the global North and South: Newham (UK) and Tijuana (Mexico), in which they examine how two municipalities with contrasting socioeconomic and political characteristics introduced core elements of New Public Management – each of them resorting to different tactics and mechanisms of translation and implementation.

Indeed, departing from the empirical, from specific cities – whether related to particular

aspects of urban governance or otherwise – might allow us to address some of the limitations of the theoretical and/or normative perspectives that traditionally dominate urban studies, representing the narrow experience of a limited and familiar group of case studies from the West and disregarding wider experiences from the South. This does not mean that beginning with empirical observation requires the rejection of or opposition to Pierre's theoretical and normative perspectives. It means that by approaching the cases and experiences to be compared in more exploratory ways, traditional conceptual ideas and projects such as those proposed by Savitch and Kantor (2002), Kilburn (2004) or Denters and Mossberger (2006) could be complemented, extended and/or enriched in new ways. Here recent initiatives to widen the scope of urban theory are relevant.

At the turn of the 21st century, urban knowledge appeared dominated by views and ideas from the North despite important changes in world urbanisation trends, particularly in the global South. The shortcomings of this tradition of knowledge production in urban studies have been identified and discussed by scholars in the field. Robinson (2011b), for example, observes that over the last decades urban researchers have compared cities from dualistic perspectives that result in analytical divides between wealthier and poorer cities. This kind of approach is problematic. It does not only strengthen categorisations that classify the multiple experience of many cities around the world into limited binaries such as capitalist and socialist, developed and developing and so forth, but also portrays their diverse experiences as exceptional or *exotic* urban instances. Furthermore, McFarlane (2010) emphasises the need for comparisons that stretch across the North-South divide, which could both support understandings of a wider range of urban experiences and inspire new debates that could subsequently inform urban theory in an era of rapid changes in world urbanisation.

Accordingly, comparative urbanism might not be thought of only as a set of research methods but as a way of thinking cities and the urban more generally. As Nijman (2007) puts it, comparative urbanism aims to develop understandings and knowledge across different cities by examining their similarities and differences over varying time periods and through the systematic description and explanation of social, economic and political urban processes taking place in them. With this in mind, in the following section I bring together contributions from a number of scholars dealing with urban comparisons to

highlight how a mixture of traditional and emerging research strategies and approaches to the study of cities might help us both to contribute to urban theory as well as to better understand the diverse institutions of local governments across the global North and South, their organisational changes, policymaking dynamics, and policy strategies in times of crisis.

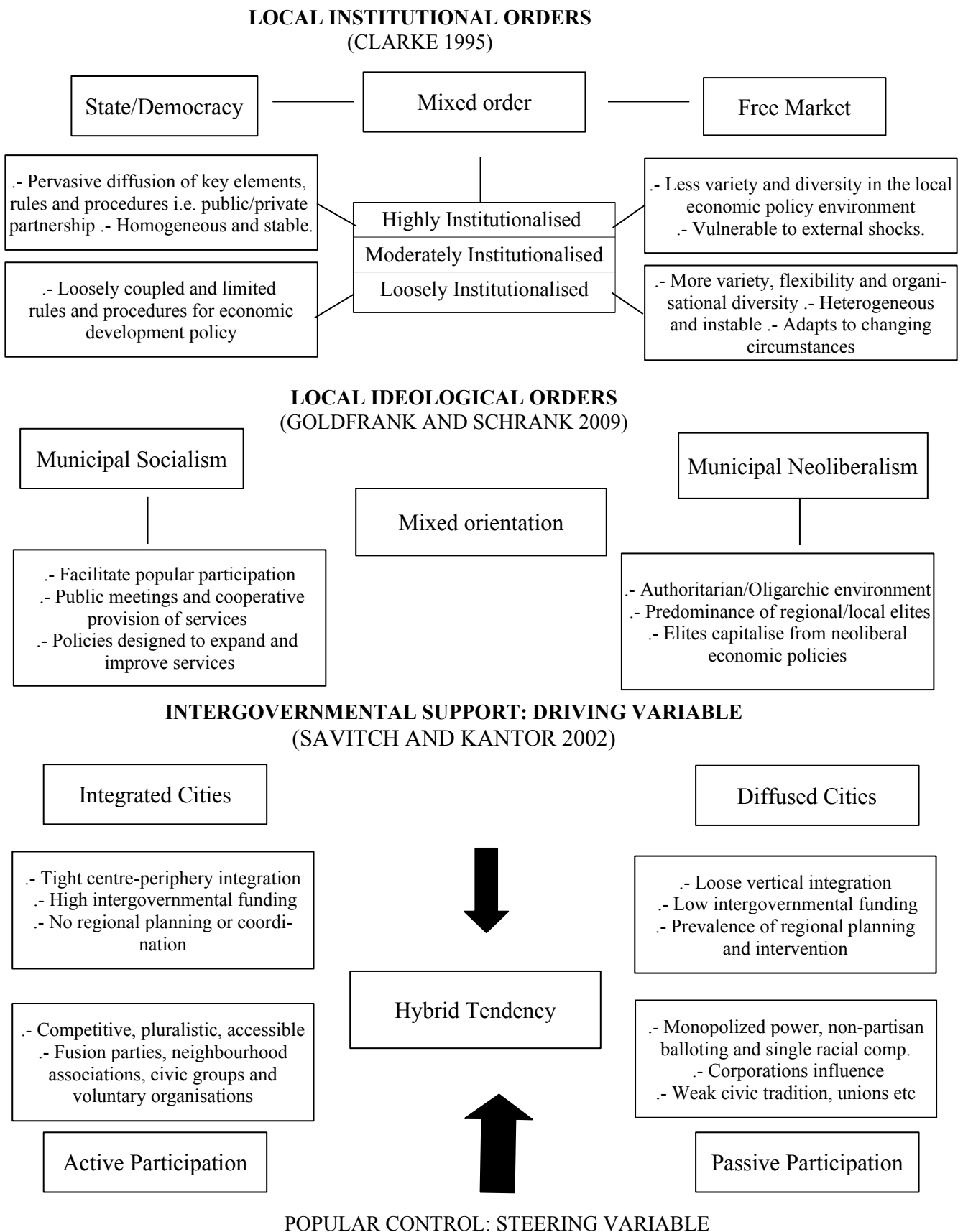
Examining municipal government transformations and urban policy-making processes in times of crisis across Valencia and Mar del Plata will help us to understand the extent to which the formal/informal institutional features of local government organisations have changed over time – after three decades of democratisation and decentralisation as well as other major changes internationally. We will also be able to consider whether these processes are actually so differentiated between contexts that are normally separated by the North-South analytical divide. In turn, this comparison might not only generate insights that are restricted to Valencia or Mar del Plata but could contribute to the study of urban crises and prove of relevance to a wider urban governance literature.

2.5 COMPARATIVE URBANISM

In order to contextualise more recent work in comparative urbanism, which is often characterised by sophisticated, experimental and provocative approaches, it is important to briefly refer to the limitations of traditional currents of comparative research that have significantly shaped urban studies. Indeed, a considerable amount of comparative work in the discipline derives from research in urban politics and urban governance (Stoker and Mossberger 1994; Kantor et al 1997; Keil 2000; Savitch and Kantor 2002; Denters and Mossberger 2006; Theodore and Peck 2011). This literature has contributed to the consolidation of both methodological and conceptual frameworks that mainly reflect the urban experience of Western cities. Figure 01 synthesises the comparative work of some scholars who have explored and analysed different experiences of urban governance across the US, Europe and Latin America over the last few decades.

The empirical and analytical units shown in the diagram have served a wide variety of comparative projects, some of which have become iconic in urban studies. Savitch and Kantor's (2002) rather detailed analysis of ten different cities across the US and Europe is most helpful to understand the challenges faced by cities with different capacities to

Figure 01. Comparative work by Clarke (1995), Savitch and Kantor (2002), Goldfrank and Schrank (2009)



deal with industrial decline and the local effects of globalisation processes. They emphasise that political action matters, and that cities have choices and are not powerless to respond to national or international forces. For them, local policy choices are shaped by multiple variables, including market conditions and a number of driving and steering variables that are specific to each city. Clarke's (1995) study of economic development across eight American cities illuminates debates regarding urban regimes and governing coalitions by looking at the shifting nature of market-based and state-led institutional logics in economic policymaking processes and policies themselves. Her analysis of change in local political arrangements in the 1990s addresses some of the shortcomings of regime theory, particularly in regards to the importance of accounting for the diversity of local institutional settings in which economic development decisions are made. Mapping the institutional terrain of eight US cities, she finds that market-based institutional orders are not as pervasive as it is normally thought and, in fact, state-led institutional orders persist in many cities with strong citizen organisational networks and decentralised political structures.

Goldfrank and Schrank's (2009) exploration of urban policy regimes across several Latin American cities traces and shows how municipalities have engaged in experiments in social and economic policies that anticipate, react to and/or resist national policy agendas. They deploy the concepts of municipal neoliberalism and municipal socialism in an effort to comprehend the origin and current developments of urban policy regimes of different cities across the region. The proliferation of both Free Trade Zones and participatory budgeting (which they identify as the archetypical institutions of neoliberal and socialist urban regimes, respectively) throughout the region, they observe, seems to be contributing to the rise of a range of urban policy hybrids that challenge conventional ideological approaches to local politics and seek to overcome the shortcomings of each strategy when pursued in isolation. Certainly, these scholars have developed useful comparative strategies and frameworks to understand both urban governance and local economic development. Clarke's line of analysis considers a contrast between state-centred and market-centred approaches in urban governance, for example, while the analysis of Goldfrank and Schrank suggest that cities often display a mixture of institutional logics and might change from one policy direction to another over time. Goldfrank and Schrank also remind us that universalist concepts founded in political economy, such as neoliberalism, can be put to work

beyond the North in imaginative and creative ways. However, such an approach has also proven to reinforce orthodox comparative methods. Indeed, focusing on such widely articulating concepts might disrupt the discovery and conceptualisation of new shared features or differences that are somewhat specific to Latin American cities and, in turn, curtail the possibility of conceptual innovation from the South.

There are of course multiple ways of comparing political structures, actors, processes and events across different cities but concentrating resources and efforts in the analysis of cases from the global North has hardly helped to uncover the full range of processes of urban governance and has contained attempts to move towards a truly international discipline. As Robinson (2006) reminds us through her postcolonial critique of urban studies, comparisons not only allow us to review influential urban research by revisiting, interrogating, and building on some of the theoretical claims presented in the last century, but to explore new ways of understanding cities without the influence of predetermined methods and concepts. Indeed, the rigour of traditional comparative research has inspired numerous projects that have not only challenged the assumptions sustaining orthodox comparative methods once their limitations outside the North become visible but also contributed to a more international urban research agenda through which new theoretical insights could be generated (McFarlane and Robinson 2012).

In this regard, the comparison of Valencia and Mar del Plata, and their experiences at dealing with multiple episodes of crisis over the last decades, certainly provide us with a rich empirical base for the exploration and analysis of different aspects of urban governance and, indeed, the opportunity to fill some of the gaps in the literature discussed above. The detailed examination of different urban actors in Chapter 6, for example, not only brings into view a wider range of local actors beyond the business coalitions that characterise the private sector in regime theory, but also sheds light on the diversity of local political and social interests at play and the ability of different groups to engage in processes of local institutional transformation and urban policymaking. Similarly, Chapter 7 brings out the importance of both intergovernmental relations and the institutional agility of local political leaders to navigate federal systems of government over time, both of which are often underplayed in urban governance literature and mainly studied through formal programmes of cooperation

between national and local governments or analysed through schemas that set out institutional configurations and policy differences across places, but that obscure changes within cities over time.

Comparative urbanism entails a variety of research approaches and methods that serve different purposes according to the interest of researchers in specific aspects of urban life, typically urban economic development and local politics. For these reasons, authors dealing with urban governance often emphasise the importance of carefully establishing what aspects of urban politics are worth comparing according to the contexts studied, the theories informing the analysis and the overall research aims (Kantor and Savitch 2005; Denters and Mossberger 2006). In this regard, defining the ‘case’ is important and entails establishing the rationale for comparing the cases and/or the variables in question as well as rethinking the meaning of the case itself. Certainly, outlining the reasons for comparing two or more cases is essential to enhance coherence and rigour throughout the research process. I do this in the next chapter. Furthermore, according to Pierre (2005), attention to different aspects of urban life as the basis for comparison might help us to understand particular urban phenomena to different extents and detail. For example, focusing on aspects of urban political transformation over time can help us to understand how different models of governance emerge and change (DiGaetano and Lawless 1999); and focusing on decision-making processes can help us to understand the different roles of economic and political actors in different places (Clarke 1995).

In order to attend to the increasingly diverse characteristics and locations of contemporary world urbanisation, there has been a resurgence of comparative research in urban studies (McFarlane 2010; Robinson 2011b; Ward 2010; McFarlane and Robinson 2012). This new wave of comparative work deals with a mixture of debates concerning theoretical, methodological and empirical issues and calls for a reformulated approach through which not only western-centric assumptions are challenged but through which more efforts are made to bring together into analytical scrutiny cases that are seemingly different and unrelated. Jacobs (2012:907), for example, elaborates on the potential of considering “difference and its revisionist power” in comparative urbanism by advancing the idea of the ‘third part’ of comparison – or patterns that might help us to understand connections between empirical cases – and reviewing her extensive experience in experimental comparative research. McFarlane and Robinson (2012) reflect on the traditional practice of comparing most-similar cases and point out how

unexamined assumptions about differences between wealthier and poorer cities have disrupted the possibility of discovering a third term of connection across particular differences. Furthermore, they advocate for a series of experiments in comparative research that “press toward generative theoretical insights on contemporary urbanism” by signposting some of the ways – whether tracing connections, exploring replications and repetitions or comparing different processes and outcomes – through which diverse urban experiences might be brought together into analytical relationship and subsequently contribute to renewed understandings of cities (McFarlane and Robinson 2012:768; see special issue in *Urban Geography* 2012:3).

In addition to comparative urbanism, there are other initiatives that seek to construct the basis for a more global urbanism. Planetary urbanisation (Brenner 2013), for example, according to which cities become irrelevant units of analysis and instead multiple processes that stretch beyond the physical limits of urban settlements taking place literary everywhere – ‘extended’ urbanisation – become the main subject of analytical inquiry. Although this approach is both provocative and inspiring for challenging hierarchies and concepts that derive from traditional urban studies, it overlooks one important actor participating in many urban processes virtually everywhere, the state. The local state, for instance, remains an important jurisdictional entity, administrative body and legal arbitrator despite the limitations it might present due to particular intergovernmental arrangements. After decades of decentralisation and devolution in many countries around the world (Rodriguez-Pose and Gill 2003; Rodriguez-Pose and Kroijer 2009), local states have become increasingly important actors in the life of cities and therefore deserve recognition in global urban debates. Furthermore, as Robinson (2014) points out, if planetary urbanisation aims to contribute to a more global urban studies, it must confront the challenge of disclosing the locatedness of its inspirations more explicitly rather than continue formulating planetary views from nowhere; difference needs to be accounted for, even across instances of extended urbanisation.

In order to disclose the locatedness of theoretical inspirations, we therefore need to reconsider the importance of the case study. According to Robinson (2014), the case study represents one of the most useful comparative tactics in urban research which whether understood as a city, wider urban processes or specific urban phenomenon is well suited to support a more global urban studies. She identifies three practical tactics

through which case studies can be re-imagined and put to work more creatively and productively for: “*composing* bespoke comparisons across diverse outcomes or repeated instances, *tracing* connections amongst cities to inform understandings of different outcomes [...], and *launching* distinctive analyses from specific urban contexts or regions into wider conversations” (Robinson 2014:19). These techniques for (re)thinking and (re)formatting comparative urban research might not be read as attempts to break with traditional comparative strategies but as complementary and necessary steps to reformulate comparative approaches that would allow us to advance our understandings of increasingly multiple and diverse urban global experiences.

My comparative project here is concerned with processes of local institutional transformation and urban policymaking in times of crisis. However, it does not aim to establish comparability on the basis of conventional empirical variables such as government structures and/or functions *per se* – nor on the basis of formal institutions of governing. Instead, it considers the interests, interactions, relationships, and negotiations between multiple actors, organisations and institutions involved in the process of identifying and responding to everyday urban issues as the basis for a comparison. This implies close attention to the mechanisms and procedures through which local governments – as devolved institutions to which local citizens sometimes have relatively direct access – deal with a wide range of permanent and periodic issues concerning service provision and infrastructure in contexts of socioeconomic crisis. In order to examine some of the different and shared experiences of the local and national contexts considered in this research, which are outlined in the next two chapters, both rigour and creativity are required – for which a combination of traditional ideas and experimental approaches from comparative urbanism seems to be well suited. Having said this, we could think of comparison of Valencia and Mar del Plata as an experimental project to identify and compose comparisons based on new variables – in the form of *comparators* as suggested by Robinson (2014) following Jacob’s (2012) observation of the *tertium comparationis* – in order to design a framework that would allow us to foster dialogue and conceptual conversations across a wider range of cities: whether from the global North or South, richer or poorer, with different kinds of government regimes or levels of industrialisation. Attention to the formal/informal configuration of local government institutions and to aspects of local political cultures or clientelistic networks (Agranoff 2010; Hall et al 1990), for example, in the

comparative study of local institutional transformations and urban policymaking processes in times of crisis would allow us to (re)consider aspects of local states that have remained somewhat unexamined in mainstream urban studies.

Thinking comparatively about urban governance – as would be required in considering the cases of Valencia and Mar del Plata together – is part of an exploratory process that should not be restricted to but also not disconnected from ideas and concepts that have traditionally dominated urban studies. Accordingly, thinking cities and the urban through a comparative imagination should be read as an opening to reframe current theories through attempts to resist, stretch or provoke predetermined conceptualisations by seeking alternative, less familiar sources of inspiration. Beginning with the empirical forms of governance, as suggested by Pierre (2005), and their role in processes of formulating and implementing urban agendas – whether policy responses to crisis or long term urban planning strategies – (in a variety of different contexts) seems to offer a rich ground for new analytical inquiry.

2.6 CONCLUSION

It has been established that a single conceptualisation of crisis will not be suitable for a comparative research agenda that seeks to bring into view and into analytical conversation diverse experiences from different cities. However, existing contributions from wider literature on crisis have been helpful. The regulationist approach (Dunford 1990), for instance, has reminded us that crises have different meanings and implications, even within a political economy framework. Indeed, whether cyclical or structural, each crisis entails different processes and characteristics that are specific to time and space. Nevertheless, we have also noted that regulationist analyses are mainly concerned with the recurrent crises of capitalism, changes in regimes of accumulation, the relationship between social stability and economic growth, and social conflict and struggles when instability appears. As we will see in Chapters 5 and 7, crises are not always lined up with or even associated with crises of capitalism directly. In fact, municipalities in both Valencia and Mar del Plata have been occupied with crises derived from a mixture of rapid demographic growth, insufficient planning regulation, public disinvestment, authoritarian regimes, political and institutional chaos and so forth. Therefore, following crises as an empirical phenomenon will help us to recognise

particular institutional and urban policy responses beyond economics that emerge in times of uncertainty and instability and, most importantly, to gain a more nuanced understanding of how they are negotiated and decided upon – considering the structures, processes and actors involved in their making.

Inspired by recent work on the multiple dimensions of financial crises and the multiple implications of different ways of narrating crises (Panizza and Philip 2014), Chapters 5 and 6 examine a number of narratives, actors and interests that are fundamental to understand the experience of Valencia and Mar del Plata at dealing crisis. Certainly, “crises” involve a much wider range of challenges beyond economics and open up opportunities to pursue changes concerning the organisation of the state, the local capacity for urban policymaking, the articulation of socio-political sectors, the participation of diverse social groups, the allocation of resources and so forth. Narratives are essential to understand the non-economic dimension of crises, how they emerge at the urban level and their consequences, and allow us to challenge macroeconomic analyses that overlook the conditions in which important economic and political transformations occur at the local level, which in turn could illuminate wider debates concerning urban governance. Narratives of crisis are important because they open analyses to local interpretations, responses and theorisations of different actors and provide evidence to build locally specific analyses of urban crisis that would help us both to expand the concept and to explain the complex and diverse processes shaping local institutional and urban change.

New Institutional Economics provided us with analytical insights and an alternative framework for the study of actors and processes shaping institutional and urban policy responses to crisis. NIE will help us to explore the intersection between crises and the ‘background story’ of local institutional transformations and urban policymaking processes in Chapters 7 and 8; where the translation and articulation of ideas into actual organisational changes, administrative reforms, and strategic policy agendas and shifts take place. Institutions, understood as a complex set of formal and informal rules that structure human interaction (North 1990), play a key role in the economic and political life of cities since they might or might not foster coordination and cooperation among local actors and/or (mis)shape the incentives structure faced by those agents (Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007). Chapter 7 and 8 analyse local institutional and urban

policy responses to crises introduced by the governments of Valencia and Mar del Plata over the last three decades and bring into view a mixture of informal and intergovernmental institutional features that are not only essential to understand the multi-scalar nature of crisis but also to explain some of the qualitative variations in the economic, social and political processes that shape local responses and strategies – which might be more visible in times of crisis. Although these approaches do attend to informal networks and political cultures, as we will see, urban scholars have much to learn from NIE in assessing the importance of informal arrangements, practices, and mechanisms that are not necessarily written as part of formal institutions but form part of specific contexts and institutional cultures.

Finally, a review of urban governance literature has brought into view a number of methodological and conceptual shortcomings in analyses informed by the experience of a limited number of cities from the global North. Although many of these studies have certainly helped us to understand urban politics and processes of economic transformation across Western cities over the last few decades, they have failed to provide us with theoretical frameworks that support cross-national comparisons, not even between North American and European cities (Kantor and Savitch 2005). Evidence from both Valencia and Mar del Plata will not only bring into view new nuances about local economic, political and social actors, their (inter)actions and/or their ability to engage in and shape processes of local institutional transformation and urban policymaking in times of crisis, but help us to revise existing conceptualisations of normative models of governance (based on the emergence of business coalitions and their tactics to harness the power of local governments) and to challenge the tenets of regime theory that have dominated urban governance for decades. Lastly, the comparison of urban policy responses to crisis, and strategic shifts in urban policy over the last three decades, across the two study cases in Chapter 8, will help us to stretch contemporary approaches to comparative urbanism (represented in Figure 01) and contribute to experimental comparisons and conceptual innovation building on experiences from cities across the North-South divide.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY – COMPOSING COMPARISONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with methodological concerns. The following section outlines the research aim and objectives. It argues that the three main objectives are strongly intertwined and thus might be thought of together rather than one at a time. The third section outlines the comparability of the two cities. Although Valencia and Mar del Plata might be conventionally deemed incommensurable in the terms of mainstream urban studies, a combination of local specificities and shared experiences between the two provide us with good empirical grounds to think across them as well as to engage with and contribute to wider analytical conversations concerning urban governance, policymaking processes and crises, in a creative and experimental manner. The fourth section deals with research methods and outlines the rationale behind the selection of the case studies, the specific empirical focus and the process of composing the comparison. The last two sections provide a detailed account of the processes of data collection and data analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This research seeks to analyse how episodes of crisis have shaped institutional transformations and urban policy innovations across Valencia and Mar del Plata over the last three decades. In an effort to promote a more global approach to urban studies in the twenty-first century and to contribute to wider urban literature dealing with economic crises and institutional transformations at the local level, the study evaluates the potential for urban comparisons across the global North and South. Specifically, the research aims to bring into analytical scrutiny and conversation a mixture of formal and informal features that form part of the local institutional environment of each city with the aim of offering a nuanced understanding of how local governments deal with economic, social and political urban issues in times of crisis. In broad terms, the research addresses the following question:

How do episodes of crisis shape institutional transformations and urban policy innovations in the longterm development trajectory of cities?

Empirically, the research involves the study of the urban dimension of crises, local institutional transformations and urban policymaking processes. This means the examination of changes within municipal institutions and the content and/or direction of urban strategic agendas in response to episodes of crisis as well as the different actors responsible for them. Theoretically, the project engages with urban research that cuts across cities from the global North and South by exploiting the potential of comparative urbanism to stretch conventional approaches, methods and concepts from urban theory. More broadly, the work draws inspiration from the insights of institutionalism. The combination of elements of NIE and comparative urbanism can help us to revise and uncover aspects of urban crises, urban governance, and local policymaking processes that have remained relatively unexamined in urban studies. For example, it might help us to explore the importance of personal connections across the local and intergovernmental institutional circuits in which policy alternatives are considered and decisions are made (Agranoff 2010); or to bring out a wider range of municipal tactics to secure sufficient funds and to address routine and periodic urban issues through different policy interventions.

In line with the overall aim, and reflecting my research interests and motivations, three objectives have guided and helped to structure the research process. They also provided a thematic base for the design of the different interview schedules that supported data collection (see Appendix 01).

3. To examine the meanings of urban crisis through exploring local experiences, interpretations and narratives

This objective entails questions such as how are major episodes of crisis experienced, interpreted and narrated at the local level? What are the implications for different socioeconomic sectors? To what extent do crises affect the local institutional environment in which urban policy decisions are made? How are conventional channels of social participation and mobilisation reconfigured in times of crisis? What are the immediate and longterm consequences? Are crises a temporary or a permanent local feature?

4. To analyse the institutional implications of political crises, including processes of decentralisation as well as the actions of the multiple actors that form part of the local institutional environment and culture

In addition to economic crises, what other critical situations have influenced local institutional transformations? How have institutional structures and dynamics been affected in times of political tension and uncertainty? Who are the main local actors? How have they influenced institutional and urban decisions? What alternatives have arisen, in terms of alliances, re-configurations of traditional forms of association, directions of government strategies, re-balancing of ideological orientations? What have been the challenges of decentralisation? What are the reasons behind local political leaders and municipal officials to support the institutional and urban strategies they do?

5. To assess the longterm impact of episodes of crisis on urban policymaking processes and the urban strategic agendas implemented in Valencia and Mar del Plata since the 1980s

This objective deals with questions such as what are the urban consequences of episodes of crisis? How are they reflected in the content of urban policies, strategies or other forms of intervention? To what extent are narratives of crisis used to justify new policy approaches? What opportunities do crises open up for policy innovation? How do longterm strategic responses to crisis develop over time? Who are the main actors responsible for their formulation and implementation? What are the sources of inspiration and finance for urban policy responses to crisis? What role do supranational organisations and transnational actors play in this?

These three objectives are strongly intertwined and thus might be thought of together rather than one at a time. They require a detailed examination and understanding of multiple actors, structures and processes that are not restricted to the jurisdiction of the municipalities of Valencia and Mar del Plata but extend beyond them. In order to approach each objective, and to address the relevant set of questions in each case, it is important to understand major episodes of crisis in the recent economic and political history of Spain and Argentina as well as the local implications of institutional change, including democratisation and decentralisation. Providing a chronological and thorough

account of some of the main events that unfolded at the national level as well as their institutional and urban implications at the local level is a methodologically fundamental step to establish relevant lines of comparability, differences, periodisations and so forth (see chapter 4). It was also necessary in order to identify substantive features, issues and key aspects of institutional dynamics in each local context to inform the empirical study.

The rich institutional transformations and urban policy innovations observed in each city over the last three decades in response to crises provide us with suitable cases for analytical comparison and with a fertile ground for conceptual innovation. They allow us, for instance, to explore a number of informal institutional features and to incorporate into the analysis aspects of internal municipal and bureaucratic dynamics, public-private relationships and intergovernmental interactions that, although less formal or visible, certainly influence the conditions under which changes in local government structures and/or urban policy shifts are negotiated and decided upon in times of crisis – sometimes in sharp contrast with legislations and formal procedures (see Cantanero Sanz *et al* 2011 for an examination of the *actual* role of local development agents in Valencia).

As we will see in the following chapters, the three main building blocks of research and analysis (crisis – institutions – urban policies) are strongly intertwined. In fact, they all become explanatory variables at some point in the analysis of the urban development experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata (see Appendix 4 for a precise discussion of the relationship between the crisis, institutional and urban policy comparators). Neither of them is completely independent from the other two, thus it would be impossible to establish a single independent variable for the entire analysis. This thesis seeks to bring out the complexity of long term urban development processes by using the notion of crisis to understand both local institutional change and urban policy shifts across the two case study cities as well as recognising the ways in which institutions and urban policies themselves might become agents of crisis. As the analysis of the two case study cities unfolds, we will learn that the formal and informal features of local institutions as well as the content and direction of urban policy agendas not only provide alternative paths and opportunities for the resolution of different episodes of crisis, but become explanatory variables of crises themselves. It is precisely such an intertwined and

complex relationship between the three main blocks of analysis what makes it difficult, if not impossible, to provide a more precise or fixed distinction between the explanatory and independent nature of each variable.

3.3 VALENCIA AND MAR DEL PLATA: COMPARABILITY

Argentina's long history of economic crises characterised by significant fiscal shocks and political instability and Spain's ongoing sovereign fiscal crisis characterised by unsustainable public debt and new political challenges are both useful cases through which to place the idea of "crisis" in context. Placing them alongside each other allows us to explore crises, across time and space from a comparative perspective. Indeed, both countries have undergone numerous crisis-induced social, economic and political transformations over the last three decades. Macroeconomic reforms, a mixture of debt, financial and convertibility crises, as well as processes of democratisation and decentralisation have all placed these countries in unique and challenging situations on various occasions since the 1980s – a decade of intense economic and political change following transition. At the local level, municipalities have assumed a larger number of responsibilities over time and therefore have had to respond to the multiple economic, institutional and urban consequences of episodes of crisis; the competing narratives of politicians, economic and social actors have jostled to gain wider support and to influence the nature of these responses.

Although cities like Valencia and Mar del Plata might be conventionally categorised as cities from the global North and South, respectively, and generally deemed incommensurable in the terms of mainstream urban studies, a combination of specificities and shared experiences between the two cities seems to provide good empirical grounds to think across them in order to engage with and contribute to wider analytical conversations concerning urban governance, policymaking processes and crises, in a creative and experimental manner. Valencia and Mar del Plata are intermediate cities with relatively autonomous governments that do not have direct access to the economic resources, political networks and connections that their capital counterparts, Madrid and Buenos Aires, normally enjoy. Therefore they have had to resort to sometimes unorthodox and experimental approaches in order to increase public revenue as well as to provide infrastructure and services for their local population in

times of both crisis and *non-crisis*.

The governments of Valencia and Mar del Plata both share similar degrees of autonomy according to their respective national constitutions and thus have considerable powers to decide upon a wide range of economic, social and political matters within their political jurisdictions. Furthermore, although in broad terms, both municipalities share a number of similarities in their financial structure as well as their sources of income (see Table 01 for details regarding the main sources of local revenue in each city).

Municipality	Valencia	Mar del Plata
Main sources of local revenue, finance and funding	Tax revenues (property taxes: rural and urban land; vehicle patents; commercial activities; construction; capital gains on businesses; income tax on individuals; value added tax; other direct taxes); Municipal rates, user charges and public prices (licenses and permission of construction and urban interventions; issuance of documents and paperwork; markets, street/public parking; use of public areas; entry fee of museums and special events; infractions and fines, municipal services); Transfers from state and regional administrations for public transport, social and economic programmes and culture; Municipal patrimony (rental income, concessions); financial assets, loans-credits.	<i>Coparticipación</i> : share of national and regional taxes; tax revenues (casinos; property tax: rural and urban; vehicles; bingo and other games of chance; alcoholic drinks; commercial activities: gross income); Municipal rates and user charges (urban services; licenses and inspections; publicity and propaganda; street markets and vendors; use of public spaces, cemeteries); Municipal patrimony and rents (concessions of beaches and river banks); Fines (infraction of tax obligations and duties; omissions of sworn declarations; interests on fines); Income from national and/or provincial social and economic programmes; financial assets (transfer of interests and other funds, loans and credits)

Table 01. Municipal sources of revenue and finance in Valencia and Mar del Plata.

Sources: Presupuesto Municipal Ayuntamiento de Valencia (<https://www.valencia.es/ayuntamiento>); Santigosa (1992); Hacienda Municipal (<http://www.mardelplata.gob.ar/economia>); Perez (2004).

As we will see in chapter 7, greater decentralisation does not necessarily mean that local authorities function entirely independently from regional, national, or federal levels of government (Boxes 01 and 02 offer an overview of some of the main issues concerning decentralisation and federalism in both Spain and Argentina), but that they enjoy relative powers to set up their own urban policy interventions and strategies. On the other hand, this also suggests that these local governments might be more exposed to

crises, as they would not only have to deal with regular urban challenges but to deliver strategic responses that mitigate the issues deriving from particular crises and which improve their future prospects. Valencia and Mar del Plata have both favoured policies fostering tertiary economic activities such as leisure and cultural tourism, commerce, and real estate development over several decades, and economic and social infrastructure have increasingly become essential elements of the urban interventions and strategic development plans of both cities.

Box 01. FEDERALISM AND DECENTRALISATION IN SPAIN

“Spain is a federal state founded upon recognition of the internal plurality of nationalities and regions. So, under the pressures of a multinational society, “a compound nation of nations, the *Estado de las Autonomías* has to come to exhibit the basic structures and processes typical of federations” (Watts, 2009). It is through the relatively asymmetrical regulation of sub-federal self-government that this federal state has sought to accommodate the demands of its nationalities and regions. In other words, it has sought to establish a structure of shared and self-rule that might serve to maintain unity in the politico-cultural diversity of Spain [...] The complexity of Spanish federalism derives from its history. Broadly, the federalization of the Spanish state was not the result of an agreement among pre-existing independent states, but of a pact that allowed the decentralization of an existing strongly centralized administration while preventing its total disintegration. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 was thus designed, not to bring the future members of a federation together, but to hold them together while recognizing their individual existence; and its circumstances led to the resulting polity exhibiting a set of asymmetries that constitute a fundamental feature of Spanish federalism” (p.64).

“Since the late nineteenth century, calls for self-government had come mainly, if not exclusively, from Catalonia, the Basque Country and, to a lesser extent, Galicia. This is why the Constitution acknowledges the existence of nationalities and regions within the Spanish nation, and provided a fast lane to self-government for these three territories – a lane later exploited by Andalusia as well, and which permitted the initial transfer of a larger share of administrative responsibilities from central government to these communities than was granted to others [...] There are also fiscal asymmetries, exemplified in particular by the special fiscal regimes of Navarre, the Basque Country and the Canary Isles. Furthermore, there are significant differences among the political spectra of the various Communities (Nationalities and Regions). In some cases there are dominant nationalist

(secessionist) parties with a very long trajectory from the nineteenth century and/or parties that are confederated with, but formally independent of, the major parties of state-wide importance [...] Finally, there is also asymmetry regarding the delimitation of responsibilities across different levels of government, which amounts to a pact between central and sub-federal parliaments. Art. 148.1 of the Constitution specifies a series of responsibilities that the Autonomous Communities were enabled to take on upon their constitution, Art. 149.1 lists a series of responsibilities that are reserved to the state, and Art. 149.3 establishes that any responsibilities not covered by either list could be taken on by the Autonomous Communities if they wished” (p.65).

“Following the promulgation of the Constitution of 1978, Autonomous Community status was attained almost immediately by two territories in which statutes of autonomy had already been approved prior to the Spanish Civil War: Catalonia and the Basque Country. Fearing both the possibility of administrative chaos if more territories rushed to obtain autonomy, and the associated possibility that the nascent democratic state might fall victim to a right-wing coup, the ruling centre- right *Union de Centro Democrático* (UCD) party then froze the initiatives of other territories. Strong opposition to this highly asymmetrical situation, led by Galicia (which had also approved a statute of autonomy before the Civil War) and by Andalusia, resulted in the agreements reached in mid-1981 between the major Spanish political parties regarding the eventual generalization of a model of parliamentary Autonomous Community throughout Spain; these agreements led to the approval of the Statutes of Autonomy of Galicia, Andalusia, Asturias and Cantabria in 1981 and to the passage through parliament of the *Ley Orgánica de Armonización del Proceso Autonómico* (LOAPA) in 1982 [...] Although the LOAPA was challenged successfully by Catalonia and the Basque Country governments in the Constitutional Court, which ruled large parts of it to be unconstitutional, the upshot was nevertheless that between the approval of the last of the seventeen Statutes of Autonomy in 1983 and the Statute reforms of 1994, a two-tier system existed in which seven Autonomous Communities (including Valencia) enjoyed broader powers than the other ten” (p.66).

Source: Maiz *et al* (2010)

Box 02. FEDERALISM AND DECENTRALISATION IN ARGENTINA

“As a federal state, Argentina is composed of 23 provinces and an autonomous federal district. The provinces are entitled to central government revenue derived from a revenue-

sharing regime and are also the main locus of spending decisions, making them the appropriate units of analysis when evaluating the impact of fiscal decentralization. Approximately 50 percent of Argentina's public spending is at the sub-national level, making it the most decentralized country in Latin America today in terms of public spending" (p.8).

"Argentina's provinces differ substantially in their economic performance. The major industrial and urban areas are highly concentrated in the centre of the country, mainly in the provinces of Buenos Aires, Cordoba and Santa Fe, which have long enjoyed relatively high levels of socio-economic development. In contrast, peripheral provinces, such as La Rioja, Catamarca or Jujuy, in the Northwestern region, have remained at levels of development only marginally different from those of the poorest countries of Latin America [...] The origin of differences between regions in levels of socioeconomic development resides in the history of the country's federal system. Two factors had a particularly strong influence. First, there is a legacy of forty years of internal struggles among de facto autonomous provinces which followed independence from Spain in 1816, until the acceptance of a national constitution by all provinces in 1860. Second, there were significant differences in resource endowments as well as differential access to the port of Buenos Aires (and thus international markets) between provinces in the centre and the periphery" (p.9).

"As a result, the provinces also differ in their capacity to finance provincial spending with local revenues and federal co-participation funds, and the federal government has often resorted to additional transfers to cover residual fiscal gaps [...] True devolution implies expenditure side decentralization accompanied by revenue side decentralization, i.e. the federal government passes on new responsibilities to the provinces, along with the fiscal means to achieve these ends. Alternatively, there may be limited devolution, with expenditure decentralization but no revenue decentralization. In this case, the federal government transfers the responsibility for primary education without any new tax revenue going to the provinces - neither is the fiscal jurisdiction (tax base) of the provinces increased, which would allow them to impose new taxes, nor are they given a larger share of co-participated taxes (shared revenue from certain taxes collected by the federal government). Instead, the federal government uses transfers which are highly unpredictable to fill the budget deficit of the provinces" (p.17).

"There is some evidence to suggest that the use of such transfers is what has happened in Argentina most of the time. With the provinces not allowed to raise their own resources to

meet the new goals, the efficiency gains from devolution are clearly reduced. Since the provinces seek to meet their additional expenditure responsibilities but do not have the funds to do so, increased expenditures on health and education must be accompanied by borrowing or transfers or spending cuts elsewhere, for example in public housing and infrastructure” (p.19).

Source: Habibi *et al* (2001)

There is no question that the governments of Valencia and Mar del Plata have become increasingly autonomous from their national counterparts since the 1980s. This means they have been able to gain relative power to decide upon local policy matters, but also that their responsibilities have increased a great deal and therefore they have had to respond to a wider range of challenges and demands – a task that becomes even more difficult in times of economic crisis and political sensitivity (see Table 02 for details on the division and allocation of competences between different tiers of government across the two case studies).

Level of Government	Spain	Argentina
National	Defence and army forces, the administration of Justice: civil, labour, commercial, criminal and property laws; international trade, costumes, inland revenue and public debt, ports and airports, merchant navy, roads and railways that expand beyond a single autonomous region, basic environmental legislation, mines and energy.	National defence and military forces, foreign relations, international trade-commerce, postal and telecommunication services, higher education, federal law and justice system, national motorways, health and social security systems, housing policy initiatives and economic development programmes.
Regional	Land management, social services provision, cultural facilities and the promotion of local languages, promotion of tourism, historic buildings, education programming and management, health services, agricultural and livestock programmes, railways and motorways, management of forests.	Primary and secondary education, cultural programmes, the recruitment and training of school teachers, regional roads, regional justice system and the enforcement of provincial laws; the protection and promotion of indigenous groups, their culture and identity.
Municipal	Street lighting, sewerage, water supply, street paving, cemeteries, food control, garbage collection, public parks, libraries and markets, waste disposal, fire control, public sport facilities, public transport,	The provision and maintenance of urban infrastructure and services: sewerage and water supply, squares, green, public spaces, roads and sidewalks, street lighting; sanitation and rubbish collection; primary health

	environmental protection, and any other other services and functions that help them to satisfy the needs of the community (with the financial support of the regional and/or national administrations)	care and primary education in some cases, emergency services for roads and for inhabitants in the most vulnerable areas (defensa civil).

Table 02. Division and allocation of competences across tiers of government in Spain and Argentina. Sources: Constitución Española 1978; Santigosa (1992); Constitución de la Provincia de Buenos Aires 1994; Alvarez *et al* (2011).

This thesis argues that crises complicate already complex processes of governance and urban policymaking at the local level and require local government functions/priorities to be reconsidered and perhaps changed according to new imperatives. Although not all the individual experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata will speak to wider analytical conversations concerning urban governance and crisis, certainly the ways in which these two cities have grappled with significant economic and political crises reflect urban processes and events that are common to many other urban contexts.

3.4 METHODOLOGY

3.4.1 CASE STUDY SELECTION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

A central motivation for the selection of the case studies was the premise that comparisons in mainstream urban studies have been traditionally based on the selection of the most similar cases, mainly from Europe and North America, and this approach had constituted a kind of orthodoxy within the discipline. While the location of scholars, their home, workplace, and/or natural interest in the cities they are most familiar with, have always played an important role in the selection of case studies, the international circulation of urban researchers and the “global” scope of university programmes have contributed to important shifts in the practice of *doing* urban research over the last decade. These trends have opened up opportunities for urban studies, particularly across Anglo-American institutions. Being born and raised in the global South and lived half of my life in the global North (and pursued higher education in the UK), I have indeed welcomed and benefited from these developments and hope to contribute to the field by bringing into view and analytical conversation the urban experiences of two ordinary

cities to which I had no previous connection.

I began a survey of cities across Spanish-speaking countries with different experiences of macro-economic crisis and similar federal systems of government, and considered the advantages and disadvantages of cities that had appeared more prominently in urban studies literature over the last two decades, such as Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, Buenos Aires, Bogota, Medellin, and Mexico City. However, in a strong commitment to start urban research from any city and the possibility to compare them, I focused on cases that had not been explicitly cited in the comparative literature reviewed, but which indeed might have been researched for different reasons and from different urban perspectives elsewhere. As I progressed in the selection process, Valencia and Mar del Plata appeared to be the ordinary and yet interesting and complex cities that I had intuitively aimed to find. They presented important differences and numerous contextual specificities, but also a number of qualities and/or experiences that made them somehow commensurable (see Table 03 and Table 04 for basic socioeconomic data). It was also clear that given the rich and complex institutional and urban experiences of the two places, empirical research and fieldwork would be fundamental in order to gain a nuanced understanding of the features and issues to be compared.

Year	Valencia	Mar del Plata
1981/1980	751743	434160
1991	777427	532845
2001	750476	564056
2011/2010	798033	618989

Table 03. Population growth in Valencia and Mar del Plata. Sources: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (Spain <http://www.ine.es/welcome.shtml>); Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (Argentina <http://www.indec.gob.ar/index.asp>); Asociación Valencia 2015 (2002); CEPAL 2002.

Year	Valencia	Mar del Plata
1991	14,00%	6.7%
2000	9.2%	14.6%
2010	18.2%	7.3%
2017 (Q1)	19.1%	10.6%

Table 04. Rate of Unemployment in Valencia and Mar del Plata. Sources: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (Spain <http://www.ine.es/welcome.shtml>) ; Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos (Argentina <http://www.indec.gob.ar/index.asp>); Asociación Valencia 2015 (2002); CEPAL 2002.

The origin and histories of the two cities are certainly hundreds of years apart. Valencia was founded as a Roman colony and occupied by the Muslims before the King of Aragon conquered it in the 13th century. It has a long history of urban planning as well as long tradition of green public spaces or *ajardinamiento* (see Llopis and Perdigon 2010). Mar del Plata emerged as a coastal/port town for the commercialisation of cattle products in the 19th century and was transformed into a city of leisure inspired by the design and aesthetics of French-Style resorts for the Argentine elite in the early 20th century. It developed into a mass tourism city in the mid-late 20th century (see Patoriza 2009). In a broad sense, however, the economic, political, social and urban experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata have shared an important number of features and issues since the mid-20th century (which I discuss further in the next chapter).

Having said that, the comparability of the cases was not a given from the outset, and some early commentators thought that qualitative comparative research would be difficult to pursue because both cities were just too different. Meanwhile, others thought the comparison would be unfair as it might reinforce urban dichotomies already known. However, the comparability of the cases became increasingly strong as the research advanced and the fieldwork unfolded. Indeed, a number of preliminary considerations in terms of broad similarities, potential lines of comparability as well as concrete variables across the two cities remained important throughout the research. Nevertheless, it has been through the exploration and consideration of multiple processes, narratives and issues concerning episodes of economic and political crisis, democratisation, decentralisation, and urban policy interventions and strategies that these cities have *become* increasingly commensurable.

3.4.2 COMPOSING COMPARISONS AND ASSEMBLING COMPARATORS

With an ever growing number of urban researchers working on multiple different cities worldwide and dealing with disparate urban phenomena, experiences and outcomes,

urban studies has become a rather dynamic and global discipline in the 21st century. This process has been accompanied by new questions, challenges and opportunities. The implications of bringing a wider range of rich and complex urban experiences into analytical conversation have been at the core of methodological debates over the last years, in which questions of *what* and *how* to compare have been accompanied by calls to establish more explicit comparative tools. The work of Robinson (2016) and Deville *et al* (2016), both of which I was fortunate to read as early drafts, have been of great inspiration through my research journey. I identify my approach with the tactic of *composing* comparisons advanced by Robinson and the process of *assembling* the comparator proposed by Deville *et al*. Allowing the comparators and comparability of the cases to emerge through the course of research planning, execution and analysis has proven a robust and productive method.

Throughout the case study selection, the literature review and a short pilot study in autumn 2013, I sketched a number of diagrams that helped me to visualise relevant lines of comparability, at least conceptually. I started by considering wider aspects of the recent development histories of Spain and Argentina and, in turn, of Valencia and Mar del Plata (the geographical location of both cities in relation to their respective national and regional contexts is shown on Map 01). These were gradually narrowed down to three thematic areas including episodes of crisis, local institutional transformations and urban policy shifts, which also became the *comparators* during the actual fieldwork process and successively aided the data analysis (see Appendixes 02-04 for examples of the diagrams). While it was indeed important to anticipate broad lines of comparability in order to demonstrate the feasibility of the research and to justify the comparison from the onset, I would like to emphasise that it was essential to remain relatively open to learn from the case studies themselves. This meant learning from and taking seriously the analytical value of specific features, differences as well as issues that had not necessarily emerged beforehand. The three main thematic lines of research and/or *comparators* are thus the result of a combination of conceptual inspiration as well as direct empirical engagement with the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata. Indeed, this does not mean they are restricted in their relevance to the study of these two cities but rather the hope is that they open up thematics for the research and analysis of other urban experiences in which different episodes of crisis and subsequent processes of urban policymaking might also emerge. Finally, the methodological tactics of

composing comparisons and assembling *comparators* provide us with analytical tools for addressing complex questions concerning urban phenomena and processes in which multiple actors, institutional structures and dynamics as well as temporalities are strongly intertwined.



Map 01. Location of the two case study cities in relation to their national and regional contexts: Valencia (top) and Mar del Plata (bottom).

As suggested in section 2.4, and attending Robinson's (2014) call to re-frame the meaning of the *case* in comparative analysis, it is important to carefully (re)consider both the definition of the case and how different cases might be brought together into analytical conversation. This requires a mixture of rigour and creativity. In this thesis, I

would like to suggest that the cases are not the cities or the municipal authorities as such. Instead, they are given by the interactions between episodes of crisis and local institutional transformations and urban policy responses. The value of this approach is the possibility to encourage the *composition* of comparisons across the global North and South by thinking through similarities and differences, allowing unexamined and unexpected patterns of analytical connection between places to emerge through the patient assembling of a comparator. As a result, cities that would normally be deemed incommensurable in the terms of traditional urban studies become intuitively comparable.

3.4.3 EMPIRICAL FOCUS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Having considered the open and exploratory nature of the comparative tactics inspiring the overall methodological approach, I now provide more precise details about the empirical focus and specific phenomena explored in Valencia and Mar del Plata in order to actually ground the comparison. The substantive empirical study was organised around the same thematic areas that shaped the three lines of comparability outlined above, corresponding to the main research objectives: episodes of crisis, local institutional transformations and urban policy shifts. In terms of episodes of crisis, the empirical study departed from moments of major economic and political crisis in both countries and cities. In the case of Valencia (and Spain, more broadly), it was analytically important to consider two time periods that, despite presenting similar levels of economic crisis, social instability and political change, were different in relation to the status of the municipality in terms of political and economic autonomy and experience, namely between 1979-1984 and 2008-2012. In the case of Mar del Plata (and Argentina, more broadly), it was equally important to explore two periods that reflected similar levels of economic, political and institutional crisis; these also saw strong contrasts in the economic and political capacity of the municipality. Therefore I focused my research on two periods, between 1983-1987 and 1999-2004.

I would like to emphasise that although these periods of intense economic and political crisis and/or change were my primary focus, they only represented points of departure for the empirical study. Indeed, it would be virtually impossible and analytically questionable to strictly restrict the study of urban crises, local institutional change

and/or urban policy responses to the time periods outlined above. As noted in section 2.2, crises are moments beyond purely bad economic performance or temporary adjustment and they often overlap with multiple other challenges, political circumstances and/or social issues that are not necessarily driven by crises *per se*, but which predate and continue after specific episodes of critical juncture. Therefore, local institutional transformations became the second line of comparability and substantive area of empirical enquiry. The political crises triggered by democratic transition and the ongoing challenges of decentralisation were the obvious points of departure. These processes entailed successive transformations at the municipal level as well as new responsibilities, which are important to understanding the capacities that local administrations have had to respond to different episodes of crisis. While the autonomy of the municipalities of Valencia and Mar del Plata was not fully established in the 1980s, greater political and financial autonomy had been gained in both cities by the 2000s.

These local institutional developments have had, no doubt, important implications for the kind of urban responses and strategies that municipalities have been able to formulate and implement over the last few decades. The third substantive area of the empirical study, therefore, involved the actual urban policy responses to episodes of crisis. The various urban emergency programmes introduced by the municipalities in the midst of transition crises were the point of departure, which involved a number of infrastructure and service interventions. Multidimensional and longterm urban strategic agendas that emerged in response to later crises were also part of the empirical focus from the outset. While formal institutions, structures and procedures are indeed important in the investigation of economic and political crises, processes of democratisation, decentralisation as well as urban policymaking, they do not constitute the units of comparison *per se*. They certainly form part of the case studies and must be considered, but are only part of the wider environment in which local institutional transformations have unfolded and urban decision-making processes taken place. For these reasons, the empirical study required the consideration of a wide range of aspects, some of which might be fixed and some of which vary according to wider circumstances. Figure 2 illustrates some of the multiple and implicit aspects involved in the processes researched.

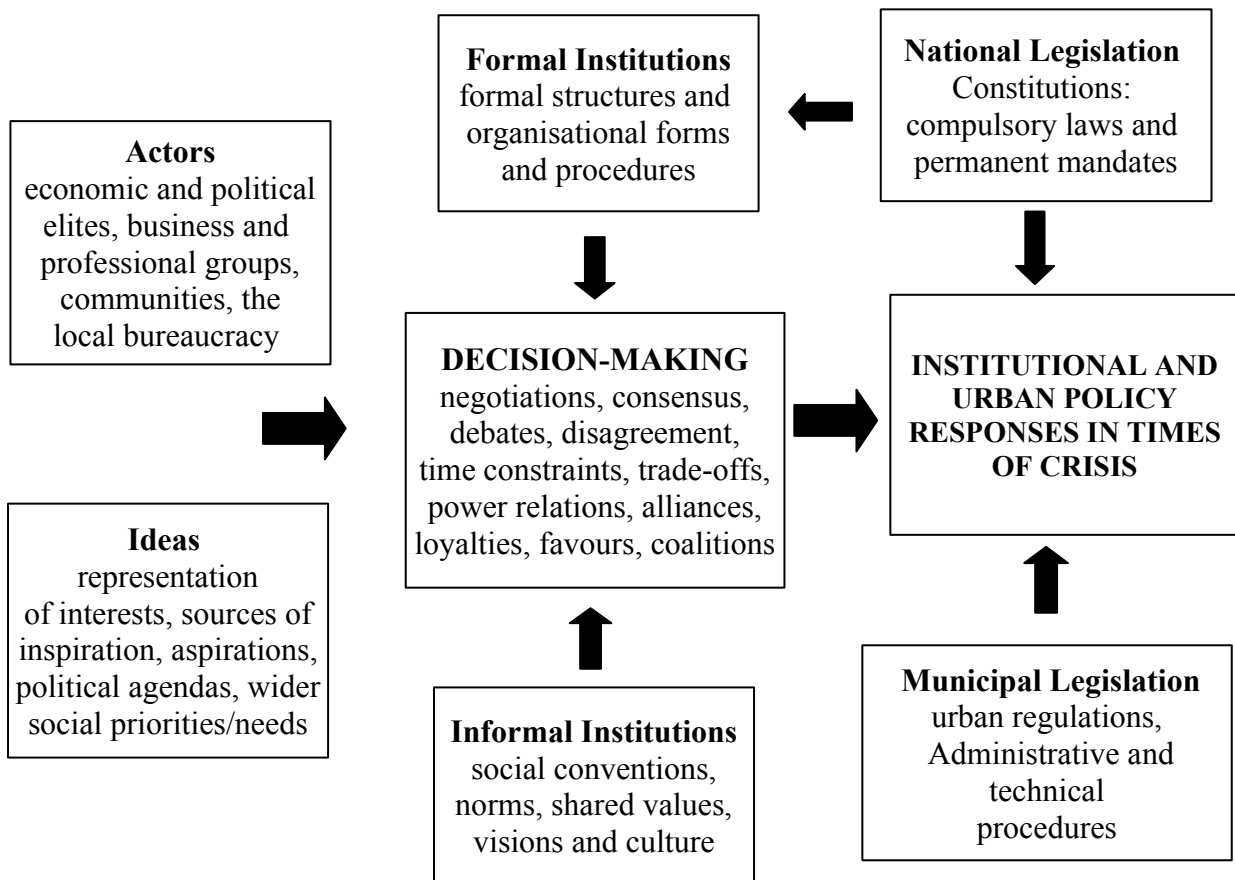


Figure 2. Formal and informal features considered in the study of institutional and urban policy responses in times of crisis

The exploration of these formal and informal features of local institutions were considered in the data collection process (see Appendix 01 for interview schedules) and became important elements of the comparative analysis. For example, closer attention to the role of informal institutions in the configuration and functioning of municipalities (particularly in times of crisis) helped me to explore unexpected similarities of the local institutional and political environments of Valencia and Mar del Plata (see section 6.3). Such similarities would have appeared an unthinkable possibility if the focus had remained on the hierarchical institutions embedded in the repertoires of conventional urban studies.

The criteria for comparability and the selection of the case studies outlined above has

been inspired by a combination of traditional and experimental literature on comparative urbanism (as noted in section 2.4), which opens up many opportunities for comparison across different contexts from a historical perspective. In line with the methods chosen by scholars researching crises, government institutions and urban policies (Panizza and Philip 2014; Agranoff 2010; Spiller and Tomassi 2007; Vulliamy 1990), and indeed considering the overall aim and specific objectives outlined above, I decided to adopt a combination of qualitative methods that allowed me both to gather and to process a rich and wide range of empirical data from Valencia and Mar del Plata, and which subsequently helped me to bring the experiences of both cases into wider analytical conversation. I adopted a mixture of semi-structured and open-ended interviews, archival research, documentary and textual analysis – each of them served a different and/or complementary function according to their strength and suitability to help me collect first-hand knowledge about the economic, social and political worlds in question.

According to Baxter and Eyles (1997), researchers using qualitative approaches normally provide a rationale for doing so. In this regard, I would like to mention that given the comparative nature of the current research and its focus on multiple processes rather than fixed structures as objects of research, qualitative methods are best suited to face the challenge of identifying and collecting appropriate and relevant data that will help to pursue the objectives outlined above. As Vulliamy (1990) points out, qualitative methodology allows researchers to get closer to the *data* through personal contacts and experiences, which therefore enables them to develop the analytical and conceptual components of explanation from their observations in the field as well as the data itself rather than through preconceived and often quantified techniques that might simplify and/or remove crucial details from the context of the cases explored. This view is of course in tune with broader critiques that explain the growing interest in the use of qualitative methods across social science disciplines – e.g. as an epistemological critique of positivist traditions that dominated social science research for decades (Limb and Dwyer 2001; Bernard 2005). Given my interest in the informal and nuanced dynamics of institutions as well as the meanings and interpretations of events, qualitative methods, especially detailed interviews and careful document analysis were essential. Lastly, qualitative techniques seemed suitable to support the comparative approach of this thesis which, as mentioned above, aimed to identify and explore unexpected

similarities and differences across places and therefore required methodological tools that allowed the possibility of being open to surprises, new insights of context and/or empirics.

Finally, I would like to outline how the use of different data collection techniques not only helped me to pursue individual research objectives but enhanced the analytical rigour of this project. Firstly, archival research and document analysis were important to provide background information as well as assisting with the examination of the various institutional transformations which occurred in the governments of Valencia and Mar del Plata since democratisation and decentralisation started in the 1980s. In addition, these techniques helped me to gather basic information for the formulation of the interview schedules and to identify relevant interviewees. Furthermore, this method allowed me to gain sufficient understanding of important economic and political changes which occurred in the national and local contexts before I embarked the fieldwork, which helped me to *familiarise* myself with the contexts and make the most of the time with key interviewees. Indeed, secondary literature was important to identifying relevant debates concerning processes of democratisation, decentralisation, urban policymaking and crisis, which I subsequently had the opportunity to discuss with some of the authors in more detail.

Secondly, a mixture of informal, semi-structured and open-ended interviews were used to gather data concerning episodes of crisis, institutional dynamics and urban policy initiatives (see Appendix 01). Interviews helped me to gain in-depth insights into different events, processes, experiences and narratives. Informal and regular conversations with local researchers and experts in the economic, political, social and urban affairs of Valencia and Mar del Plata were also key during the fieldwork process. Indeed, the interview material helped me to complement accounts drawn from secondary sources and archival research by providing more insightful accounts of events emerging from background research. This form of *triangulation* is consistent with the strategies identified by Baxter and Eyles (1997) in their criteria for evaluating qualitative research, in which they claim that the credibility and confirmability of findings are important features of rigorous research.

I make reference to different kinds of interviews because, as Rapley (2006) points out,

in actual practice recruitment mostly happens on an *ad hoc* basis. This means that researchers might need to approach different interviewees with different set questions in view of possible issues concerning positionality – i.e. age, class, gender and nationality and/or cultural differences – but also time constraints and/or other unexpected circumstances. Although some authors believe that the depth of analysis is more important than the size of the research sample (Valentine 2001), purposive sampling is important in order to achieve transferability of knowledge beyond the individual case – which is indeed a desirable feature in comparative urban research. According to Baxter and Eyles (1997), transferability is about the degree to which findings or elements deriving from one research context might be transferred to others. While qualitative researchers might conventionally focus on contextual specificities that are meaningful to particular places and peoples, this comparative project aims to build analytical conversations not only between the two cases studied but also to inform analysis of wider urban contexts. Therefore, I sought to interview and engage with a wide variety of participants – including local public officials and politicians, urban planners, architects and engineers working for the local governments as well as independently, academics from local universities and from different disciplinary fields (including geography, sociology, economics and history), and representatives from other groups involved in processes of urban governance (i.e. business associations and social organisations), who provided me with different views and narratives regarding urban governance and crisis according to their own perceptions, knowledge and experiences.

Thirdly, observations and reflections on a number of debates held in the legislative departments of the municipalities of Valencia and Mar del Plata as well as public meetings, forums, seminars or conferences dealing with topics of urban policies, strategic agendas, public participation and/or crisis constituted an important element of fieldwork research. These events were not limited to spaces of government but took place within universities and other professional, social or business settings. Given the prevailing atmosphere of economic and political crisis in Valencia in 2014, as well as the normality and usual consideration of crisis-related themes in Argentina and cities such as Mar del Plata, there were many opportunities to participate in relevant events. This was due to an increasingly controversial socioeconomic and political situation at the time of fieldwork in 2014, caused by high unemployment, inflation, fiscal deficit, controlled exchange rates, and corruption scandals – see La Nacion 2014; BBC News

2014. Data collection took the form of a research diary in which both descriptive and reflexive entries were recorded. While the former involves the description of events, settings and activities *per se*, the latter include personal interpretations, reflections and thoughts inspired from the former (Delamont 2004). In addition, my fieldwork extended for approximately fifteen months in which I was able to experience both cities and to reflect upon the longterm imprint that episodes of crises have left on them. Lastly, I would like to mention that I am fluent in Spanish and have previous first-hand experience working with Spanish and Latin American peoples, which indeed proved a positive advantage during the fieldwork.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION-FIELDWORK

The substantive empirical study was organised around the thematic areas that shaped the three research objectives and lines of comparability outlined above; episodes of crisis, local institutional transformations and urban policies. A mixture of archival research, documentary analysis, semi-structured and open-ended interviews as well as a fieldwork diary were used for data collection. A one week pilot study was carried out in Valencia in October 2013, which allowed me to improve the research design, to test the feasibility of the methods and to reflect upon issues of access, feasibility, time constraints and costs. A more sustained period of fieldwork took place between March 2014 and March 2015.

Although I did not have any personal connections in these two cities, and in fact had never been to Argentina, I was able to secure places as visiting research student at the *Instituto Inter-universitario de Desarrollo Local* (IIDL) in Valencia and the *Instituto del Hábitat y del Ambiente* (IHAM) in Mar del Plata. I am grateful to Prof. Josep Sorribes and Lic. Monica Burmester for their unconditional and interested support and for guiding me through the academic and political scene of each city from the start of my fieldwork. As Agranoff (2010:177) points out, referring to intergovernmental relations in Spain (but also applicable to Argentina), “knowing *how* to do something is often not enough, and must be facilitated by knowing *who* sits where, *what* is needed to get something moving [...] who can answer a question, facilitate a permission, or transmit a resource is based on the *enchufe* [connection] principle”. Interestingly, his observation not only reflects the dynamics of the informal institutions that this thesis

explores but also a research strategy to consider when doing urban research in countries like Spain and Argentina (see Vellacott 2007). Having access to some of the key local economic and/or political figures, for instance, is not always easy and often requires the recommendation of other people who know them and whom they trust.

Having access to the facilities of the research institutes above and the support of their members helped me to ground the conceptual ideas supporting the lines of comparability outlined above and to refine/specify the empirical focus before proceeding with documentary research and interviews. The first few weeks of the fieldwork were devoted to archival research as well as a number of informal conversations with potential interviewees and university researchers, particularly from the departments of Architecture, Planning, Economics and Geography. These were also helpful to gain a broader understanding of these two cities, the main socioeconomic, political and urban challenges and to learn about the local sources of primary and secondary material on these topics. I collected and digitalised approximately two hundred documents between Valencia and Mar del Plata, though the overall availability of relevant material was relatively more limited in the case of the latter. It is worth noting that most of the official planning documents and municipal publications dealing with socioeconomic, urban and institutional matters were available in printed rather than electronic form. In fact, electronic sources and databases have only started to develop over the last decade in both cities and most of the data prior 2000 has not been digitalised. This reflects one of the challenges of doing historical research as well as the difficulties of collecting data from ordinary cities, which would be virtually impossible to pursue remotely and for which direct engagement with the field is fundamental.

A total of 24 formal interviews were conducted in Valencia and 28 in Mar del Plata, which together amounted to approximately 100 hours of recorded material. A wide variety of informants were carefully chosen in order to discuss particular topics in regards to crises, local institutions and urban policy (see profiles in Appendix 05). Given the multidimensional scope and long timeframe of the research, four different interview schedules were formulated (Appendix 01). I also created a number of templates that summarised the aims of the research (which were often emailed in advance) and prepared a number of diagrams that helped to structure the actual interviews and provided visual support for the interviewees and myself (see Appendix

06-07). While the crises, local institutional transformations and urban policies researched were strongly intertwined, the interviewees were not asked to draw explicit connections between them but rather to focus on their field of expertise, their own experiences and narratives of crisis, whether as economists, politicians, city planners or representatives of social organisations. In both cities, interviewees within research or academia at present had often occupied public posts in past administrations and/or had engaged actively in specific municipal initiatives – which not only made them particularly knowledgeable interviewees with extensive first-hand experience in government, but also well connected figures who helped me to make contact with key economic and political actors from the 1980s and 1990s. This was indeed helpful as this research is concerned with a mixture of economic, political and urban events and processes that have unfolded over the last three decades.

In addition to documentary research and formal interviews, my observations of a number of official debates held in the municipalities of Valencia and Mar del Plata as well as informal conversations held in public meetings, forums, seminars or conferences dealing with topics of urban policy, social mobilisation or crisis constituted important sources of data. These informal discussions/interactions with municipal officials, local politicians, developers and academics were revealing and allowed me to reflect upon and put into perspective some of the reasons why local actors often valorise the institutional innovations and urban experiences of other cities (typically from the global North) and find it difficult to see how the experiences of their own cities could contribute positively to urban knowledge. The fieldwork diary also allowed me to keep a record of wider reflections and thoughts concerning the actual fieldwork process and the experience of doing urban comparative research across ordinary cities, particularly when we/researchers are not familiar with them. Entries around issues of time, and time constraints more particularly, were a recurrent theme. How much time do we need to familiarise ourselves with new places? How long would it take us to gain access to key data or people? How much time do we actually have? How long do we need to make sense of the actual socioeconomic and political dynamics of a city beyond what we had read? How long do we need before we can visualise shared phenomena despite their differences and/or the differences of what seems to be the *same*? Although I do not explicitly refer to these observations, questions and reflections in the text, the notes in the fieldwork diary helped me to organise the data analysis process and to structure

some of the arguments in the substantive chapters.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS: WRITING COMPARISONS

The analysis of the data was organised in four broad themes, which included crisis, institutions, actors, and urban policy. The secondary material and literature was organised according to the same themes, but also chronologically and in relation to more specific urban policy interventions and/or regulations as well as economic and political events such as democratic transition, different phases of decentralisation and episodes of crisis. This was all done electronically and manually. Interviews were transcribed, some simultaneously translated into English and others left in Spanish due to time concerns. This part of the analysis was done without the support of any transcription software or service, which allowed me to spend time with the data, to identify new interpretative threads and to refine the lines of comparability. Following the identification of common features, issues as well as differences, I reorganised the data according to codes that reflected the empirical focus of the three research objectives. This was also done manually and without any coding software. The evidence of participants and their narratives were, then, used to calibrate and “feed the *comparator*” (as Deville *et al* 2016 would put it). Jacobs (2012) sees this process as an essential step of comparative analysis, in which the conditions to see multiplicity through multiple cases, to understand singularity among the cases and common processes and ways of *becoming* rather than *being* are created. In the words of Deville *et al* (2016), the *comparator* is not something that is observed or naturally present in the field but the result of preparatory and investigative procedure.

3.6.1 THE CRISIS COMPARATOR

Though the interest in economic crises and the impact of austerity measures and welfare cuts has been renewed amongst social science researchers since 2008, particularly from urban studies, the experience of ordinary cities such as Valencia and Mar del Plata are a reminder that crises are much more than episodes of economic downturn, failed capitalism, financial meltdown or austerity, and indeed entail numerous other social, political and institutional dimensions – some of which might be just as explanatory as the macroeconomic junctures and/or turmoil often cited. In an effort to advance our

understanding of urban crises and to bring into analytical conversation the experiences of cities from the North and South, my aim has been to revisit and rethink some of the evidence and the wide range of instances, narratives and connections gathered from Valencia and Mar del Plata with the ambition to develop alternative insights that could help us to understand urban crises more generally.

Indeed, despite the contextual specificities and multiple narratives that emanate from each episode across time and space, the notion of crisis provides us with a common ground of departure for comparative analysis. Having said that, and by finding inspiration in the work of Robinson (2016) on *composing* comparisons and Deville *et al* (2016) on *assembling* the comparator, I started off from two cities that were not necessarily “compatible” and gradually worked on the formulation of comparability. How was that possible? Through the research process, this occurred by opening up the complexity and multiple dimensions of the experiences of the two case study cities, pulling out interpretations, generating insight and comparability as the analysis and writing up of the cases advanced. Numerous place-specific narratives helped me to visualise how crises work their way through local governments and urban policy agendas, for example, and how an institutional approach and analysis could aid the study of the longterm implications and urban consequences of crisis. As the research advanced, I found rich themes that helped me to think across the two cities, generating new analytical dimensions. The two cities have specifically shared phenomena in the sense that crises have happened and both cities are part of the global economy (neither of them is isolated from such global dynamics), but each of them has differentiated experiences. In addition, when we look at institutions, the transformations that emerge, how different actors operate and how urban policies are generated, we start to find shared phenomena, processes, features and issues that can be brought together analytically, to think across the two cities in terms of proposing explanations for their distinctive outcomes.

What role does crisis play in this kind of comparative analysis? How do we think about different episodes of crisis conceptually? My aim was to treat crisis as an empirical phenomenon more than a preconceived universalist concept, which allowed me to bring together different experiences and to think beyond the economic perspectives and the urban fiscal implications often discussed in urban studies literature. This is to say, an

empirical view of crisis allowed me to articulate a comparison that mobilises itself for conceptual innovation by thinking through multiple urban events/processes together. The consideration of the multiple dimensions of crises allowed me, for instance, to gain new insights concerning their relationship with urban actors (who might see challenges as well as opportunities), with municipal institutions dealing with urban policies and regulations (which might undergo complex reconfiguration processes while trying to meet their responsibilities), and with the actual urban landscape of cities (which might observe significant yet unpredictable changes over time).

Another compelling focus for comparison were the strategic planning initiatives introduced in each city in response to crisis. In broad terms, these strategies are very similar in terms of methodology as well as in their multidimensional and longterm approach. Indeed, every city strategy shares many ideas and results from many policy circuits and models and imaginations of urban development that come into it, but each one is also distinctively produced out of specific policy and political contexts. However, the process of thinking comparatively across different cases and experiences of city strategies was at times very difficult, because (we) researchers are not free from inherited concepts and ways of thinking acquired through literature, education and/or professional training nor from prejudices in regards to what we see and we learn from the field itself. In my experience, the latter was complicated by the observations of local researchers who have been dealing with urban issues in Valencia and Mar del Plata (and the global South) for decades and did not see how the urban development experience of their own cities could contribute to a wider global urban agenda in a positive, and non-derogatory, manner. Their concern is not accidental, but a reflection of deeply rooted hierarchies in the practices of urban development and the production of urban knowledge, which are very difficult to confront when trying to think beyond the binaries of the global North-South divide either from an analytical or substantive perspective.

Finally, from a conceptual or theoretical perspective, I did not aim to operationalise any particular concept of crisis while doing the data analysis, and neither did I seek to prove that my empirical observations and findings were consistent with a theoretical proposition. Instead, I began with a combination of theoretical insights that allowed and encouraged the exploration and analytical use of narratives, power relations, informal

features and dynamics, intergovernmental complexities and the many vitalities that shape urban phenomena and processes. This is not to say that concepts are unimportant, but to point out that comparative research seeks to interrogate and change theory, so it must be kept more open – allowing to account for contextual specificities and diversity in a more generative manner. Indeed, the theoretical insights that inspired this research are not limited to the universalist notions of capitalism, neoliberalism and/or austerity typically found in urban literature dealing with crisis. While such concepts can certainly help us to explain aspects of the urban development experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata, they might also limit the analytical process and narrow the scope of the empirical data deemed to be relevant for the explanation of urban outcomes.

3.7 ETHICAL ISSUES AND POSITIONALITY

The fieldwork study took place in Valencia, Spain, and Mar del Plata, Argentina, over a period of several months where no ethical issues concerning data collection or data protection were raised. The methods chosen for data collection included archival research and interviews and complied with the data protection legislation of each country. Participants were initially approached via email, telephone and direct contact in their places of work and, on several occasions, through the reference of other interviewees. I carried out interviews with a wide range of local actors, mainly professionals from the public and private sectors, who have been involved in urban policymaking processes, strategic planning initiatives and public administration. I did not work with vulnerable individuals, children or any other sensitive groups. None of the participants had issues regarding consent, confidentiality, and/or withdrawal (see Appendix 10 for final ethics report).

The interviewees were provided with information sheets, consent forms and a brief introduction to the aims and scope of the research project mostly in advance and, in some cases, before starting the interview proceedings (Appendix 08 and Appendix 09 for templates of the information sheet and the consent form used during the fieldwork). Participants were given the option to remain anonymous throughout the process. Although some of them did not explicitly request it, they were all anonymised throughout the writing of the thesis. Amongst those who requested to be anonymised, and who did not allow the interview to be recorded, there were a mixture of public and

private individuals who considered that their views and opinions had been misrepresented by academic researchers and journalists in the past. On a few occasions, it took some time to build rapport and trust with the participant and therefore some interviews took place over two/three meetings. The interview data was encrypted and securely stored in electronic form.

The interview schedules included a number of open questions dealing with sensitive topics such as corruption, clientelism and other illegal practices; the participants were free to choose the extent and depth of their answers. The data collected from them was fully anonymised, given that their views and opinions in relation to such sensitive topics might compromise their professional career and the image of the institution they work for. Nevertheless, issues of corruption are widely covered by the media and have become the centre of public debates in everyday life. In both Spain and Argentina, researching corruption can be difficult depending on the nature and depth of the cases being considered. In a broad sense, the recent political and urban development experience of Valencia is well known for corruption scandals that have been covered by journalists, academics and emerging political actors alike, particularly since the onset of the crisis in 2008 and during the electoral campaign of 2015. The cases of *Laterne*, *Imelsa* and *Gürtel*, for instance, have resonated across the country and gained extensive coverage at all levels over the past few years (El Pais 2010; Subirats *et al* 2012; Tarazona-Vento 2013; Ayuntamiento de Valencia 2014; El Pais 2015; El Pais 2017). While corruption remains a sensitive topic among local officials and politicians, corruption has also become a common subject of debate in the municipal legislative body and among the public more generally.

My own positionality throughout the research process needs some consideration. As Wetherell *et al* (2001) point out, separation between the researcher and the field is impossible and the implications of the identity of the former for data collection and analysis must be accounted for in any piece of social research. They argue that “the researcher’s influence must be taken into account and even utilised. Doing this requires the researcher to be self-aware. It involves the imagined act of stepping back to observe oneself as an actor within a particular context, to understand how her or his own presence and actions influence the situation [...] particularly for studies that involve interviewing” (Wetherell *et al* 2001:17). This also resonates with the work of Deville *et*

al (2016), in which the importance of recognising the multiple reference points and comparisons drawn by interviewees during the actual interview process is emphasised. The answers of interviewees, they argue, already contain ideas, narratives, subjectivities and ways of seeing and thinking about cities that researchers might read and interpret very differently, according to their own pre-formulated apprehensions and prejudices about a place, their social background and even the knowledge they acquired through particular forms of education, training and experiences.

In order to establish a relationship with participants during my fieldwork period, and/or to “position” myself for the interviewees, it was important to communicate that I am originally from Venezuela where I grew up, that I lived and worked in the UK for over a decade, and that I pursue a PhD in an institution based in London. Additionally, it was important to mention that I had studied Latin American development at a postgraduate level and thus had an ample understanding of different political and socioeconomic processes that had taken place across the region over the last few decades, from which some parallels to the experiences of European cities following the 2008 crisis could be drawn. Furthermore, the fact that I did not have any personal connection to either Valencia or Mar del Plata seemed to open up a number of possibilities for interviewing local actors who normally would be unwilling to meet local researchers or even journalists. In order to gain access to some individuals, I was advised by local colleagues to emphasise that I was part of a higher education institution in Britain at the time of introduction.

In this regard, my positionality had a positive impact on the kind of information that interviewees in Valencia and Mar del Plata were willing to discuss and explain (see Mullings 1999 for a detailed analysis of positionality and power relations in processes of data collection and the multiple subjectivities at play in the field, which corroborates some of my own experiences). In some cases, comparisons and/or connections were drawn in relation to cities from Venezuela rather than London, which made interviewees more comfortable to speak about topics that might have been difficult to express in English and/or which they might have been unwilling to share with researchers from the “North” who might have perceived the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata as being backward, too “informal” and therefore unworthy of attention. Furthermore, and contrary to the experiences of other fieldwork researchers in

South America, municipal officials and politicians in Mar del Plata did not feel the need to reproduce a North-South divide by valorising the experiences of Spanish cities. In fact, some of them reflected on their earlier experiences and/or their views regarding the success attributed to urban development models of cities like Bilbao and Barcelona in the 1990s and were able to identify both the limits of such large-scale and citywide initiatives as well as the difficulties and issues that arise when trying to replicate such models in the South.

3.8 CONCLUSION

The selection of two seemingly incommensurable cities from the so-called global North and South as starting points of enquiry, and the similarities found between both Valencia and Mar del Plata by the end of the research process, did not only unveil the existence (or rather absence!) of a ‘paradox’ between the expected and actual findings (nor only challenged an urban research methodology that conventionally starts with the study of the most similar cases), but explored new possibilities for comparative urban research, new ways of approaching and understanding cities by dealing with and accounting for their different experiences, and new ways of challenging the North-South analytical divide.

The number of similarities found in the experiences of crisis, institutional responses and urban policy initiatives of Valencia and Mar del Plata over the last three decades and the strong comparability that ensued from the common features and processes examined (although temporarily out of step) was definitely a surprise and largely unexpected, particularly from the perspective and principles of more conventional practices of doing urban comparisons. This not to say that all cities are the same, or equally comparable, but to highlight that the process of composing comparisons or assembling comparators can help us to think across difference as well as to bring cities that would normally be deemed incommensurable into productive analytical conversations. This thesis helps us to start moving beyond the orthodox practices that have shaped comparative urban research by offering rigorous comparisons and by drawing lessons from cities across the North and South.

CHAPTER 4: COMPARING SPAIN–ARGENTINA AND VALENCIA–MAR DEL PLATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The shared history of Spain and Argentina is rooted in the colonial era when the Spanish Empire intervened and transformed Latin American territories in significant ways. The origin of several contemporary cities across countries like Argentina, for instance, dates back to the sixteenth century when the Spanish Crown established vice-royalties and other forms of political administration throughout South America. Cities like Cordoba, Tucuman and Buenos Aires were governed by the Viceroyalty of the Rio de La Plata until early in the nineteenth century before Argentina became independent in 1816. In the colonial time, the planning and foundation of new cities within the Empire was subject to precise guidelines and techniques that aimed to attain different economic, political and military strategic objectives. As early as 1573, Felipe II promulgated what could be seen as the equivalent of a contemporary law for urban planning, in which the required standards for the creation of a new city within the Empire were outlined.

These historical connections are important, and worth considering when dealing with research that involves contemporary economic and political comparisons between countries like Spain and Argentina. Indeed, their multiple longstanding and ongoing economic, social, political and cultural connections have an influential role in the shape and form of their present situations and relations. Many years after independence, both countries continue to share multiple similarities in terms of governmental and institutional structures as well as various socioeconomic and political processes. For example, in the first half of the twentieth century, both Spain and Argentina featured centralised economic systems, focused on autarkic and inward-looking development policies, and prioritised industrialisation as their main strategy for economic growth. Both Franco and Peron were inspired by nationalism and a quest for national autonomy from foreign capital. They followed a national-syndicalist ideology and a corporatist strategy (Vellacott 2007). Socially, high polarisation was a common feature over the same period. Politically, Coraggio (2001) observes that the structures of contemporary government institutions across Latin America are largely a legacy of historical

connections with Spain. Furthermore, at the subnational level, Argentinean cities have inherited the institutional framework of Spanish municipal systems. More directly relevant to this study, they have undergone similar economic and political processes over the last three decades: including democratisation, decentralisation as well as several debt and financial crises. In the last part of the twentieth century, for instance, both countries were effectively reducing the role of the state in economic matters: deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation were important processes on both sides of the Atlantic.

Certainly, the economic and political history and/or the characteristics of government structures of Spain and Argentina are not identical, but there are some similarities between them which might be the result of multiple historical connections between the two and indeed an important consideration for the current research. There are, of course, many differences too. Processes of globalisation and neoliberalisation, for example, produced unprecedented paradigmatic shifts in terms of economic policy and political transformation in each country with contrasting results and outcomes. Each of them faced different opportunities and challenges in the last quarter of the twentieth century, and had to respond very rapidly to the emerging financial pressures of economic globalisation. As Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb (2002) observe, both developed and developing nations saw the need to restructure their economic policies along neoliberal-oriented lines in order to adapt or even survive the new international economic order – in which free trade, free markets and free capital flows were the norm. This was the case for both Spain and Argentina in the 1980s. Lastly, these authors note that domestic institutional (in)capacities and inherited relations between the state and society were determinant factors in the policy choices that each individual nation made. It is indeed fundamental to explore these themes and issues across the cases in greater detail. Methodologically, to establish relevant lines of comparability, differences, periodisations and/or possible connections across the cases. And also substantively, to identify key features, issues and aspects of each context for the empirical study. The following sections elaborate on the shared and divergent national and local political and economic developments of Spain, Argentina, Valencia and Mar del Plata.

4.2 SPAIN AND ARGENTINA: COMPARABLE INSTANCES?

While there are indeed contrasting aspects to the recent history of Spain and Argentina, determined by contextual and historical specificities, some shared experiences are also noticeable. In both countries, for example, there is a longstanding centralist tradition of power, exercised by a mixture of authoritarian and populist leaders. In Spain, during the decades following the end of the Civil War (1936-39), from the late 1930s onwards, the executive rewarded different interest groups in return for loyalty. Each group exercised control over particular areas of social policy and labour, business and agriculture all rested under a compulsory syndical arrangement (Vellacott 2007). General Franco was able to control directly and indirectly different factions of society by either including them in the State hierarchy or grouping them through infiltrated ‘official’ syndicates that represented labour and other groups in policymaking processes. This form of control gave virtually all groups some economic policy concession which limited them from making more demands and destabilising the system. In Spanish America, however, the removal of the Crown left a vacuum of authority and virtually no institutions that could keep order after independence. In Argentina, this was reinforced by a corporatist tradition of granting land rights to elites in exchange for loyalty as well as a consolidated mercantilist system. Combined, these arrangements did not support economic growth (Vellacott 2007).

Centralised and personalistic politics have been important in these two contexts, which is potentially relevant for analysing economic and political transformations, policymaking processes, and policies aimed at achieving growth and/or responding to crises more broadly. As Acemoglu *et al* (2005) point out, institutions have a strong impact on the direction of economic policies and thus the distribution of the outcomes of growth and decline. In this regard, Vellacott (2007) claims that the Spanish corporatist system was functional at the institutional level and this was enough to ensure it performed ‘well’ compared to the Argentinean political economy in the second half of the twentieth century. While Franco’s centralised bureaucracy survived the transition to democracy and his disciplined mode of operation allowed stability and encouraged productive activity, corporatism in Argentina (from the late 1940s onwards, in particular) failed to integrate significant groups that demanded various economic and social interests be addressed (*ibid*).

Furthermore, Spanish democratic successors inherited most of the authoritarian political

structures from 1975 onwards. Political parties after transition, for instance, continued to be largely controlled by central government. This top-down approach was reflected in the State's administration once the party gained power and the party leader became president. This way of governing and controlling has left little room for other institutionalised groups to exert pressure on the national government, particularly when it comes to challenging economic policies. Even the interests of the groups most favoured by the party and/or president in power are subordinated to the 'national' agenda of the latter. Argentina's executive government, on the contrary, was (and still is) forced to deal with powerful and fragmented economic groups that have competed for a share of the national rent directly rather than through an effective state bureaucracy (Vellacott 2007). Therefore Argentina's perpetual cycles of economic and political instability. Different corporatist governments tend to favour prominent organisations such as the *Sociedad Rural Argentina*, the *Union Industrial Argentina*, or the *Confederación General Económica* more than political parties. These associations are able to mobilise significant political and economic support and their influence on the national economic life prevails despite changes in political parties or leaders. They are capable, for example, of organising disruptions of economic activities through labour strikes and factory occupations, creating scarcity and/or pushing up inflation by withholding products from the market and strengthening alliances among themselves according to common interests – making associations even more powerful in relation to the State (Vellacott 2007).

According to Chudnovsky and Lopez (2007:13), “since political power has a large influence on institutions and the State is the locus of power, it is difficult to separate changes in the balance of political power from institutional change”. In this respect, closer attention to the formal/informal configuration of government institutions might help us to examine and better understand particular policy projects and outcomes across Spain and Argentina by considering some of the informal mechanisms through which corporatist and political party strategies work. This entails looking beyond formal structures and the prescribed responsibilities/duties of leaders and policymakers and opens up the possibility to illuminate wider debates regarding governance and responses to crises. The 2001 crisis in Argentina, for example, cannot be seen as the result of only cyclical economic instability but also of underlying structural conditions. As Veigel (2009:3) puts it, “economic crisis is also part of a struggle over the very model of

economic and political order in which veto players – be it the military, trade unions or traditional business associations – can paralyse the country and bring down the government without offering a viable alternative”. The analysis of Argentina’s case, in relation to the institutional tradition of Spain, indicates that it is important to (re)think state bureaucracy at all levels and to examine the role that informal institutions present in everyday public-private relations; as well as the place of intergovernmental dynamics in coordinating socio-economic goals beyond formal state structures, arrangements and rules. As Helmke and Levitsky (2004) note, informal institutions are variables that need to be unpacked empirically as they shape the performance of formal structures in important and often unexpected ways. In Argentina, executive-legislative relations and national-municipal interactions, for instance, cannot be explained in terms of constitutional mandates alone but require attention to the pressure of powerful economic actors to influence regulation and/or the institutional agility of local politicians to negotiate larger transfers. In Spain, as Agranoff (2010) observes, clientelistic networks, party channels and personal connections are essential to understanding intergovernmental relations beyond formal institutions.

4.2.1 CHRONOLOGICAL TIMELINES

This section examines the wider economic, political and institutional scenarios of Spain and Argentina from the early 1980s until the late 2000s, a period evidently characterised by significant transformations across practically all areas of national life in both countries. These transformations are important to understand local processes. Indeed, democratisation, decentralisation and economic liberalisation shaped the opportunities and challenges experienced at the subnational level. Also a combination of economic and political crises were crucial throughout this three-decade period. The political tension and economic uncertainty of transition, for instance, made much more difficult the early years of decentralisation, when new responsibilities regarding revenue raising, budgeting for infrastructure and service provision as well as urban development affairs were being devolved to local administrations. The following timelines, therefore, highlight a number of key events that help us to start thinking comparatively across the two cases. They are presented chronologically and in a simplified format that facilitates the identification of themes of empirical and theoretical relevance and thus of the main lines of comparison; both of which are important methodological steps in this thesis.

SPAIN

The late 1970s – deep economic shocks as a preamble to the 1980s crisis

- ✧ General Franco led a hyper-centralist dictatorship between 1939-75. A peaceful transition to democracy occurred between 1975-79, which indeed represented a profound political change. As Rodriguez-Pose (2000:89) notes, the process “not only implied a transition from a right-wing dictatorship to a fully-fledged democratic system, but also the passage from a centralised to a decentralised state”.
- ✧ Following the disappearance of Franco, and the end of years of political repression, regions demanded more autonomy. In 1978, a new Constitution introduced new tiers of government which granted self-governing power to the *Comunidades Autónomas* and the municipalities. This system can be considered a form of ‘devolutionary federalism’ (Moreno 2002:400).
- ✧ A significant shock in oil prices in 1979/80 exacerbated the ongoing (unresolved) economic crisis in Spain. This new economic downturn was also interpreted as a temporal conjunctural crisis rather than a structural crisis (Gonzalez 2005). “Social discontent rose and workers and their trade unions put into practice their newly achieved right to strike in 1979” (Mora and Moscoso 1991).

The 1980s – from a difficult start to a more positive outlook after the mid-1980s

- ✧ The decade starts with a catastrophic economic equilibrium. Uncertainty paralysed decision-making processes and no significant measures to tackle the economic crisis were made (Gonzalez Portilla 1997). Manufacturing industry was rapidly declining. The early 80s saw 42 percent loss of jobs in shipbuilding alone.
- ✧ Policy responses from the newly established regional governments were slow, and failed to tackle emerging problems deriving from deindustrialisation. They were unsure on how to confront economic policy interests under the new democratic system (Gonzalez 2005).

- ⤴ From 1982 onwards, Felipe Gonzalez (in presidency 1982-1996) adopted policies that were tough yet considered necessary to bend the basic unbalances of the national economy (Gonzalez-Orus 1986). He carried out a modernisation programme with a neoliberal approach: including privatisation, liberalisation of labour market while maintaining the Social Pacts (Gonzalez 2005).
- ⤴ Gonzalez's government adopted important policies of economic restructuring, adjustment and reconversion – known as policies of rationalisation that aimed at reducing the workforce in overstaffed firms and provide financial support to those in major difficulties (Velasco and Plaza 2003).
- ⤴ Active involvement in Europeanisation project (Moreno 2002), EU entry in 1986. Economic recovery and improvement in the late 1980s – particularly after the full EU accession.

The 1990s – consolidating economic recovery and sustained growth from the mid-1990s onwards

- ⤴ The entry to the EU was overall positive for the Spanish economy, but exposed its competitive weaknesses during different phases of integration (Gonzalez 2005; Varela 2006)
- ⤴ There were some economic difficulties in the early 1990s. By 1993 there have been several devaluations in the Spanish peseta – which were partly a consequence of the country's full incorporation into the EU single market – and some signs of recession had started to appear i.e. high unemployment rate, weak GDP and raising debt levels (Varela 2006 ; Cubel 2004).
- ⤴ In the mid-1990s a new phase of strong economic recovery and growth was visible. The government labelled this phase the 'start of the recovery'. The Spanish Central Bank had an important role in this period. It was responsible for ensuring the compliance of several macroeconomic requirements in order to enter the EU Monetary Union: controlling inflation below 2 percent, low interest rates, rigorous and disciplined fiscal policy and so forth (Varela 2006). Transition to the Euro in 2000.
- ⤴ Unemployment and public health issues also existed in the second half of the 1990s but were minor compared to previous years. A new agreement on the *Fondo de Reserva de la Seguridad Social* (Social Security Fund) was signed in

1997 (Varela 2006; Velarde 2009).

- ⤴ Manageable deficit of approx 2.6 percent of GDP towards the end of the decade (Varela 2006; Jimeno 2009). From 1997/8 the Spanish economy grew more or less steadily up to 2007. Spain registered more growth than the EU median. Overall, these were years of economic growth and stability (Velarde 2009; Lopez and Rodriguez 2011).

The 2000s – unprecedented economic growth and the late 2000s crash

- ⤴ Important changes in the prevailing orthodox monetary macroeconomic model of growth and economic discipline allowed Spain to enter the EU and stabilise earlier imbalances by the early 2000s (see Varela 2006; Velarde 2009). From 2004 onward, negligent management of economic policies and Eurozone financial guidelines pushed the national economy into increasingly risky policy decisions and macroeconomic transactions (Velarde 2009).
- ⤴ New major emphasis in domestic demand, both in terms of consumption and investment. The mid-2000s saw a significant increase in imports: materials for construction and labour force for real estate development (Velarde 2009). Unprecedented emphasis and investment on the construction sector and property market (Lopez and Rodriguez 2011).
- ⤴ Tourism and property development perfectly suited the consolidation phase of economic opening and globalisation that the country experienced in the early 2000s. House prices soared, rising 220 percent between 1997 and 2007. And housing stock expanded by 30 percent (see Lopez and Rodriguez 2011).
- ⤴ In early 2007 Spain reported one of the highest GDP growth in Europe (Jimeno 2009; Lopez and Rodriguez 2011). In 2008, the onset of a new crisis: GDP falls to 0.7 percent in the last quarter 2008, negative balance of payments, great deficit in current accounts, significant increase in the country risk levels, steep decline in the price of Spanish assets (house prices as well as stocks and shares), high unemployment and high welfare spending e.g. the *paro* (unemployment) allowance: approx 15 percent of the workforce (Velarde 2009)
- ⤴ Spain finds itself at the brink of classification as a case for Eurozone bailout – following Greece, Ireland and Portugal. Unemployment rate at over 20 percent and a deep recession compounded by austerity measures aimed at reducing

deficit (Lopez and Rodriguez 2011).

ARGENTINA

The late 1970s – crisis as a preamble to the 1980s’ “lost decade”

- ⤴ For many decades throughout the twentieth century, the military “intervened directly or indirectly in the political process during every major economic downturn or political crisis” (Veigel 2009). *Junta Militar* since 1976 (military government). They centralised provincial resources and used discretionary transfers to allocate funds. The military carried out early neoliberal experiments in trade and finance which led to large external debt and substantial current account deficits in the late 1970s.
- ⤴ Internationally and through Latin America, structuralist development strategies advocating industrial programming: industrialisation, protectionist policies and inward-looking strategies in the form of import substitution industrialisation (ISI model) were increasingly problematic and their poor results questioned in light of the stable and rapid growth observed in export-led East Asian countries (Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007).
- ⤴ The ISI model became increasingly unsustainable due to growing macroeconomic and institutional instability. Government economic policy decisions were costly, leading to efficiency losses in the productive industrial sector while creating incentives for rent-seeking activities aimed at benefiting from State subsidies and protectionism (Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007).

The 1980s – the unfolding of the crisis: focus on early 1980s

- ⤴ A significant banking and currency crisis in 1981. Overvalued currency and uncompetitive exchange rates (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007). This situation had a strong effect on manufacturing industries, causing a steep fall in industrial output and employment. The economy was dependent on the import of capital goods in order to sustain industry.
- ⤴ In 1982 the national crisis was exacerbated by foreign debt crisis and Argentina’s economic performance was mostly negative throughout the decade.

Institutional and macroeconomic uncertainty prevailed through the 1980s – known as the lost decade (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007). Neoclassical orthodoxy regained power in the form of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) together with a monetarist domination of macroeconomic policy.

- ⤴ The military changed the course of economic policy at least five times between 1981-1983, they tried different forms of interventionism as well as economic liberalisation. These changes made visible deep divisions between their corporatist and the neoliberal factions. They abandoned market-oriented reform projects and ultimately withdrew to the barracks amid growing political turmoil in 1983.
- ⤴ Democratic return in 1983: presidential elections marked the transition from dictatorship, in which Raul Alfonsín was elected for the 1983-1989 period (Remmer and Wibbels 2000). The new government had to deal with a difficult economic, political and social situation (Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007). It adopted a heterodox programme of stabilisation, the *Plan Austral*, which failed to institutionalise effective economic governance, reverse industrial decline and contain hyperinflation (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007).
- ⤴ Provincial governments gradually regained importance with democratisation and provincial resources that had been (re)centralised by the military regime were freed from discretionary allocation mechanisms (see Eaton 2001).
- ⤴ “Between 1988 and 1990 Argentines rode the roller-coaster of hyperinflation and failed attempts to stabilise the economy” (Lewis and Torrents 1993:3). Political instability, chaos, looting and economic collapse saw the 1989 elections fall to Peronist Carlos Menem (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007).
- ⤴ In 1989 Washington Consensus (WC) policy recommendations gained further popularity among policymakers. They aimed at taming inflation, stabilising prices, and promoting deep structural reforms: import liberalisation, financial reform, deregulation, privatisation and tax reform.

The 1990s – ‘temporary’ recovery and preamble to the 2001 crisis

- ⤴ Argentina begins to grapple with economic adjustment, perhaps the most “successful” adjustment story of Latin America. SAPs and WC policies implied drastic budget cuts (Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007). “President Menem radically

restructured the economy by taking advantage of unprecedented access to global finance in the early 1990s” [...] “FDI rose from USD 3.3 billion in 1991 to USD 11 billion in 1992” (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007)

- ⤴ Entry to the MERCOSUR (a regional trading bloc) in 1991 gave Argentina access to a huge market in favourable terms, making possible economic specialisation in some sectors.
- ⤴ The 1990s were characterised by price stabilisation, inflation control, growth spurt (1991-1998), and the implementation of far reaching structural reforms: trade liberalisation, privatisation of utilities/public services, deregulation, WTO compromises, and international best practice norms in banking (following Basel financial regulation guidelines).
- ⤴ Convertibility Plan – high growth years. The first eight years (1991-1998) of the Plan helped the government to establish some degree of stability which allowed for long-term planning. The Plan represented the centrepiece of the new liberalism. It tied the peso in parity with the dollar, which helped to reduce inflation to less than 5 percent in 1994 and to achieve growth of approx 4.5 a year in average between 1991-1995 (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007).
- ⤴ The 1994 Constitution consolidated a Federal system with three tiers of government: Federal or National Government, Provincial Government, and Local Governments or Municipalities.
- ⤴ In the context of neoliberal reforms, “decentralisation served as a way to reduce central state spending”. For example, with provinces taking responsibilities for education and health, the federal/national government was able to shed hundreds of thousands of jobs between 1990-1992 (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007:91).
- ⤴ Internationally there have been numerous financial crises throughout the 1990s including Mexico, and several East Asian countries – all related to open capital markets (Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007). First generation WC recommendations had dismissed foreign exchange policy issues and said nothing on currency crisis prevention that could follow premature financial liberalisation in countries like Argentina (Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007). In 1998 new signs of recession started to appear: GDP and total factor productivity stopped growing and the economic downturn extended until 2001 when the biggest financial crisis in Argentina’s history unleashed.
- ⤴ In 1999, “in the midst of rising dissatisfaction with economic slowdown, the

decline of public services and rising poverty, a new centre-left government took office led by Fernando de La Rúa” (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007:92).

The 2000s – worst financial crisis in history and first steps towards recovery

- ✧ Argentina started the millennium with a shaky economic and financial position which led to its worst crisis in history – and simultaneously reconfirmed increasingly discredited 90s WC policy recommendations. In 2000, almost a third of the population of the country were poor according to the World Bank. “Poverty jumped from 38.3 in October 2001 to 57.5 percent a year later” (Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007:94). Income inequality also suffered a sharp rise in the early 2000s (Whitson 2007).
- ✧ The causes of the 2001 crisis were largely macroeconomic and institutional at the national level but were also exacerbated by external economic shocks. The crisis was not only a consequence of ‘bad’ economic policies but political (dis)order: Menem and his successor De la Rúa “had been unable or unwilling to control public spending and had been forced to borrow from abroad in order to govern” (Veigel 2009:3).
- ✧ The Convertibility Plan had failed to achieve permanent stability. High levels of corruption and a very chaotic political and economic transition reigned in 2001-2002. Large fiscal imbalances, high/unsustainable debt burden, lack of adjustment mechanisms led to market distortions, multiple protests over government policies and declining consumer confidence.
- ✧ Sovereign debt default in mid-December 2001: president De la Rúa resigns in the midst of the most severe economic crisis ever, a week of violence with several people dead and many wounded. Two days later provisional president Rodríguez Saa declared the suspension of all debt payments (Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007). The country defaulted on all its financial obligations.
- ✧ Numerous policy choices were nationally and internationally questioned: particularly the 2002 historic default, but also price controls, high export taxes, nationalisation of private pension funds. Mainstream economists called for second generation reforms in order to deal with socioeconomic shortcomings of earlier WC reforms, including complementary policies and building better institutional settings (Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007).

- ⤴ In 2003 growth was resumed and remained at very high levels since then until the second quarter of 2009 when the country reported a contraction of approx -0.8 percent. Large fiscal stimulus equal 9 percent GDP in 2008: directed to public works spending and alleviating short term fiscal problems. This was accompanied by dramatic nationalisation measures, such as that of the private-sector pension system.
- ⤴ “Nestor Kirchner had enjoyed a firm hold on power since 2003 and has been able to consolidate a new political and economic consensus based on state intervention in the economy, an undervalued peso, and the rejection of neoliberalism and free trade” (Veigel 2009:12). No financial assistance from the IMF has been required, and all outstanding debts were cleared in 2006.
- ⤴ Internationally, the economic environment has been beneficial for Argentina since the mid-2000s. High liquidity in financial markets and extremely high prices for natural resources due to growing demand from emerging markets like China and India benefited Argentina’s exports (mainly raw materials and agricultural products) (Veigel 2009). Domestically, “rapid growth has contributed to a significant reduction of unemployment and poverty” (Veigel 2009:13), and domestic sectoral interests have been kept relatively under control or at least they are not too conflictive while resources are plentiful.
- ⤴ However, international commodity prices (and Chinese demand) have declined since 2009 and Argentina’s economy has gradually contracted over the last years. Although there have been signs of crisis more recently (La Nacion 2014; BBC News 2014), default seems to be unlikely at present.

4.3 ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DECENTRALISATION

In the context of the generalised crisis in both Spain and Argentina, particularly during the 1980s and the first decade of the new millennium, the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata deserve specific attention. While a general overview of the multiple economic and political transformations experienced at the national level since the 1980s is indeed most useful, this section deals with changes at the local level – produced by political and fiscal decentralisation during the same period but with particular attention to episodes of crisis. The following illustrations aim to highlight differences while making an effort to recognise experiences that might not only be common to the case

studies but perhaps to a wider range of cities undergoing similar processes under similar circumstances elsewhere. According to Jessop (2002) crises result from transformations of social relations at multiple scales. Whether they are narrated as economic and/or political crises at a given moment in time, they are never an objective phenomenon that produces particular or standardised outcomes and/or responses. For him, both outcomes and responses depend on interpretations based in particular stories and the path dependency of places.

In Spain, for example, Moreno (2002) observes that the constitutional recognition of autonomous cultural communities in 1978 produced *de jure* asymmetries between Spanish regions (see Box 03 for an overview of the main issues of democratic transition and decentralisation in Spain), as each of them was able to decide their own degree of self-government and therefore each had different political capacities to change and produce policy responses to crisis (see Gonzalez 2005 for the experience of the Basque country, for example). In economic terms, such variations in the degree of self-government meant *de facto* regional economic disparities, which were exacerbated in times of economic downturn and produced contrasting consequences between the wealthier north-east and the poorer south (see Hamilton and Rodriguez-Pose 2001; Rodriguez-Pose 2000).

Box 03. DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION AND DECENTRALISATION IN SPAIN

“After a long hyper-centralist dictatorship (1939–75), a peaceful transition to democracy (1975–79), and an active involvement in the process of Europeanization after its accession to the European Economic Community (1986), Spain has undergone deep and far-reaching social transformations [...] With the disappearance of the dictator General Franco, the rise of demands for regional self- government reaffirmed Spain’s spontaneous inclination towards the autonomy of its nationalities and regions. The democratic parties had fought against Franco’s attempts of cultural genocide, repression and reinvention of history but did not have a clear-cut model for the type of decentralized state they broadly advocated” (p.399).

“Nevertheless, they shared the conviction that the legitimacy of democratic power was inexorably linked to implementing home rule of the country’s nationalities and regions [...] The constitutional expression of such a strong platform presented a great political

challenge, for Spanish modern history had witnessed tragic failures in the past when regional aspirations and the territorial sharing of power were concerned. However, the wide inter-party political consensus that made possible the drawing up of the 1978 Constitution succeeded in overcoming old reticence and mistrust. It also brought with it an element of ambiguity in the formulation of the *Estado de las Autonomías* ('State of Autonomies'), which is the name given to the new democratic and decentralized state [...] Subsequently, a *via media* was negotiated, which explicitly recognized one Spanish state as an ensemble of diverse peoples, historical nationalities and regions, and which has as supreme constitutional principles those of liberty, justice, equality and political pluralism" (p.400).

"As a result, the 1978 Spanish Constitution made it possible for one, three, all or none of the Autonomous Communities (*Comunidades Autónomas*, which comprise historical nationalities and regions) to be self-governed [...] With the passing of time, *de jure* asymmetries have been equalized somewhat, although the exercise of self-government implies *de facto* political disparities and diverse policy outputs implemented by each *Comunidad Autónoma* [...] Let us recall that the Spanish 1978 Constitution does not include the word 'federal' in any of its provisions. Nevertheless, the *Estado de las Autonomías* can be considered an instance of 'devolutionary federalism'. The process of federalization in Spain will involve *de facto* arrangements of power delimitation in its three-tier system of government (local, intermediate and central)"(p.401).

Source: Moreno (2002)

In Argentina, the system of revenue sharing between central, provincial and local administrations has undergone numerous changes since its establishment in 1934, mainly as a result of transitions between democratic and non-democratic regimes as well as numerous changes in the direction of economic policy (see Box 04 for a more detailed discussion). As in the case of Spanish regions, these changes have had uneven consequences for Argentinean provinces. Frequent changes have not only challenged the *coparticipación* system itself but created rivalries between different localities when revenues have been more limited or scarce. Therefore, it is indeed important to consider the dimensions and directions of changes enabled by decentralisation across cities and how they might have been affected by economic and political events unfolding at the national level.

Box 04. DEMOCRATISATION AND DECENTRALISATION IN ARGENTINA

“[...] Decentralisation – defined as increases in the policy authority of lower-level state officials relative to national-level state officials – is not everywhere a strictly new phenomenon [...] Even though Argentina experienced numerous swings between democratic and authoritarian governments and between liberal and statist development models throughout the 20th century, it always maintained a revenue sharing system in place [...] The Argentine experience with revenue sharing offers qualified support for the argument that democratisation drives decentralisation. Many of the increases in revenue sharing occurred in democratising periods and many of the reversals took place under non-democratic governments. A closer look at each of major changes in these rules, however, reveals that decentralising governments have been both democratic and authoritarian and that centralising governments have also been both democratic and authoritarian. An authoritarian government in the early 1970s engineered one of Argentina’s most significant decentralisation episodes. Within democratic periods, revenue decentralisation has been the result of ‘bottom-up’ pressures from democratically-elected subnational officials rather than ‘top-down’ decision making by chief executives at the federal level” (p.2).

“As in 1946, the centralisation of revenue under the previous military regime ignited ‘bottom-up’ pressures for decentralisation after the return to democracy in 1983 [...] One can understand how these pressures resulted in decentralisation by evaluating the changing balance of power between the Radical and Peronist parties. In the 1983 elections the Radical party won the federal executive branch and a majority of seats in the lower chamber of the National Congress. Its candidates, however, won only seven of the 23 gubernatorial elections. In contrast, the Peronist party won a majority of provincial governorships and enough seats to dominate the National Senate. In other words, the partisan composition of the government was divided both at the federal level and between the federal and provincial levels” (p.18).

“Though provincial governors had some difficulty agreeing to a unified stance vis-a-vis the federal government, they finally proposed increasing provincial shares, based on the revenue that provinces had received under the former law and the estimated cost of providing the services that the military government had unilaterally decentralised [...] Alfonsín’s ability to resist decentralisation evaporated with his political strength. First, the austral plan collapsed in 1987, giving way to renewed inflation. Second, the Peronist victory in the 1987 congressional elections meant that the Radical party lost its majority in

the lower chamber. After the elections, Alfonsín acceded to the demands of subnational Peronist leaders for greater decentralisation in exchange for Peronist support for a new tax reform in Congress” (p.19).

“[It is evident] that successive generations of political leaders have sought to shift the country back and forth along the decentralisation continuum. In explaining the direction and the timing of this movement, hypotheses that attribute causal roles to democratisation and/or liberalisation help illuminate certain aspects of Argentina’s experience [...] With respect to the democratisation hypothesis, the historical record in Argentina confirms the more general finding in the contemporary period that the democratic election of subnational officials unleashes a powerful force for greater decentralisation [...] Ultimately, movement along the decentralisation continuum reflects the shifting balance of power among political actors, in both liberal and statist periods and under democratic and non-democratic governments alike” (p.24).

Source: Eaton (2001)

Decentralisation has been a relatively new experience for both Spain and Argentina. It produced a break with old centralist and authoritarian systems and set into motion major transformations in the economic and political life of cities. While economic [neo]liberalisation and democratisation feature prominently among the changes experienced at the national level in the last quarter of the last century (see section 4.2.1), decentralisation parallels such significant changes at the local level. After all, they are not unrelated. In fact, political and fiscal decentralisation might be partly interpreted as consequences of larger national processes. As Eaton (2001) observes, demands for decentralisation were unleashed as democratic regimes returned or were established in developing countries – but also industrialised Spain. Furthermore, in an attempt to reduce the role of the state and achieve fiscal stability, national government leaders tended to endorse decentralisation as a policy that furthered their [neo]liberal agendas (see Vellacott 2007).

Political and fiscal decentralisation is a moving target in the sense that it is not definite and it is still unfolding across both Spain and Argentina – and indeed in many other countries where devolution policies have gained ground over the last few decades. It is perhaps too soon even now to answer difficult questions regarding the actual outcomes

of decentralisation, which is also not the aim of this section. Literature analysing the consequences of greater political authority and financial autonomy for democracy and economic performance at the local level is not only extensive but also diverse, and seems to gain momentum every time wider circumstances change and so becomes the focus of research (see Rodriguez-Pose and Gill 2003; Ezcurra and Rodriguez-Pose 2009; Chattopadhyay 2013 for a variety of reviews). Indeed, some forms of local state autonomy are not entirely new. Argentina, for example, could be regarded as the most decentralised country in Latin America due to an early experiment of federal revenue sharing in the 1930s (Eaton 2001). Similarly, in Spain, the 1978 constitution recognised national and cultural differences that had existed for hundreds of years and which had granted different levels of 'local' autonomy before Franco's centralist dictatorship (Moreno 2002). Nevertheless, in both Spain and Argentina, the last three decades seem to have been freed from significant swings between democratic and authoritarian regimes and between explicitly liberal and statist economic models. Henceforth this is a good period to explore what appears as an uninterrupted unfolding of political and fiscal decentralisation from the perspective of cities, especially Valencia and Mar del Plata.

4.3.1 VALENCIA

Following democratisation, political and fiscal decentralisation opened up a new horizon for the future of Valencia. Although there have been both opportunities and challenges, this section is more concerned with the latter. The first municipal elections were celebrated in April 1979, when a socialist government (after coalition PSPV-PSOE and PCE) was elected and successively voted in office until the 1991 elections when the right returned to dominate local politics. This period of socialist leadership coincides with a decade that started with significant macroeconomic difficulties and political volatility at the national level but ended more optimistically in both respects. The early 1980s were years of visible crisis with Valencia, as well as many cities across Spain and the world, experiencing a mixture of economic structural changes, high levels of indebtedness, and political transitions.

Economically, the city experienced significant levels of deindustrialisation, accompanied by a total abandonment of the agrarian sector, and an increasing shift towards a service economy that altogether led to high rates of unemployment and

subsequently to significant demographic stagnation – due to internal migration and lower birth rates (Alcala-Santaella et al 2012). Politically, the socialist governments had to deal with multiple challenges: confronting the inherited chaos in terms of urban infrastructure and services, maintaining balanced relationships with other levels of government which despite being from socialist parties too had different ambitions and agendas, keeping (uncomfortable) promises such as the removal of monuments or other commemorations to Franco around the city, demonstrating to Madrid the need for more adequate legislation and financial arrangements in local governance, responding to daily disagreements from internal opposition, and deciding carefully on the execution of necessary projects to vindicate years of infrastructural abandonment and dereliction (Sorribes 2012). Last but not least, social discontent was visible across Valencia. Despite some attempts of the socialist government to recognise and institutionalise some of the historical functions of neighbourhood associations, social movements underwent a profound crisis in the 1980s. While many neighbourhood leaders were gradually incorporated as *consejales* in the local government (Ayuntamiento), this did not mean more representation for associations but fragmentation of their organisational structure (Alcala-Santaella et al 2012). Furthermore, associations found it difficult to devise a role and function for themselves within the nascent local democracy (see Subirats et al 2012:135). The new normative framework of decentralisation neither reinstated or institutionalised the ‘historical’ role of neighbourhood associations – which were an important and active component of Valencia’s social movements before decades of dictatorship under Franco – nor did the level of participation that democracy had promised materialise (Alcala-Santaella et al 2012).

Given the multiple political and economic difficulties experienced during the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Spanish government postponed essential reforms of local state finance for nearly a decade after democratisation had started. The *Ley Reguladora de las Haciendas Locales* (1988) introduced important changes in local revenues. It reinforced the responsibility of lower tiers of government to manage their own economic interests (see also the *Ley de Bases de Régimen Local* (1985) for details on the minimum legal framework common to all local governments). Up to 1988, the Spanish system of local finance had undergone several minor reforms. Until then, the main sources of revenue for municipalities had been taxes, user charges and other similar revenues, as well as grants, debt and loans, but centralised financial legislation

had limited the ability of local governments to act independently (Santigosa 1992). After the *Ley Reguladora de las Haciendas Locales*, the basic structure of local revenues did not change significantly but the new emphasis on autonomy and financial sufficiency inspired several projects in local finances which however took several years to consolidate (Santigosa 1992). According to Rodriguez-Pose (2000), the national government remained considerably involved (in a somewhat uneven manner) in the solution of regional and local issues well after the start of the millennium, whether through direct participation in local infrastructure projects or indirect provision of resources i.e. budget transfers.

Local governments across Spain have also increased their international connections through multiple kinds of agreements with supranational organisations, institutions and city governments from distant countries. In Valencia, according to Sorribes (2012), the accession to the then European Economic Community not only propelled the opening of local markets and opportunities for exports but a radical change in expectations, ending the uncertainty and possibility of “involution” that political and economic isolation had produced under Franco. Since 1986, European funding has become an important source of revenue and key instrument for the development of ‘backward’ or ‘lagging’ areas and the correction of inequality across Spanish regions (Rodriguez-Pose 2000:101). During the 1990s “the regional policies traditionally carried out by the Spanish state, the EU and regional governments have been active in designing and implementing policies whose main aim is the promotion of economic activity [but also] to achieve greater economic and social cohesion” (Rodriguez-Pose 2000:92).

In terms of financial self-sufficiency, “after an agreement of the Council for Fiscal and Financial Policy in 1993, Communities under the common regime [such as the *Comunidad de Valencia*] came to receive 15 percent of the total personal income tax collected in their own territory. Later on, this percentage rose to 30 percent for the period 1997-2001” (Moreno 2000:403). This represented an important change in the approach to regional financing. Furthermore, percentage changes in public expenditure clearly illustrate the scale/proportions of the devolution of power in Spain. As Moreno (2000:404) notes, “between 1981 and 1997, central government expenditure dropped from 87 percent to 59 percent of the total, and regional spending rose from 3 to 27 percent. Local spending increased from 10 to 14 percent across Spain”.

Although levels of political and fiscal decentralisation have indeed increased in Spain over the last three decades, local governments are not autonomous organisations that function without contact with upper-level tiers of government as the constitution and other normative legislation might suggest. Intergovernmental relations are therefore a very important aspect of decentralisation processes in Spain. Although the place and role of local governments in Spain – and also other countries with federal systems and multiple tiers of government, such as Argentina – seem to be important areas of contemporary research (Agranoff 2010; Toboso and Scorsone 2010), complex relationships between local governments and their regional/national counterparts have coexisted since the 1980s. Indeed, they continue to be complex and challenging but they might have already overcome the difficulties of consolidation. In the early years of decentralisation, during the 1980s when significant economic difficulties and political tensions were at their peak (see Alcalá-Santaella 2012; Sorribes 2012; and Santigosa 1992 for illustrative examples), intergovernmental relations seemed to be more haphazard and thus somewhat difficult to manage. While some of the early ‘coordinating’ challenges observed in Valencia’s first municipal government might be explained by technicalities related to newly established organisational structures and the incorporation of new actors, the uncertainty of informal elements of the political culture; such as party alliances and clientelistic networks, might have played (and still play) a more relevant role (see Agranoff 2010). Nevertheless, until recently, these elements seem to have been hugely understated in analyses of decentralisation. The implications are important, particularly because there are significant ongoing debates in urban studies regarding the actual role of the local state for which a closer examination of the formal/informal composition of the institutions of local government would be necessary. Indeed, as Helmke and Levitsky (2004:725) note, there are many contexts in which informal institutions can explain formal institutional outcomes and political behaviour more thoroughly – whether in areas of legislative politics, party organisation, electoral financing, federalism and/or public administration. Although some of the limitations of the local state have already been studied and attributed to multi-hierarchical constellations of power that hinder some of their functions/capacity, more research on the informal elements sustaining and shaping intergovernmental relations might be needed in order to better understand the *Realpolitik* and the unwritten rules that often complement formal structures and official channels.

4.3.2 MAR DEL PLATA

The history of revenue sharing in Argentina is rooted in the 1853 Constitution. It endowed the provinces with revenue raising powers – including total control over taxes on production and partial control over consumption taxes (Pirez 1986, in Eaton 2001:4). While the federal government was able to finance its expenditure from trade taxes during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the provinces were able to raise their own revenue from domestic consumption taxes. This situation dramatically changed during the Great Depression when Argentina's trade declined sharply and the federal government desperately needed alternative sources of finance (Eaton 2001). In this context, the system of *coparticipación* was born in 1934 – an agreement whereby the provinces delegated to the central government exclusive rights over specific taxes in exchange for an automatic share in the revenues collected. A similar system of *coparticipación* has also been agreed between numerous provinces and the municipalities in their jurisdiction (Macon 1985, in Eaton 2001:5). The Province of Buenos Aires, for instance, is required by law to allocate a proportion of the total tax revenues received from both the Federal *coparticipación* pool as well as its own provincial tax system to each of its 134 municipalities – including General Pueyrredon/Mar del Plata (Hebe Balbo 2008). The technicalities and functioning of this system of Provincial-Municipal *coparticipación* is very complex, even in its normative and legal terms, which leaves significant space for confusions and contradictions that however seem to be overcome and resolved through less formal mechanisms in practice.

It is important to highlight that despite their multiple shared responsibilities for tax collection with the national government, neither provinces nor municipalities have completely delegated their taxing duties to the central state but only those that overlapped with federal taxes (Eaton 2001:6). Although the system of *coparticipación* has somewhat undermined the autonomy of the provinces, subsequent increases in the share that they receive from the federal government could be read as decentralising. As Eaton (2001) puts it, considering that approximately 65 percent (or more) of the revenue spent by subnational governments comes from the *coparticipación* scheme, Argentina features as one of the most fiscally decentralised countries in Latin America (see also Saiegh and Tommasi (1999) for extended discussion). In addition, contrary to other

systems in which transfers to lower-tiers of government depend on various conditions for spending, the provinces in Argentina are not obliged to follow any federal government guidance. According to the World Bank (1991 in Eaton 2001:7), most evidence suggests that the provinces used revenue sharing to greatly expand public employment at the provincial level since democracy returned. Therefore, while the autonomy of provinces and municipalities might have relatively declined in terms of raising tax revenue, they have maintained and increased their autonomy over expenditure.

The *coparticipación* system has undergone multiple reforms since the 1930s. In 1983, after years of military rule when revenues from *coparticipación* (and otherwise) had virtually disappeared from the arcades of provinces and municipalities due to the recentralisation of tax revenues, demands for the decentralisation of local finances gained strength. Nevertheless, the newly established democratic government was unable and unwilling to make significant financial reforms that could put at risk their fragile political stand. Instead, the federal government opted for a series of *ad hoc* strategies to distribute resources until 1987 when a new *coparticipación* law was passed. According to this, provinces would receive a share of 56.7 percent from the *coparticipación* revenue pool – a figure proposed by provincial governors based on the (generous) shares they had received from past democratic governments and the cost of newly decentralised services (Eaton 2001). The 1990s, however, saw the recentralisation of *coparticipación* revenues under Menem's administration. Two fiscal pacts were signed in 1992 and 1993, whereby provinces not only surrendered their claims over 15 percent of the funds received from transfers but also accepted a set of conditions from the federal government concerning changes in local socioeconomic and fiscal policies, which had to be met in order for them to receive the 'guaranteed' revenue transfers (Rezk 1996 in Eaton 2001:19). In turn, these agreements would have a negative effect in municipal finances.

In terms of political autonomy, transition to democracy in 1983 provided the space for a combination of domestic and international actors to advocate for a reformulated relationship between national and local levels of government. In other words, they demanded greater local political participation, a wider variety of social concessions, and expressed the increasing need to articulate public and private actors locally as well the

need to modernise the state and therefore create a new role for municipalities – all of which would work together to advance decentralisation and therefore achieve significant organisational transformations (Catenazzi and Reese 2001, in Bocker 2005:279). The assumption was that the closer the state got to local communities, the more effective the strategies and interventions devised would be in solving the most urgent urban issues. Nevertheless, according to Ceceña (2001), the configuration of such local agencies to deal with newly delegated responsibilities and promote local socioeconomic development is never unproblematic as embedded power imbalances facilitate the creation of alliances amongst the most powerful groups, which then put their own priorities and demands at the top of the urban policy agendas.

The 1994 Constitution not only consolidated the return of democracy but conferred unprecedented levels of autonomy on provinces and municipalities. According to this, each province is required to draw up its own constitution following the general precepts of the federal system, while granting the autonomy of municipalities for several administrative, economic and financial purposes (Article 5 and Article 123). Like in Spain, these reforms did not come about right after the first democratic elections in 1983. On the contrary, the process was slow and contradictory during the early years of democracy due to significant economic difficulties, generalised political instability and issues of (mis)coordination between different tiers of government (see Bocker 2005:281). Although greater political and fiscal autonomy was indeed good news, the situation for local authorities was particularly challenging and made the ‘municipalisation’ of the crisis of the state even harder to deal with, as new roles and responsibilities were systematically transferred to largely inexperienced and unprepared lower-tiers of government (Arroyo 1997, in Bocker 2005:282). In Mar del Plata, and several other intermediate cities, these challenges were accompanied by the rapid decline of traditional economic activities, disinvestment, and unemployment.

4.4 URBAN POLICIES AND CITYWIDE STRATEGIES

The previous section illustrated the stories of Valencia and Mar del Plata in terms of political and fiscal decentralisation, highlighting major transformations and some of the challenges faced by these cities due to a mixture of national and local processes such as democratisation and/or economic crisis. The aim was not to suggest a direct causal

relationship between increased economic and political uncertainty at the national level and local transformations – although there are some connections. Instead, the aim was to follow the political and fiscal decentralisation trajectories of two cities located in countries that would normally be thought of separately within the global North and South, but which appear to have undergone similar processes of economic and political transformation over the last three decades. This section builds on the analyses of Valencia and Mar del Plata in terms of urban policies and strategic planning with the aim of highlighting differences, similarities and possible shared experiences across the two cities and to indicate the possibility for a more substantive dialogue. The idea of economic and political crisis plays a minor yet important role in this section. As we will see, while some of the early urban policy efforts and the emergence of strategic planning initiatives in both cities were driven by a perceived necessity (but also political ambition and/or opportunity) to overcome longstanding urban economic issues and to revise the direction of their future, they were also shaped by a strong sense of crisis.

According to secondary literature reviewed for this section, it could be said that Valencia and Mar del Plata have followed opposite directions in the political processes concerning urban policy-making, but this has nonetheless led to a number of similar policy outputs and outcomes. Whereas Valencia has gradually moved away from ‘right to the city’ inspired urban policies and embraced less inclusive mechanisms of policymaking, Mar del Plata seems to have distanced itself from orthodox and somewhat top-down approaches to urban policymaking and engaged with more consensual and participatory methods. This section outlines the experiences of each city in urban policy making from the early 1980s to the late 2000s.

4.4.1 VALENCIA

Alcala-Santaella et al (2012) argue that numerous urban policy interventions inspired by Lefebvre’s (1969) *Right to the City* and seeking to reinstate the socio-spatial equilibrium of the city were enacted in Valencia during the 1980s. Despite the multiple economic and political constraints affecting the municipality of Valencia through the first half of the decade, there was a visible political compromise to compensate for decades of socioeconomic abandonment and urban neglect, particularly of the most popular social groups. In 1984, for example, several *Planes Especiales de Protección*

aimed at rehabilitating neighbourhoods with significant levels of decline were approved. Whether these interventions achieved what they aimed for or not is open to debate (see Sorribes 2012 for a balanced reflexion). However, it was not until the somewhat brighter years of the late 1980s – and indeed after the consolidation of political and fiscal autonomy, and the generalised euphoria after the accession of Spain to the EU in 1986 – that more comprehensive urban policy measures were taken. The *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana* (1988), for instance, which reflected the principles sustaining the role of the local administration as well as the direction of urban policies. Indeed, infrastructure projects represented an important part of local government policies but social aspects were also included in the urban agenda. Although intergovernmental relations seemed to hinder the actions of the municipality in different ways, the city changed significantly in the late 1980s. The provision of basic public infrastructure (the first line of the metro and roads more generally), the recuperation of public spaces (Turia Gardens and many squares), the rehabilitation of educational, sport and health facilities across city neighbourhoods, and the introduction of a new network of social services all represent important projects that shaped the urban competencies and strategies of the government of Valencia in the medium and long term (Sorribes 2012; Alcalá-Santaella *et al* 2012).

The visible emphasis of urban policies on infrastructure projects and the built environment in the late 1980s was reinforced over time. In an unusual fashion, even the municipality of Valencia and upper-level tiers of government (controlled by opponent parties) seemed to converge in the main ideas surrounding the aims and purpose of urban policies. Essentially, there was strong consensus between municipal and regional governments on the broad orientation of urban policies, namely, a shift away from slow growth and focus on the improvement of living standards towards the creation of economic incentives and marketisation of the city (see Alcalá-Santaella *et al* 2012). The latter logic was to reconfigure the original principles of the *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana* (1988) and subsequently to shape the direction of urban policies up to recent years (see Gaja 2002 in Subirats *et al* 2012b:139; Sorribes 2012). This shift became increasingly evident during the 1990s, particularly after a rightwing coalition (between the *Partido Popular* and *Unión Valenciana*) won the 1991 local elections.

As the 1990s unfolded, the discourse from diverse political and economic actors calling

for the need to promote mega-projects at the city level grew increasingly strong. Even the otherwise contrasting opinion of political actors at different levels of government seemed to gradually align. In 1995, the regional government – in agreement with the local government – commissioned the *Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias* (City of the Arts and Sciences) to be designed by famous architect Santiago Calatrava (see Rausell 2004). Similarly, the municipality commissioned the rehabilitation – in the sense of restructuring rather than protection – of the historic centre of Valencia in 1992. This was developed and funded through a multilateral agreement between the regional government and the municipality as well as the EU (Alcala-Santaella *et al* 2012). These material interventions in the urban landscape of Valencia were to consolidate the now established philosophy that mega-projects could function as urban policies and strategies *per se* (see Diaz Orueta and Fainstein 2008 in Subirats *et al* 2012:138). Furthermore, they marked a departure from the historic urban landscape of the city which would later be reinforced by other mega-projects aimed at opening the historic centre to the sea and by implication changing the *Paseo Marítimo* (maritime facade) of the city as well as fostering the construction of new high-end residential/commercial spaces (see Gaja 1996 in Subirats *et al* 2012:140; and Cuco Giner 2009).

For Alcala-Santaella *et al* (2012), these changes in the urban landscape of Valencia have had more profound consequences in sociopolitical terms. Firstly, they virtually dissipated all the ‘right to the city’ ideals that inspired the early stages of urban policy in Valencia. Secondly, the processes through which such projects were decided and acted upon jeopardised the enhanced level of social participation that the new democratic system had promised. Instead, it seems that participatory channels gradually disappeared (or were somewhat deinstitutionalised) and policy decisions were increasingly made to satisfy competitiveness, economic growth and the interests of a powerful few. Nevertheless, as Sorribes (2012) observes, this trend might be explained by the relative absence of a feasible alternative in the local political environment of Valencia. In fact, a situation that might otherwise have led to punishment at the polls has paradoxically resulted in greater popularity.

In 1993, the municipality of Valencia initiated the design of the first *Plan Estratégico de Valencia*. The plan was to be developed in cooperation with multiple private and public sector groups: from public administration, universities, business associations, the

chamber of commerce, third sector organisations, trade unions and so forth – which would all work ‘together’ to decide upon a common urban strategy to guide the future of the city. The initiative was completely local, with no direct involvement of other tiers of government, but influenced by the experience of cities such as Barcelona. As in the case of earlier urban policy interventions, and other strategic initiatives from elsewhere, there are contrasting opinions regarding the intended and actual achievements of the *Plan Estratégico de Valencia* (see Alcalá-Santaella *et al* 2012; Cantanero Sanz *et al* 2011). Indeed, there is literature assessing multiple other cases of strategic planning initiatives that provide rich empirical evidence from across the world (see Pascual i Esteve 1999; Healey 2007). The point I would like to make here, however, is that following a brief crisis affecting virtually all levels of Spanish government in the early 1990s (partly a consequence of the post EEC integration euphoria and various domestic economic weaknesses during integration; Cubel 2004; Varela 2006; Sorribes 2012 for more details) and a not unrelated slowdown in Valencia’s local economy (including rising unemployment and public deficit), there was a strong belief among local policymakers that the only way forward was to stimulate a new expansionary cycle – greater than the one experienced in the late 1980s and driven by heavy investments in large-scale projects that would supply the city with the necessary infrastructure for the development of tertiary activities in the future (Alcalá-Santaella *et al* 2012:138).

The *Plan Estratégico de Valencia* played an important role in the urban policy affairs of the city from the early 1990s until very recently – when it has gradually lost its steam (Alcalá-Santaella 2013 – informal conversation). It not only served as an invaluable platform to formulate and lead interventions that were deemed urban policy priorities but served also to orchestrate some of the processes involved – i.e. to facilitate implementation. While the benefit of hindsight has enabled critics to claim that the principles of participation and cooperation emphasised in the early stages of the plan – and indeed through its entire development – never materialised in practice, others have gone further to argue that the plan only helped to legitimise new forms of urban policy intervention with a false promise of participation and consensus (Alcalá-Santaella *et al* 2012). It is important to consider such views as they might partly explain the emergence of alternative forms of community organisation and/or social mobilisation across Spanish cities today, aimed at resisting urban policy interventions as well as raising other demands (see Xambo and Gines 2012 for an analysis of the case of Valencia).

However, the point is that in Valencia, despite much criticism, the same political party and even the same mayor have been consecutively voted in to the local government elections with absolute majorities in the years 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011 (Sorribes 2012).

Rita Barbera (the Mayor) has been a leading figure in the *Plan Estratégico de Valencia* since its early stages. A plan that, after successive normative reformulations, increasingly gained force to pervasively influence urban policy initiatives and interventions across the city for many years. From the mid-1990s to the late 2000s, urban policies were heavily – if not exclusively – associated with the development of mega-projects and mega-events (Gaja 1996 in Subirats et al 2012:143). For instance, the original project of the *Ciudad de las Ciencias* was extended to include other iconic buildings such as the *Palau de les Arts* (concert hall) and the *L'Oceanografic* and the *L'Agora*. The new *Palacio de Congresos de Valencia*, designed by Norman Foster, opened in 1998 while many other projects of public infrastructure were also underway – including roads, the metro, the tram, numerous parks and squares, and the extension of the waterfront. The organisation of mega-events – associated with particular infrastructure projects around the port area – also became an important component of the urban policy agenda in the new millennium. The Americas Cup 2007 and F1 Grand Prix in 2008, 2009 and 2010 are two representative examples. While these urban policy interventions have most definitely changed the image and reshaped the vision of Valencia, there seem to be important differences between the normative and discursive elements of the strategic plan – as well as other urban policies more generally – and the actual outcomes (Sorribes 2012; Cantanero Sanz et al 2011). These type of differences have been studied in various strands of political science dealing with state policy implementation and/or public choice, for example (see Vellacott 2007). However, they have been less explored from institutionalist perspectives that would take account of the role of informal practices in local policymaking processes: political culture, clientelistic relations, informal networks and other forms of alliances which in the Spanish context might be as important as formal laws in shaping outcomes (see Hall et al 1990; Agranoff 2010 for illustrations and evidence from Spain and Valencia respectively).

The multiple economic and political vicissitudes experienced in Spain/Valencia until 2008 provide a crisis-prone scenario that allows us to critically review and, with the

benefit of hindsight, to reflect upon the processes that have shaped the different urban policy interventions observed in Valencia over the last three decades (Map 02 shows the location of some of the urban projects and initiatives that will be examined in further chapters). Furthermore, the post-2008 scenario allows us to explore recent shifts in urban policy agendas that seek to address the local government's dilemma between maintaining social policies to ameliorate the effects of the crisis, advancing fiscal retrenchment to reduce deficit and regain financial trust, and/or continuing with the dominant urban policy agenda to stimulate a new expansionary phase of growth. This means examining the latest urban policy outputs but also the processes through which some of them have been and are being brainstormed, informed, negotiated, formulated and decided upon – considering diverse narratives, interests, power relations as well as feasible alternatives. We turn to this in chapter 8.

4.4.2 MAR DEL PLATA

Although a number of large public infrastructure projects were under construction in the early 1970s across Argentine cities, partly encouraged by the success of the industrialisation model and the welfare state that characterised the preceding decades, the return of a military government and several economic difficulties exacerbated by regressive policies at the federal level brought such ambitious and expansionary plans to a halt (see Bocker 2005:273-74). In the 1980s, Argentine cities were not only affected by structural adjustment processes and conditional administrative reforms that followed the debt crisis, but also by the effects of an increasing internationalisation of financial activities. The latter trend was reflected in the work of several authors and multilateral institutions who had started to reconsider the place of cities as entities of economic productivity that required new institutional spaces for socio-political interaction, new kinds of urban management/governance, and new forms of relationship between the



Huertos Urbanos Benimaclet (2012-2017)



El Jardín de Turia (1982-1987)



Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias (1998-2009)



Map 02. Location of some of the large-scale projects and community-led initiatives that have shaped the urban landscape of Valencia since the 1980s.

state and society (Bocker 2005; Camagni 2002; Cignoli *et al* 1997; CEPAL 2003a; CEPAL 2003b). This implied the reconfiguration of local priorities and strategies and therefore of urban policies, which in turn would have an imprint on the landscape of cities – whether in the form of new types of infrastructure such as shopping malls, theatres, theme parks or socioeconomic phenomena such as gentrification (see Ciccolella and Magnaqui 1999; Medina 2012, 2014). The Province of Buenos Aires, where Mar del Plata and many other municipalities are located, gives evidence of the kind of ‘fractures’ that a combination of crisis and the reorientation of urban policy directions produced in the landscape of cities during the late 1980s. As Bocker (2005:277) puts it, the Province of Buenos Aires displays a dual and fractured urban space: new central spaces that respond to the logics of post-Fordism and postmodernism on one hand, and vestiges of spaces that responded to the logics of Fordism and were rapidly declining on the other.

In contrast to several cities in the Province of Buenos Aires that were significantly affected by macroeconomic adjustment processes and issues of (un)governability in the 1980s, Mar del Plata occupied a relatively privileged position. Although the city had had issues of infrastructure and capacity for years, which became more visible in the 1980s, it has consistently benefitted from tourism and large numbers of visitors. Nevertheless, the development of the city continues to be questioned and criticised for its lack of urban planning. The construction boom, the ambition of becoming a modern city and property speculation in the 1960s, for example, were all factors that influenced a somewhat disorganised architectural development in which nearly 70 percent of the historical centre was demolished (Pastoriza 2009). In the 1990s, the possibility of urban planning interventions that could revive the ambitious projects of earlier decades became increasingly unfeasible. In fact, urban policies aimed at dealing with planning matters virtually disappeared from the local political agenda. Urban policies were thus developed in a context of wide economic and political uncertainty – partly shaped by the longterm consequences of structural adjustment programmes and the associated retreat of the state – that required the prioritisation of policies oriented to tackle pressing social issues such as poverty (Bocker 2005:278). Nonetheless, and despite the creation of the *Secretaria de Desarrollo Urbano y Medio Ambiente* (SDUMA) during the liberal-conservative administration of Mario Russak (1991-1995), which aimed at dealing with issues such as insufficient sewer infrastructure and coastal water pollution,

no actual achievements were reported and the secretariat was dissolved during the administration of Elio Aprile in the following period (1995-1999).

The second half of the 1990s was even more difficult for municipalities across Argentina, and Mar del Plata was not an exception. Financial imbalances and a growing fiscal deficit required tough measures to tackle unsustainable debt and borrowing (see Bocker 2005). In late 1995, municipal expenditure exceeded revenues by 10 percent and the administration of Elio Aprile was finding it difficult to keep the promises which they had made during the electoral campaign, concerning the delivery of fundamental projects of public infrastructure such as the expansion of hospitals and the reinforcement of seawalls. In 1996, given the ongoing financial constraints, the municipality decided to carry out an unprecedented popular consultation to decide the future of 25 projects of urban infrastructure. The proposal put forward by the municipality, including a plan for financing the projects and an associated increase in local property taxes, was approved by 54 percent of the constituency (Medina 2012). However, socioeconomic problems intensified towards the late 1990s and early 2000s when unemployment figures peaked and poverty increased significantly across Argentina. The collapse of fishing activities, the textile industry, the metallurgic sector and the decline in tourism and commerce more generally placed Mar del Plata as one of the cities with highest unemployment and poverty in 2002 (Gennero and Ferraro 2002). These events put further pressure on the already constrained financial situation of the municipality, which meant that some of the projects previously approved in popular consultation were severely delayed or incomplete. The inability of the administration to deal with the ongoing socioeconomic crisis and the rapid loss of political legitimacy led the Mayor, Elio Aprile, to delegate its charge to Daniel Katz (the alderman with most votes after Aprile in the 1999 elections) in 2002 – who not only finished the term but was later elected for the period 2003-2007.

The combination and accumulation of economic difficulties and political uncertainty across all levels of government in the early 2000s provided the conditions in which Argentine municipalities started to actively seek new ways of policy intervention. The need for such an exploratory quest and subsequent change was clear. Local governments were not only being affected by decisions and structural processes taking place beyond their jurisdictions at the national level, but they were also being made

responsible and accountable for providing solutions. In 2002, the *Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata* appeared in the landscape of local politics as an alternative instrument to evaluate and address increasingly complex socioeconomic and urban problems. This new strategic initiative promised to foster higher levels of efficiency in the face of uncertainty and scarcer resources as well as the opportunity to reconfigure traditional approaches to urban planning that were centralised and technocratic and thus unable to deal with social development matters such as cohesion and equality (Becker 2005).

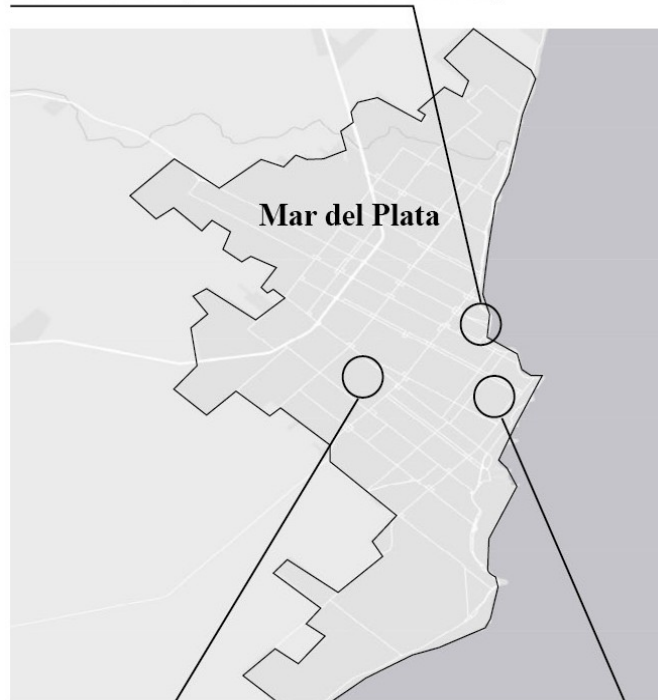
Although the first official strategic plan in Argentina was formulated in the city of Córdoba in 1993, as an early municipal experiment that sought to reconfigure traditional ways of local management, it took almost a decade before Mar del Plata began its own project to formulate a strategic plan. The emphasis on the strategic and participatory elements of this form of local intervention gradually attracted city governments from across Argentina, who were also persuaded by positive experiences from elsewhere – mainly the US since 1981 (San Francisco) and Europe since 1992 (Barcelona) (see Pascual i Esteve 1999; Mantobani 2003 in Becker 2005:284). The first formal step towards the consolidation of the *Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata* occurred in April 2001 when a self-organised group of over sixty institutions and individuals assembled and decided to work on the creation of the *Junta Promotora*, which aimed to promote the need and benefits of adopting such a form of planning. In October 2002, eighteen institutions including various universities and business associations were designated with operational roles and functioned as the *Comisión Ejecutiva*, while the Mayor, Daniel Katz, was designated honorary president of the new *Comisión Mixta* (see *Plan Estratégico de Mar del Plata* 2004:10). I examine the circumstances and processes through which this strategic phase of planning emerged and unfolded in chapter 8. Map 03 shows the location of some of the urban projects that have shaped the strategic development experience of Mar del Plata over the last three decades.

4.5 CONCLUSION

Spain and Argentina share multiple similarities in terms of governmental and institutional structures, and many social, economic and political processes are rooted in their longstanding historical ties. For most of the twentieth century, they both featured



Frente Marítimo (Cumbre de las Américas 2005)



Polideportivo Islas Malvinas (Panamerican Games 1995)



Calles para la Gente (ICES-IDB 2014)



Map 03. Location of some of the most iconic and large-scale projects that have shaped the urban landscape of Mar del Plata since the 1990s.

centralised economic systems and a mixture of authoritarian and/or populist political regimes. The institutional (in)capacities and inherited relations between the state and society were determinant factors in the policy choices that each individual country made at the time of democratic transition. Certainly, the wider economic, social, political and institutional transformations observed in Spain and Argentina since the early 1980s are essential for the analysis of local processes. Democratisation, decentralisation, and economic crises have all shaped the opportunities and challenges experienced at the subnational level over the last three decades. Political and economic decentralisation in both Valencia and Mar del Plata has been slow to implement and remains a moving target at present in the sense that it is still unfolding, exposing challenges and opening up new opportunities everyday. The articulation of urban policies and strategic planning initiatives have been an important feature in both cities over the last three decades. The chapter highlighted a number of shared experiences and differences across the two cities to indicate the possibility of a more substantive dialogue. Urban policies and strategic interventions in both Valencia and Mar del Plata have been largely shaped by a mixture of political ambition and opportunity to overcome longstanding infrastructure and service deficits, a perceived necessity to revise and/or change the direction of the city's future development vision, and a strong sense of crisis. This chapter compared different experiences of Spain, Argentina, Valencia and Mar del Plata to identify a number of themes of empirical and theoretical relevance, including a number of key economic events and political processes, and to establish the basis for the comparative analysis that follows.

CHAPTER 5: NARRATING URBAN CRISES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

While the 2008 “global” crisis has encouraged urban researchers to explore the implications of the recent financial downturn across a wide range of cities (mainly across North America and Europe), it could be said that much of this work has been framed within the broad categories of political economy and Marxism, and therefore reinstated familiar debates around neoliberal governance and austerity on one hand (see Peck *et al* 2009; Brenner *et al* 2010; Peck 2012; Oosterlynck and Gonzalez 2013) and social struggles and the right to the city vis-a-vis capitalism on the other (see Harvey 2012; Castañeda 2012; Geddes 2014). These contributions are all very important in both analytical and empirical terms; nevertheless – given the multidimensional nature of crises – there are a wider range of links between crisis and the urban yet to be examined. Furthermore, and in order to better understand urban crises from a global perspective, it is important to revisit and account for the experiences of diverse cities across time and space, particularly across the North-South divide. In this view, and looking back at the last three decades, for example, we might not only realise that cities like Valencia have undergone severe episodes of crisis well before 2008 but that cities like Mar del Plata, while plagued by decades of financial insecurity, have been largely unaffected by the post-2008 “global” events.

This chapter provides evidence to support the idea of crisis as a flexible concept, sensitive to multiple local narratives and contextual specificities. The discussion of how crisis has been narrated in Valencia and Mar del Plata indicates that it is a complex phenomenon and wider condition beyond purely economics in which diverse processes of change across local institutions, urban policy agendas and the urban landscape take place. This approach will help us to better understand the relationship between episodes of crisis and some of the decisions shaping the urban policy agendas introduced in Valencia and Mar del Plata since the 1980s by situating the impact of crises within the local institutional terrain where such policymaking processes take place.

The chapter is structured as follows. The next section introduces a characterisation and discussion of *moments* of crisis, drawing on time and place specificities of the recent

experiences of crisis in Valencia (2008) and Mar del Plata (2001). It moves beyond macroeconomic analyses and objective events that have shaped ideas such as the 2008 “global” crisis to focus on contextual features and non-economic challenges that emerge or become more visible in cities at times of crisis. Here, the idea of moments of crisis aims to capture the urban dimension of critical junctures in which multiple challenges, uncertainties and opportunities arise across the economic, social, institutional and political domains of cities. While the relatively recent/ongoing experiences of Valencia prompt us to bring into view earlier moments of crisis (in order to place post-2008 developments in perspective), the more distant experiences of Mar del Plata allow us to examine both the immediate and longterm developments enabled by the 2001 crisis at the local level.

The third section examines the narratives of crisis advanced by local actors in an effort to account for and make sense of the contextual specificities (i.e. social, political and/or institutional local aspects) shaping their views. These locally specific *narratives* provide us with an alternative empirical source for the analysis of the urban dimension of major episodes of crisis at a time when researchers (within urban studies and across the social sciences more generally) continue to focus on the aftermath of the “global” financial crisis of 2008. The analytical approaches and conceptual frameworks that have normally guided research on crisis appear increasingly insufficient to explain the multiple and diverse complexities experienced across cities (see Subirats 2014). Attending to local narratives of crisis is important because they open academic analyses to the interpretations, responses and theorisations of different actors. These enable us to better understand the multiple dimensions that major episodes of crisis might have at the urban level as well as their tangible consequences, both of which are normally interpreted (yet insufficiently explained) as outcomes of wider macroeconomic conditions and/or objective events. Furthermore, these narratives provide necessary evidence to build locally specific analyses of urban crisis that will help us both to expand the concept and to explain the complex and diverse processes shaping local institutional/urban change.

Inspired by the notion of the *longue durée* of Fernand Braudel (Guldi and Armitage 2014), the fourth section discusses the importance of taking a long term view in the analysis of recent episodes of crisis. The 2008 crisis has indeed triggered and exacerbated a series of macroeconomic challenges across North America and Europe

over the last few years, while gaining the epithet of “global” crisis, which seems to have dwarfed the complexity and magnitude of earlier episodes of crisis experienced across both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere. However, at the local level, some of the institutional and urban challenges observed across cities such as Valencia and Mar del Plata in recent years are not unprecedented (and certainly not only related to the 2008 “global” crisis in the case of the latter) and have their roots in longer term trends/issues. Therefore, a long term view might help us both to better understand the urban dimensions and multiple temporalities of crises as well as to place more recent episodes in perspective. The section considers some of the local institutional challenges concerning basic infrastructure/services in both Valencia and Mar del Plata during the earlier days of democracy in the 1980s, as well as some of the obstacles inherited from the authoritarian regimes that preceded transition. It is argued that some institutional and urban challenges attributed to more recent episodes of crisis are not entirely new but are the combined result of earlier rounds of crisis and path dependencies. These local challenges have accumulated over time, becoming more complex for multiple reasons in addition to crises *per se* and more visible in times of widespread political instability and socioeconomic uncertainty. Lastly, it is suggested that crises are not necessarily temporary, but can be more permanent and therefore might become a normalised condition in which local institutions evolve and urban policy issues are dealt with regularly, thus shaping the ongoing and longterm urban development trajectory of cities. Finally, the conclusion considers the value of the comparative analyses presented in this chapter for understandings of urban crises and for building urban comparisons more generally.

5.2 MOMENTS OF CRISIS

The moments of crisis discussed in this section are part of the most recent episodes experienced in Spain and Argentina, in 2008 and 2001 respectively. These episodes of crisis began at the national level in both cases and brought about significant consequences for municipal governments with relatively limited experience at navigating complex federal systems – still under consolidation in both countries. The crises coincided with the end of relatively long periods of socio-economic and political stability – of “growth/abundance” in Spain and “fiscal discipline/recovery” in Argentina – which came to an end with recessions and deep crashes.

This section moves beyond the macro-economic analyses and objective events that have shaped ideas such as the “global” financial crisis to focus on contextual features and non-economic challenges that emerge or become more visible in times of critical juncture, with a particular focus on local governance and urban policy in Valencia and Mar del Plata. The idea of “moments of crisis” is introduced here, and aims to capture the urban dimension of periods of critical juncture in which multiple challenges, uncertainties and opportunities arise across the economic, social and political domains of cities. While the word *moment* entails a brief and exact period of time in semantical terms, I suggest the need to move beyond predetermined timespans in the study of urban crises. The two cases encourage a much longer term and more institutionally embedded approach to understanding crisis.

5.2.1 VALENCIA

There is no doubt that the most recent/ongoing episode of crisis in Valencia is intimately related to the macroeconomic events that were unleashed across Europe in 2008, a crisis that started within the banking system and swiftly became a sovereign debt crisis. For this reason, it is unsurprising that analyses of the many transformations taking place across Spanish and European cities over the last few years largely draw on the local impact of the “global” financial crisis and the subsequent recession, focusing particularly on issues of high unemployment and the decline of productive activities such as construction and tourism, unsustainable municipal debt, and the implications of local government cuts (Lopez and Rodriguez 2011; Miramontes *et al* 2012; Subirats and Marti 2014). Indeed, such analyses tend to emphasise the economic/financial character of crises and to associate urban challenges with objective macroeconomic conditions following 2008. While such macroeconomic analyses are important and have an impact on the resources allocated to cities in federal systems of government such as Spain (and Argentina too), they tell us very little about the multiple and diverse non-economic challenges faced at the local level in times of major economic downturn.

In Valencia, the latest episode of crisis has been long, had many moments and taken many forms since 2008. It has had multiple consequences across the economic, social, political, institutional and urban fabric of the city. From a built-environment and administrative perspective, for instance, the impact on large-scale projects has been

significant, while local government departments have also undergone important transformations. There is no doubt that the post-2008 crisis scenario exposed a number of challenges to the government of Valencia and put significant pressure on its ability and capacity to deal with urban matters, whether we consider the provision and management of day-to-day services or the formulation/implementation of more complex citywide strategies. From a social-urban perspective, education, health and culture have been severely affected. The limited resources available at the local level have been allocated to initiatives to promote economic recovery through encouraging employment by supporting local entrepreneurship and innovation projects.

Major crises can disrupt the otherwise regular operations of local government departments dealing with conventional urban services as well as interfere with the formulation and implementation of strategies sustaining the longterm urban development agenda of cities (if and when one does exist). However, unlike other Spanish cities also affected by the 2008 events, the crisis in Valencia has been particularly associated with and perhaps exacerbated by shortcomings in the local strategic agenda (Chapter 8). For JEM, the external consultant responsible for the organisation, formulation and implementation of the strategic plan of Valencia,

“Rita [the Mayor] has not understood, or coped well, with the declining status of Valencia (and its institutions) since the onset of the 2008 crisis and the municipal authorities have been very slow to come up with alternatives to the policies and strategies that were no longer working. While the aldermen said to the Mayor that the failure of existing urban strategies was the consequence of the crisis, I would argue that there was already a crisis of misconceived power and success, as well as institutional disarticulation, before the onset of the actual 2008 events”.

The resources invested by the municipality in urban development strategies before the 2008 crisis were allocated almost exclusively to ambitious large-scale projects and mega-events, which seemed to work relatively well for a while and even helped to raise the international profile of Valencia, but completely collapsed when the recession started. As RAJ points out, “when the crisis kicked in, the flaws of some of the strategies behind the urban and economic policy agenda were exposed and the idea of

making Valencia an international and competitive city went bankrupt together with the large-scale projects and mega-events that were at the core of such ambition”. The overall balance of RAJ’s view after a decade of ambitious urban policy agendas appears somewhat negative, as he believes that the city missed out on the opportunity to promote more modest and yet inclusive urban strategies at a time of economic and political stability. Therefore Valencia has been in a weak position to face the ongoing crisis as well as the multiple challenges that ordinary European cities will face in the 21st century. For him “the early 2000s were filled with great projects and events, as well as impressive political marketing, but what did the city really gain from all that? Valencia is much more socially fragmented than ever before, I believe. A dual city, filled with social inequality and a series of monumental yet idle constructions that have left the municipality indebted and bankrupt”.

For MAL, who has worked in the public sector for over twenty years, one of the most visible consequences of the post-2008 crisis in the urban landscape of Valencia has been the sudden disappearance of large-scale projects that were central elements of the urban policy agenda for almost two decades: “In Valencia, the urban dimension of the 2008 crisis has definitely materialised through a change of priorities in the urban policy strategy of the city, in which public infrastructure and construction activities in general have lost their privileged position. For example, the project of Nouvel and Tomas – which won an international competition in 2007 for the opening of the Turia’s (river) to the Mediterranean – has been on “standby” since the crisis started and it will probably remain in a drawer in the municipality for sometime (*ibid*)”.

Nevertheless, MAL emphasises that local culture had been in crisis well before 2008. Numerous projects and initiatives have become the object of political opportunism and bad decisions over time. The *Instituto Valencia de Arte Moderno* (IVAM), for example, has suffered important changes since the late 1990s and lost prestige compared to its earlier years. Local politicians have got increasingly involved in its affairs, even as directors of the institution, which has not been positive for either the management or the content of the museum. Similarly, a major project pursued in the years of economic boom and growth called Musica92 – through which the regional government transferred resources to local governments for the creation of music centres and schools across municipalities – found it really difficult to survive over time due to the large budgets

needed for their management and maintenance, even at a time of relatively abundant resources. For MAL “[municipalities] failed to maximise the resources allocated to the initiative Musica92. At some point, you could count over 150 centres across the region, when half of them would have been sufficient. A large part of the resources were spent in basic infrastructure, when they could have been used for maintenance or more strategic tactics, such as adding value, content and the promotion of the project itself. Music92 did not fail due to the crisis alone but due to a longstanding problem in the administrative and municipal system that we have. In times of crisis, ill conceived urban policy initiatives cannot afford to continue. In Valencia, this is the case for culture, large-scale projects, municipal sport facilities and so forth”.

Clearly, the urban specificities of a crisis cannot be understood without considering the wider historical context of a city i.e. its economic, social, and political trajectories. Indeed, the difficulties and challenges observed in Valencia since 2008 are not the “instant” result of an isolated moment of critical juncture but rather the outcome of longer processes – whether we think of earlier rounds of crisis, contradictory urban policy agendas, authoritarian regimes and so forth. If we consider the economic trajectory of Valencia since democratic transition, for example, we observe that instability and uncertainty are not necessarily new features: the city has neither observed uninterrupted positive growth since the 1979 local elections, nor has the 2008 crisis unleashed an unprecedented phase of local economic downturn. For GIM, thirty-five years is a very long period of time in which, if you look back into the details carefully, you will find multiple mini-cycles of crisis in the recent past. “The crisis generated by the energy/oil crisis in the late 1970s lasted for many years, up to 1987 approximately. There was a brief recovery in the late 1980s, following the joining of the EU in 1986. Then you have a small crisis in the early 1990s, 1992 more precisely. From 1997 to 2007, there is general agreement that it was a decade of abundance and prosperity. According to Eugenio Burriel, it was a decade of *prodigious* economic growth for Spain” (*ibid*).

Indeed, a long term view has important implications for the ways in which we might understand the 2008 crisis and some of the urban challenges unleashed thereafter. Taking a longer view of earlier episodes of crisis helps us to place post-2008 ideas such as the “global” financial crisis (and their relation to the urban) in perspective.

Furthermore, if we consider the observation of GIM, we might agree that the 2008 crisis and its multiple consequences across Valencia and Spain more generally represents just one episode of critical juncture in the longterm economic experience of the city. While it is clear that the local economic, social, and political situation since 2008 has been rather contrasting to the preceding decade, critical junctures are definitely not new. Certainly, there are important differences between the wider economic conditions post-2008 and those that shaped the 1997-2007 period; which was labeled as the “prodigious decade” by Burriel (2008) due to the rapid economic growth and housing boom observed across Spain. However, we must also remember that Valencia was a relatively poor city that faced multiple institutional obstacles and urban deficits until the early 1980s. Thus, as GIM puts it, “the first decade of democracy between 1977-1987 was a period of long and severe crisis at the local level. It was quite depressing”.

While 1997-2007 was a decade of rapid economic growth (and political alignment across levels of government), EUR insists that Valencia has never had a privileged financial position: “it has always been difficult to obtain funds from the national/regional governments, if compared with the volume of public resources and/or private investments that other cities receive”. Unlike earlier episodes of crisis, the problem at the moment is seen to be that key drivers of the local economy (i.e. the construction sector) have faced a very difficult time since 2008 and thus the possibilities of local resilience and recovery have been curtailed (*ibid*). The decline in construction activities and tourism has indeed had a negative impact on the revenue that the local government is able to raise, which has put extra pressure in the local budgets, triggered sociopolitical tensions, and limited the ability of the municipality to finance both extant urban policies and/or alternative strategies (see Subirats and Marti-Costa 2015 – for a discussion about construction and municipal revenues).

The situation of Valencia in terms of infrastructure and services has also been critical in the past. In fact, the city presented significantly worse urban conditions in the late 1970s and early 1980s than it has in the post-2008 crisis scenario. While many issues have been addressed since the start of democracy, others have persisted over time. Therefore, and similar to the case of the relatively insufficient finances mentioned above, some of the urban deficits attributed to the recent crisis are not actually new. While it is undeniable that the ongoing crisis has added to the complexity of already existing urban

and social fragmentation across the city, there is no doubt that such issues are also connected to an old problem: a dual city (I discuss this in section 5.4 below). The urban deficits observed today in some areas of the city have been repeatedly ignored or neglected by local governments (and society at large) – whether in times of crisis or not, the distribution and access to services and urban facilities across the city has been uneven. For POC, urban fragmentation and the duality observed in Valencia at present is as pressing an issue today as it was in the 1980s when he was the Mayor of the city:

“The urban and social fragmentation of the city makes me very uncomfortable, and [if it is not taken seriously] it will lead Valencia to its total destruction. It is like a germ that destroys everything on its way little by little. I lived myself in a poor neighbourhood in the periphery of the city in the 1970s, in which you needed rubber boots to cross the streets every time it rained. There was mud everywhere. In 1979, many areas of the city did not have street drainage, street light, water supply, or any basic infrastructure. Those memories are very present in my mind. There are neighbourhoods experiencing a rapid process of deterioration today and the ongoing crisis has been used to justify the [usual] local government inability to deal with basic infrastructure and service issues in some areas. Els Orriols, for example, is on its way to become a dumping site within the city, with a high concentration of immigrants living and working there. If nothing is done in these cases, the conditions for the marginalisation, exclusion and ghettoisation of parts of the city will become more and more visible, while processes of gentrification and the privatisation of space will shape other areas. This division of the city is my biggest worry now, as it was 30 years ago when we improvised humble and modest interventions to make urban life more acceptable/less precarious (*ibid*)”

5.2.2 MAR DEL PLATA

For more so than for Valencia in 2008, the 2001 crisis in Argentina was not only about economic downturn and financial default, it also saw the outbreak of a severe political and institutional crisis that spread across the national, regional and municipal levels. For Mar del Plata, it was a time of fracture in which the relationship and trust between the

local state and society collapsed, ending with a power and leadership vacuum in the municipality. The resignation of Fernando de La Rúa and his exit from the presidential palace in a helicopter in December 2001 had a strong symbolic impact on the political life of the entire country. It was followed by the resignation of both the governor of Buenos Aires Province and the mayor of Mar del Plata. The leaders of the three tiers of government with jurisdiction in the city resigned almost simultaneously; both public interests and administration had been in the hands of leaders without the capacity to deal with the ongoing macroeconomic recession.

Nevertheless, the difficulties of the early 2000s provided the conditions for important changes at the local level, particularly in terms of urban policy, governance and social mobilisation. In the midst of widespread economic and institutional chaos, and total distrust between society and the state, the idea of the *Plan Estratégico de Mar del Plata* gained momentum across key economic sectors, the municipality and the newly elected Mayor Daniel Katz since 2001. Unlike in Valencia (where the cycle of strategic planning collapsed with the 2008 crisis), in Mar del Plata the plan emerged out of the crisis and it represented a possibility for sociopolitical consensus and urban policy articulation in a time of economic hardship, social tension and political disappointment. For PER the *Plan Estratégico* provided an ideal opportunity to promote and regain the trust that public and private sectors had lost in each other, as well as to connect with communities at large. The main questions were how to recover the local trust? How to believe in political leaders that remained in power (and the parties they represented)? How to trust local institutions after such failures? While the possibility of a strategic plan had been dismissed by the administration of Aprile in the late 1990s, the circumstances post-2001, together with the vision of a new Mayor and a proposal from an experienced consultant (Roberto Monteverde), made the strategic approach highly attractive for the municipality – as an instrument to deal with the economic, social and political difficulties of the time. According to PER

“Monteverde [the consultant commissioned with the *Plan Estratégico*] was originally from Rosario, which meant that he did not belong to the local institutional structures that had failed to prevent the crisis and was not part of the traditional power elites either. He arrived as a mediator, a third party who had no preference for neither public nor private interests or proposals.

Hence, he was able both to communicate with all sectors in a constructive manner and to bring diverse urban actors into conciliatory conversations. I have no doubt that his professionalism and charisma helped Mar del Plata in a positive way, to build consensus across different local groups, to device common problems/aspirations, and to reestablish some of the trust that had been lost”

In addition to the multiple difficulties exposed by the crisis, and the climate of institutional distrust after the resignation of key political leaders, an important challenge for local economic, political, business and social actors became very visible from the early stages of the plan: they did not know how to communicate well with one another or how to think/work collectively. Urban governance, understood as a normative model in which public-private actors work together in order to achieve collectively defined goals, had not been a prominent feature or a strength of the local institutional environment of Mar del Plata. Despite democratic achievements and greater decentralisation, the municipality had neither the experience nor the capacity to foster or build consensus across the multiple social actors and economic sectors of the city by the onset of the millennium, and changes were urgently needed in order to confront the challenges exposed by the crisis (KIC). For AOZ, this realisation and the necessity to come up with an alternative model of governance largely explain the relationship between the onset of the crisis and the adoption of strategic planning in the case of Mar del Plata

“The crisis exposed many shortcoming in urban governance and forced us [non-state actors] to think harder. How do we continue? What is the way forward? If we did not work collectively [with state and social actors], we would have all sunk. In my view, the crisis pushed private institutions to think more broadly and to coordinate their efforts beyond sectorial interests. Many were able to overcome their differences (at least temporarily) and to leave aside their egos and competition in order to share responsibilities and to take collective action. There was a feeling of flatness and power balance across local institutions. This was important because each of them, whether public or private, mobilised a particular group of people and set of resources across the city, which together and with the cooperation of key individuals

actors could take advantage of the opportunity given by the strategic planning initiative to actively engage in urban policy matters” (AOZ)

Furthermore, the 2001 crisis provided the conditions for the emergence of a wide variety of social movements at the local level – some ephemeral with localised effects and others more lasting with wider institutional implications beyond the city. Whatever the case, they had a visible impact on local institutional dynamics by providing urban actors with alternative spaces for economic, social and political interaction (beyond usual and formal local government channels) and the municipality with an opportunity to revise some of the practices and mechanisms shaping urban governance. In Mar del Plata, and across Argentina, society demanded the resignation of all political leaders, civil servants and aldermen but it was never clear who should replace them. KIC called this kind of popular demand a *suicidal utopia*, according to which everyone had to leave their offices and none was to remain in their public/government post. However, other socioeconomic actors such as trade unions and communities organised themselves more actively and experimented with new forms of association as a response to the crisis and the local institutional chaos.

According to KIC, with the benefit of hindsight, one can easily identify two kinds of socially driven initiatives that emerged at the local level in the peak of the crisis 1) those that did not last for long and 2) those that consolidated over time. Indeed, there were very successful schemes of organisation and cooperation started by local communities as strategies to overcome the hardship of the crisis. For example, the practice of a barter economy became a day to day activity. There were exchange centres in several locations across the city. “If I knitted a scarf, I could go to the barter centre and exchange it for fruits and vegetables. The peso did not have any value, there was no currency involved, therefore people could only exchange goods and services with one another” (*ibid*). However, this initiative failed to endure over time and to develop into a different sustainable project, as many people did it only temporarily due to their extreme necessity. On the other hand, there were other social movements that managed to continue after the crisis or even to gain an active institutional and political status over time. This was the case of urban agriculture associations that started from small family projects as well as the *piquetero* or “picketer” movement that sparked throughout the country in the form of protests against unjust economic policies in 2001 and later

developed into a vehicle of political expression and engagement. At present, KIC points out, there are political parties with full parliamentary representation that started out from social movements similar to the *piqueteros* a few decades earlier. Therefore, the potential of such urban forms of social mobilisation as well as collective organisation and/or activism to produce a visible impact on wider institutional settings or to create an alternative political force is certainly a possibility – particularly when there is consistency and collective efforts are not diluted once that the crisis is overcome.

Finally, the economic and institutional chaos unleashed by the 2001 crisis in Argentina also put significant pressure on municipal companies, particularly after most of them had been privatised in the 1990s under the severe structural adjustment reforms introduced by president Menen. While the 2001 crisis was indeed pervasive and had a profound impact in the structures and functions of most government departments dealing with the provision of basic urban infrastructure and services (as well as health and education), it also served as a testing ground for municipal companies such as the *Obras Sanitarias Sociedad de Estado* (OSSE, which deals with water provision and treatment) to experiment with management strategies that allowed them both to remain public and to cope with the crisis. In contrast to many local government departments that underwent significant economic and political stress over the early 2000s, there is no doubt that the case of OSSE was an exception and perhaps a case to consider in more detail in order to identify the organisational and operational features that allowed them to weather one of the worst crisis episodes of Argentina's contemporary history. The point I would like to make here, though, is that some of the processes unleashed by major episodes of crisis and successive measures (such as the privatisation of state assets) might not affect all local institutions in the same way, as some of them might be better equipped in terms of financial and/or human resources to endure and confront the challenges of crisis. According to KIC, president of the OSSE between 2002-2007, his was the only sanitary company in Argentina managed by a municipality that survived the various waves of privatisation of the 1990s. The OSSE had the characteristics of a private corporation in terms of management efficiency and independence but the formal ownership structure and social focus of a state institution.

It is worth noting that the OSSE has been a fully autarkic organisation since its conception in the early 1980s, which means that unlike other municipal entities it has

direct access and control over its finances. While the 2001 crisis negatively affected investments in new projects and the management of existing infrastructure for a while, there were no significant conflicts or shocks like the ones observed across other municipal offices. In fact, the OSSE took advantage of the early 2000s to develop new ideas and projects that could be materialised once the crisis was over and the municipal financial situation normalised. For KIC, “it was certainly not a time for big projects, there were difficulties but nothing as serious as the municipality itself. They [OSSE] never stopped payments to suppliers and/or employees, for example. They had a small technical department of about 5 or 6 full time well qualified engineers, who developed a series of proposals during this time (of crisis). Since there were not many actual works/sites to supervise, they dedicated over two years to study and produce projects that could be materialised once the crisis had passed. This allowed a pretty quick take off once the money started flowing in again”. OSSE’s experience during and after the 2001 events not only tells us about moments of exception within wider crises but also about particular qualities and tactics that other municipal organisations/departments within Mar del Plata (and beyond) might wish to consider and learn from.

5.3 NARRATIVES OF CRISIS

In times of crisis, multiple narratives about the nature of events emerge from different actors across the urban domain. Indeed, such narratives tend to be shaped by the particular difficulties, pressures and uncertainties faced by government departments, political leaders, businesses and communities within cities. For those involved in or close to local policymaking circles, for example, a crisis is a time of competition in which individuals and groups try to impose their views concerning particular issues in order to formulate a dominant narrative and thus influence institutional changes and policy decisions accordingly (see Panizza 2014). For the wider society, it is a time of conflict and struggle (but also of creativity and opportunities) in which communities and social/urban actors resist and confront the obstacles posed by crisis while trying to gain attention and recognition from those in the local government/political sphere.

At a time when many cities continue to deal with the consequences of the “global” crisis of 2008, to seek inspiration and alternative ways to shape their futures, and when conventional macroeconomic approaches appear insufficient to make sense of the

complex transformations taking place at the local level, attending to the multiplicity of interpretations and understandings of crisis is imperative to expand our knowledge of their urban dimensions and consequences. Crises are different in different places and urban researchers can only gain insight into such diversity of experiences by considering the various ways in which they are narrated across time and space.

This section builds on place-specific interpretations of crisis that bring into view the experiences of different local actors from Valencia and Mar del Plata and provide us with an alternative source of analysis to the statistical/financial aspects that conventionally shape economic discourses and crisis prescriptions. It is not to say that budget cuts and austerity measures are analytically unimportant, but to recognise that such decisions do not necessarily depend on objective economic parameters or economic crisis as such but also on the assessment and interpretation of local government actors. In turn, their views will be reflected in the alternative proposals for administrative reconfiguration and the decisions made in relation to urban projects and strategies. While some interpretations might convey the views of wider socioeconomic groups (who might also agree on a given prescription and resolution), others might remain relatively isolated and struggle to gain more visibility and/or legitimacy at the local level – yet nonetheless represent an opportunity for change. The aim is not, however, to discuss the disproportionate weight that different narratives of crisis might carry at the local level but to demonstrate that different interpretations might emerge and coexist simultaneously – each of them legitimate in their own way and able to drive/induce change at different levels and scales.

Episodes of crisis might expose the vulnerabilities of local government structures as well as the challenges faced by those departments dealing with the provision of basic urban infrastructure and services and/or the formulation of citywide strategies. Such vulnerabilities and challenges as well as the consequences of the decisions made to mitigate the crisis at the local level have been the empirical focus of social science research (and form the analytical base of debates on austerity urbanism, neoliberalism, urban resilience and so forth). But less attention has been given to the diverse and multiple ways in which major episodes of crisis might be interpreted and translated into actions by different political and/or social actors at the local level.

5.3.1 VALENCIA

Times of crisis are indeed times of widespread economic uncertainty as well as social and political instability, but also times of decision and change within municipal structures and dynamics. For those dealing with urban policy strategies in Valencia, for example, the 2008 crisis and its aftermath meant that prevailing strategies of urban-economic development, involving competitive and global positioning, did not work anymore (see section 8.4). After over a decade of economic growth and (self-attributed) success, this was a difficult realisation for both the institutions and the professionals working on the city's longterm strategy. For EUR, a consultant with extensive experience in strategic planning across the public and private sectors, this does not mean that all the earlier efforts have been lost over the crisis and she emphasises the need to continue working on the capacities and strengths of local government departments in order to find new urban policy alternatives and to turn present challenges into future opportunities.

“It is almost certain that nothing will be the same [in Valencia] after the [2008] crisis. Public finances will just not be the same, and we are indebted until God knows when. We are undergoing a process of revision and transformation within local government departments [in which] we must identify and develop our strengths based on the practices, skills and expertise acquired over time and the limited resources available. [For instance] we have improved the communication channels between the municipality and a wide range of economic actors across the city over the last decade. These relationships and networks are valuable and essential for the process of recovery. In times of crisis everyone needs from each other, local economic actors from the municipality and vice-versa. It is a win-win situation, then, even if only a pragmatic one” (EUR)

EUR's assessment does not only reflect her personal view but an interpretation that has gained traction in the post-2008 crisis scenario and one that is widely shared within urban policymaking circles at present due to its rationale and/or appropriateness given the circumstances, even though it might prevent novel ideas and alternatives from emerging by perpetuating the *status quo*. While municipalities can definitely capitalise

on their established relationships and networks with key local economic actors as well as on their longstanding practices in times of crisis – whether to ensure wider cooperation in making difficult administrative decisions or to devise new urban policy paths, maintaining such approach for too long can undermine the emergence of novel solutions. In the case of Valencia, it is clear that administrative changes across urban policy departments and/or functions over the last few years have been shaped by the ideas and priorities of municipal actors that predate the crisis of 2008, many of whom have accepted and communicated through the extant institutional structures a narrative according to which although nothing will be the same in terms of resources and financial capacity, earlier efforts cannot be “wasted” and future solutions must build on previous experiences (even when they might have been flawed or even contributed to the local crisis!).

It is undeniable that the 2008 crisis has created exceptional conditions for local government actors to produce numerous changes within the municipality of Valencia and certainly has had a major impact on the strategic vision of the city, particularly in relation to the construction of large-scale projects and the organisation of mega-events (see sections 7.2.1 and 8.4 for more details). However, given its ongoing nature, it might be too early to draw definite conclusions about the different crisis responses of municipal authorities and their longterm consequences – particularly in relation to the transformations that continue to take place in local governments and urban policy spheres.

In order to gain a more nuanced understanding of how a particular narrative of crisis might be used to influence urban policy decisions, a longterm perspective and the consideration of earlier episodes of crisis might be necessary. The justification behind the first *Plan Estratégico de Valencia* in 1993, for example, contained a strong narrative of crisis in which the difficulties and failures of the first democratic administrations in the 1980s (see Pro-Valencia 1994 report; Sorribes 2007) – a decade of structural economic change and deep institutional transformation – were used tactically by the conservative candidate Rita Barbera (who was first elected in 1991) to problematise the (in)capacity of the socialist administration to deal with severe urban issues/deficits and to promote the need for a citywide strategy that would transform Valencia into a modern city. According to FLA, who has held several political and technical posts in the

municipality for over two decades, more than a “technical” diagnosis, this represented a “political” assessment of the situation:

“I do not believe it was such a deep reflection on the 1980s [crisis] which led the local government to promote an alternative model and strategy for the development of Valencia in the 1990s. I think it is naïve to think that local political actors and emerging leaders (who are still in power i.e. Rita Barbera) made such an informed assessment at the time. For me, urban policy decisions [i.e. the *Plan Estratégico* and LRAU] had to do more with wider urban policy trends aligned with a neoliberal paradigm that encouraged cities across Spain to take advantage of large investment opportunities, to transform themselves, and to show both that they were able to compete with others and to stand out. It was a time in which cities like Bilbao with the Guggenheim were seen as references of large infrastructure interventions and Valencia followed that path too. The discourse of the strategic *positioning* of cities was very strong at the time” (*ibid*)

This view not only reflects that crises might provide local political leaders with opportunities to justify urban policy decisions that might later be claimed as personal achievements and even used for electoral campaigns, but also the suspiciousness with which experienced local government actors might perceive a particular narrative of crisis in hindsight (after two consecutive decades of government under the same Mayor). The matter here is clearly not whether there were economic difficulties in Valencia in the 1980s nor the alleged inability of the socialist administration to overcome the situation, but whether and how a particular crisis narrative that emerged in the early 1990s became part of the official discourse and was used to justify the urban policy direction taken by the newly elected government. As Hay (in Panizza and Philip 2014:7) notes “those who are able to define what the crisis is all about also hold the key to defining the appropriate strategies for its resolution”. The point I would like to emphasise here, therefore, is that the organisational changes enabled or the policy decisions made (or introduced as necessary) at the local level as a consequence of crisis not only depend on the tactical use of objective economic indicators and parameters. They also depend on the interpretations of political leaders and their allies of the local situation and the alternatives they might deem convenient for their electoral goals as

well as their key economic supporters.

It is understandable that, with hindsight, different socioeconomic actors disagree on the outcomes of decisions and choices made by local government leaders in response to crisis, particularly when it becomes clear to them that good intentions were not the only reason behind them (but perhaps electoral goals or even the pressure of elitist sectors). For this reason, it is very important to consider the value and longterm implications of narratives of crisis. As Panizza and Philip (2014: xvii) put it “crisis narratives are “real” in that they are understood within the conflict of group interests and through institutional structures”. In other words, the political agency of local actors and the structure of local institutions are fundamental for understanding crises and what happens in their aftermath. While the 2008 crisis brought about an opportunity for the government of Valencia to rethink and redirect its urban development future, officials such as FLA believe that it all depends on the reading that key political and economic actors make of the post-2008 scenario and the alternatives they decide to pursue.

“I fear that the local government and key economic actors misread or misinterpret the post-2008 crisis scenario and its implications for Valencia, again [as they did in the 1990s]. If you hear the message of the president Mariano Rajoy addressing the nation, for example, saying that Spain has successfully overcome the crisis and is now the example and envy of Europe, it is very worrying. This message is also replicated in the municipality by Rita Barbera and her closest circles. It is true that some indicators might be improving and pointing to some sort of macroeconomic “recovery” lately, but the situation and daily experience of cities like Valencia tell you otherwise” (*ibid*)

If local political and economic actors, with an influential position in urban policy matters, are unable to recognise the contradictions of urban policy strategies driven by large-scale projects and mega-events pursued until the mid-2000s and to realise that the local economy can no longer rely on a highly speculative construction sector that is also incompatible with the new socioeconomic environment, the post-2008 crisis experience would have only served to push the city into a deeper and possibly irreversible state of decline. While a wide range of local actors do not oppose strategic planning and

visioning as an urban policy alternative for the social, economic, and institutional recovery of Valencia, they believe that every effort must be made in order to avoid the mistakes and excesses of the past – some of which resulted from the inability and/or unwillingness of political leaders to recognise when a particular strategy or intervention needed to be stopped, revised and redirected, before it collapsed altogether (FLA; JEM; PAU). These views and concerns are shared by a number of interviewees who represent different political and socioeconomic groups and/or interests.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that new opportunities have emerged for wider social groups to engage in shaping emerging urban strategies as well as to improve their communication with the municipal offices dealing with such initiatives since 2008. This suggests that the potential to recognise alternative interpretations of crisis and representations of interests in the formulation of prospective solutions, might be gradually increasing since the start of the crisis. It is difficult, however, to discern whether some of these developments would have happened anyway (as a result of international trends or the deepening of local democracy, for instance), but evidence from municipal and community sources indicates that the crisis has contributed to reconfiguring the balance between more and less powerful voices at the local level. Since 2008, for example, there is a wide range of “emerging” local actors in the urban policy arena of Valencia. In addition to the *Feria de Valencia* (office for trade fairs and conventions), the *Autoridad Portuaria* (port authority), and local business groups who have long influenced urban development decisions of the city (see Sorribes 2015 for a detailed explanation about the role of local developers), universities, higher education institutions and professionals specialised in areas of research and business development, entrepreneurship, innovation and technology have gained more visibility and a privileged position in the strategies of emerging urban policy agendas over the last few years.

“Universities, institutes of technology, young entrepreneurs and talented professionals in the creative industries have increasingly become an important group for us at the InnDEA [the municipal office responsible for the urban strategic agenda]. They have an attractive set of capacities and skills to offer to the city and need our support in order to materialise some of their ideas and business models. In a era of digital technology, these

institutions/peoples are valuable for their scientific knowledge, their business acumen and their networks beyond the city. They understand the importance of the strategic positioning of Valencia [at the regional and international level], as they move a lot and are aware of developments elsewhere” (EUR)

It is clear that neither such institutions nor the individuals involved necessarily represent local disadvantaged groups or the poor, but they do include organisations and groups that have been systematically ignored and openly neglected in processes of urban policymaking over the last two decades when such professional fields were not a strategic policy priority. It is also worth noting that the InnDEA is the result of a long process of administrative transformation that started in the late 2000s, when the main focus of urban development strategies changed from the construction of large-scale projects and the organisation of mega-events to initiatives driven by entrepreneurship, innovation and business development (see sections 7.2 and 8.4). Therefore, municipal actors dealing with urban strategies might have several reasons to narrativise the 2008 crisis, not only to justify their interest in engaging with “emerging” local actors (even though this might have happened anyway, as many cities aspire the status of a creative/smart city) but also to show that something is being done about the ongoing crisis and that participation is widening as a result.

In addition, social movements and participation across Valencia have become more visible since the onset of the 2008 crisis. They might not have gained the same level of engagement of entrepreneurs, creative industries and universities in processes of urban policymaking (or the new urban strategic agenda *per se*), but have had the opportunity to strongly engage in decisions related to infrastructure and services concerning their own neighbourhoods. After over two decades of a local conservative government under the same political party and leader (Rita Barbera), with a relatively poor record of engagement and limited communication between the municipality and the communities, modest gains by social movements are an important advancement (GIX). Indeed, there is much work to be done in order to create more institutionalised channels of social participation and engagement in Valencia, but the post-2008 crisis scenario has certainly helped to create the conditions in which such change has become a feasible possibility – see Geddes (2014) for a discussion on local institutional developments in Latin America

after crisis and parallels with Europe after 2008. The ongoing crisis has certainly opened up opportunities for communities to start engaging more actively in decisions concerning urban development plans and projects by taking advantage of the relative weakness of traditionally influential groups such as the developers and the relative paralysis of the municipality due to insufficient resources and political instability (GIX). The addendum at the end of section 5.4.2 provides an overview of the main political changes that took place in Valencia following the 2015 municipal elections and explains how a public citizens platform that emerged in the post-2008 crisis scenario, and which brought together a number of social movements and activists groups, formed a political party (*València en Comú*) that not only obtained almost 10% of the votes but had the opportunity to form a coalition government with two other parties.

5.3.2 MAR DEL PLATA

The 2001 crisis features as one of the worst episodes in the economic history of Argentina. It exposed a range of vulnerabilities and new challenges across the institutional, political and social domains of cities countrywide. While the collapse of the Convertibility Plan, the ongoing recession at the onset of the new millennium and the subsequent default in late 2001 all constitute important events for the analysis of the macroeconomic situation at the time, they tell us very little about the ways in which such a major episode of crisis was interpreted and confronted at the local level. In Mar del Plata, the experiences of multiple urban actors suggest that various processes of transformation have been enabled by the economic uncertainty and political instability of this episode of crisis, not only as a result of increased social mobilisation and/or participation but the (re)actions of middle classes and local industries.

Indeed, the 2001 crisis provided an unprecedented opportunity to reconfigure local institutional relations, particularly between public and private actors involved in urban policy circles. This meant that business sectors and individuals who had traditionally influenced local decisions concerning urban policy and regulation observed a relative decline in their bargaining power vis-a-vis the state (i.e. becoming more moderated in their views and demands), while less powerful socioeconomic actors who had been systematically ignored over time gained more recognition and increased their ability to engage in urban policy debates through new participatory channels and policy

instruments such as the *Plan Estratégico*.

For AOZ, who has an extensive experience representing local institutions such as the *Colegio de Arquitectos*, the *Universidad de Mar del Plata* as well as numerous communities in processes of urban regulation/strategic consultation, this does not necessarily mean that traditional sectors such as the construction, tourism, hospitality and fishing industries lost their capacity to influence urban policy priorities and decisions after 2001, but that the directors, representatives and professionals behind them have gradually changed their attitude compared to the 1990s. From her point of view, they have become more receptive, more open to debate, and to understanding the wider needs of the city and of other social groups beyond their own sectorial economic interests. For this reason, and nearly two decades later, the reconfiguration of longstanding relationships and established networks between the municipality and traditional business elites that followed the 2001 crisis continues to be regarded as positive for the local institutional environment of Mar del Plata (KIC; PER; LAX). After all, the rebalancing of power triggered by the crisis allowed a wider and more diverse set of social actors to engage with the municipal authorities dealing with urban affairs as well as to challenge top-down interventions and planning approaches.

In addition to the changes observed in the institutional dynamics of Mar del Plata following 2001, some of the actors which have been active in shaping transformations across the institutional and urban landscape of the city have not figured strongly in wider accounts of urban crises. This seems to be the case of the experiences of middle classes with regards to crises. While the consequences of austerity and welfare cuts for the urban poor following episodes of crisis, for example, are common features of academic and policy research, the accounts of middle classes who are not necessarily the wealthy but have the ability to influence social and urban processes and might benefit from the opportunities that emerge in times of crisis are often overlooked (see Svampa 2001 and Kanai 2010 for discussions on the political influence of urban middle classes in Buenos Aires). In Mar del Plata, the tactical manoeuvres of middle classes and/or the opportunities of local industries to pursue their own agendas as well as shaping broader institutional and urban outcomes must be considered more carefully. For AOZ, Mar del Plata and Argentina more generally are not only interesting for the study of crises and poverty (of which the bibliography is extensive), but also for the

study of the role of the middle class in urban development processes.

“The city belongs to everyone in the end, rich and poor, and crises affect everyone in one way or another. Argentinian scholars have gained recognition for studying the impact of welfare cuts and adjustment programmes across popular sectors and the poor, but almost no work about those who have profited from periods of recession and crisis through their actions and interventions in the urban domain (e.g. by lobbying for more flexible planning regulations and construction parameters and by promoting investment in brick and mortar and strategic priorities that reflect their economic interests) in times of economic hardship, political instability and institutional weakness” (*ibid*)

The observation of AOZ is important because the conditions created by crisis and which relatively privileged social groups might consider favourable to influence planning regulation and/or to invest in the real estate sector, for example, are simultaneously contributing to serious urban and social issues and to the fragmentation of the city. The opportunities exposed by episodes of crisis to the middle class and their actions to shelter from recurrent economic shocks have had indeed significant implications for the longterm urban development of Mar del Plata. As GIC points out, for instance, gated communities and luxury apartment blocks have exploded across the Buenos Aires Province over the last two decades, including similar developments in Mar del Plata. These have led to issues of land speculation, (un)affordable housing as well as self-segregation and social exclusion over time. Lastly, she notes that “it is worrying that those living and growing up within such gated villages and highly secured apartment buildings have limited or no experience of urban public life and are the same people that would probably have a greater chance to influence and favour similar urban policy decisions in the near future (*ibid*)”.

Furthermore, and despite their analytical potential, the collective experiences and actions of middle classes are not the only ones that seem to have been overlooked in the study of urban crises. An examination of the recent economic history of Mar del Plata also reveals a number of experiences of local industries which might help us to explain the urban dimension of crises through their effect on particular sectors. For instance,

across the fishing industry and the casinos in the late 1990s (a time of relative stability but increasing political tension due to major economic reforms) and the early 2000s. In both instances, and beyond the difficulties faced by each sector, their coordinated actions with other local actors contributed to important institutional achievements. For NEP, a municipal official with ample experience in local economic matters, the adjustment and liberalisation policies of the 1990s were considerably unfavourable for the economy of Mar del Plata and put an enormous pressure on sectors such as fishing (see Allen 2001 for a detailed study of the crisis of the fishing industry as a consequence of national economic reforms). In 2001, the crisis provided the conditions for actors across the fishing industry to organise themselves in order to confront the situation and to resist the changes in national legislation that had negatively affected them and their localities. As NEP recalls, almost two decades later, it was a crisis that went beyond the interests of the fishing industry alone and had severe consequences for the local economy and the city as a whole. Therefore, the situation required the collective effort of trade unions, the chambers of commerce, political parties, communities as well as the municipality, which constitutes in itself an important achievement in terms of mobilisation and institutional coordination.

A similar response was observed in the attempt to privatise the casinos (which are a monopoly of the state in Argentina) in the time of president Menem. In this case there was also a coordinated and articulated response from multiple local actors, in which even the local representatives of the party of the president and the national administration supported the position of Mar del Plata. While such local efforts were indeed worthwhile and the privatisation of the casinos was ultimately avoided, the point I would like to emphasise here is that aspects of crises that concern a limited number of places and peoples, or economic activities/sectors, do not seem to receive the same analytical attention that aspects of crisis providing empirical evidence of austerity, neoliberal policies, or state retrenchment do. Therefore, the institutional manoeuvres and intergovernmental tactics of local actors to confront crisis and to contest macroeconomic measures such as privatisation often remain unexamined and analytically defanged. In the case of Mar del Plata, it is evident that the experiences of the fishing industry and the casinos are essential to explain the urban dimension of crises, as they have influenced the ways in which local actors and institutions have interacted with each other and organised themselves in order to respond to national

policies and measures aimed at dealing with macroeconomic issues but that contradicted local interests. Moreover, as in the case of middle classes, the experiences of local industries in Mar del Plata serve as a reminder both that narratives of crisis are always incomplete (and unevenly played out across time and space) and/or that local specificities and agency are central to advance our conceptual understanding of urban crises.

Finally, episodes of crisis do not always seem to pose a threat for the survival of local economic activities. Nevertheless, social researchers seem to be generally less interested in such narratives. In contrast to the crises faced by the fishing industry and casinos in Mar del Plata, which were partly the consequence of changes in national legislation in favour of liberalisation and privatisation, major macroeconomic crises might be perceived positively by the construction sector at the local level. Unlike the collapse of the construction industry observed in Valencia after the 2008 crisis, this sector entered a relatively expansionary cycle in Mar del Plata following the 2001 default. This is reflected in the narrative of JAM

“Generally, crises in Argentina have to do with debt and macroeconomic imbalances that in most occasions end up in the devaluation of the currency. These episodes are not just common, but also intense and relatively frequent in this country. When such devaluations occurs, opportunities for the construction sector emerge. Paradoxically, you need less US dollars to build the same or even more square meters than you needed before the devaluation. With a weak peso, it becomes cheaper to pay salaries, services, locally sourced materials and to buy land – all this despite a relatively high inflation rate. In Argentina, many industries find a safe refuge in the US dollar due to the roller-coaster economy that we have, which is always fluctuating in unpredictable directions. What did property investors see in 2001? A great opportunity to build as many square meters as possible, with less money than in the 1990s when the peso was pegged one to one to the US dollar”

Although such a viewpoint is somehow inconsistent with more conventional narratives of crisis (that are filled with a mixture of instability, challenges and uncertainties), it is a

sentiment that some local actors seem to share in Mar del Plata and Argentina, where hard currencies and bricks and mortar have become havens for investment and the construction sector has yielded more attractive returns than activities dependent on imports. It is also one of the main reasons why the construction sector has observed a relatively upward trend across the city for over a decade now. Ignoring such narratives or deeming them inappropriate evidence for our understanding of urban crisis (due to the relatively small but perhaps influential sector that might agree with it) would not help us to advance our knowledge about the contradictory (challenges/opportunities) nature of crises.

5.4 MULTIPLE TEMPORALITIES OF CRISIS

Inspired by the notion of the *longue durée*, launched by Braudel in 1958 (Guldi and Armitage 2014), this section discusses the importance of taking a longterm view in the analysis of relatively recent episodes of crisis. Indeed, and despite the enduring and pervasive consequences of the 2008 “global” crisis across the Americas and Europe, most cities on both sides of the Atlantic have a longer experience at dealing with crises. Valencia and Mar del Plata, for instance, have both dealt with the consequences of numerous episodes of economic, social and political juncture over the last several decades, including financial default as well as democratic transition. Therefore, it is worth exploring some of their past experiences of crisis in order to place more recent episodes and their consequences in perspective, particularly in relation to longterm processes of change across local institutions, urban policy and governance.

While in the case of Valencia the 2008 “global” crisis unleashed a series of threats for the economic growth and political stability forged for over a decade of “prodigious” urban development (as Burriel would label the 1997-2007 period), the economic uncertainty and political volatility experienced in the 1980s are a reminder that the city has had to deal with serious urban and institutional challenges in the recent past. Mar del Plata, on the other hand, has been unaffected by the consequences of the recent “global” crisis. However, the city has had to deal with the multiple challenges triggered/exacerbated by the 2001 default as well as the 1980s debt crisis, which have had severe and enduring consequences. For these reasons, and with the benefit of hindsight, it would be analytically useful to examine some of the time specificities and

the implications of such temporalities for our understanding of urban crises from a global comparative perspective.

5.4.1 LEGACIES OF CRISIS

The 2008 crisis has indeed triggered and exacerbated a series of macroeconomic challenges across North America and Europe over the last few years, gaining the epithet of “global financial crisis”. This notion has not only reduced a wide range of disparate events (economic and otherwise) into a recognisable and allegedly global category at present, but blurred the complexity and diminished the magnitude of earlier episodes of crisis experienced across both sides of the Atlantic and elsewhere, particularly at the subnational level. Nevertheless, some of the institutional and urban challenges observed across cities such as Valencia and Mar del Plata in recent years are not unprecedented (and certainly not related to the 2008 “global crisis” in the case of the latter). Therefore, a longterm view might help us both to understand the urban dimensions and multiple temporalities of crises as well as to place more recent episodes in perspective.

VALENCIA

The 1970s were a difficult decade for Western European cities due to the oil and energy crises that affected the performance and production of their industrial activities. At the time of democratic transition in 1979, the economy of Valencia was stagnant. The long recession had caused severe and irreversible consequences across traditional sectors such as agriculture, shipbuilding and metallurgy. The crisis had triggered the demise of *La Huerta* (agricultural sector), *La Union Naval de Levante* (the local shipbuilding company) and dozens of metallurgical factories across the city that found it difficult if not impossible to recover ever since. Indeed, as with most cities across Europe and North America at the time, the productive base of Valencia had features that determined both its resilience to crisis and its ability to move towards alternative economic activities – or not – over the following decades (see Savitch and Kantor 2002 for an extensive comparison). While there is no doubt that economic difficulties continued to be a challenge throughout the 1980s, a mixture of political tensions, inherited institutional issues and poor urban conditions and deficits added to the complexities of the post-transition period.

In order to understand the severity and multiple dimensions of the crisis faced by the municipality of Valencia at the time of democratic transition, a brief review of some of the reports produced by the first democratic administration provides us with valuable insights. According to a statement in the *Libro de La Ciudad 1979-1982* (Ayuntamiento de Valencia 1983:32), for instance, “the inheritance received after decades of military dictatorship is only comparable with that of the son of a businessman who inherits a firm in financial distress or almost bankrupt, with multiple debts and issues with employees. The city (as urban space) and the municipality (as local administrative entity) were as exhausted as terminally ill patients in April 1979”. The municipal report examined multiple problems inherited by the first elected government of Valencia with a particular focus on 1) the most pressing urban issues and 2) the unfavourable features of the legislative and institutional framework. Therefore, it included a mixed account of accumulated infrastructure and service deficits after four decades of abandonment as well as a set of problems, dissatisfactions and irrationalities affecting institutional structures and dynamics after decades of administrative ineptitude and/or corruption.

In terms of urban infrastructure, Valencia had observed an accelerated urban growth since the early 1960s. This was characterised by the rapid construction of dwellings by private developers without the appropriate provision of basic urban infrastructure (i.e. sidewalks, pavement, street lighting, drainage networks etc.). As a result, large areas of Valencia presented a rather precarious condition and the periphery as much as the centre of the city displayed a significant state of abandonment and dereliction in 1979. This was also the case with basic services. The supply and treatment of water faced severe issues. While the main water supply network, which dated from the 1920s, had been under great pressure since the early 1970s due to rapid demographic growth, the water treatment plant was also completely congested and saturated by 1980.

Furthermore, as in the case of infrastructure, the provision of urban facilities was insufficient to cater to an increasingly urban population, particularly those within the lowest income sectors and those living in the periphery. While there was a shortage in the number of places for kindergartens and primary schools, and green public spaces were virtually absent across the city, the planning regulations effective at the time encouraged high-density developments that exacerbated rather than mitigated issues of schooling and green spaces. In addition, there were neither municipal sport facilities of

any kind nor reserved land, plans or resources to build them.

Finally, Valencia was a city with a collective urban memory at risk. The absence of a policy to protect the built heritage of the city centre, for instance, had triggered the widespread destruction of historical buildings, walls and open spaces. By 1979, the neighbourhoods of the *Ciutat Vella* (city centre) were rapidly becoming administrative and commercial centres without historical character but with increasingly attractive and speculative land values. Indeed, the first democratic government had to deal with and respond to a wide range of urban infrastructure and service issues inherited after decades of military dictatorship. While the *Partido Socialista* assumed responsibility for the operational shortcomings and/or mistaken decisions of their administration during transition (partly due to inexperience), it is evident that the urban condition of Valencia was the result of a longer process of decline and the shared responsibility of the previous administrations for their lack of urban planning regulation and enforcement as well as actual developers and construction firms.

In addition to the pressing infrastructure and services issues outlined in the report, the *Libro de La Ciudad 1979-1982* (Ayuntamiento de Valencia 1983) also provided an assessment of the extant institutional framework. According to the report, the legal and financial configuration of the municipality was not only rather unfavourable but critical at the time of transition. In April 1979, the newly elected government quickly realised it was confronting both an organisational structure with serious deficiencies and an adverse set of actors and dynamics that together made the operation, functioning and eventual transformation of the municipality very difficult. While the Constitution of 1978 had granted the right of autonomy and self-government at the regional level and provided legal guidance for the constitution of the new administrative entities (or *Comunidades Autónomas*), it had been silent with regards to the legal framework for municipalities. Furthermore, the *Ley de Bases de Régimen Local* of 1956 (the previous legal base of municipalities) had been derogated only partially, which meant that local governments remained in an institutional limbo between the tutelary of Madrid and the authority of new regional governments. Financially, and in addition to the profound crisis in the local coffers, the inherited legislation was rather obsolete and largely in contradiction with the new constitutional precepts regarding decentralisation. Nevertheless, the central government delayed its negotiation and amendment for almost

a decade, which indeed limited the capacity of the municipal government to perform its functions and act upon pressing urban issues (see section 7.3 for details about the legal and financial framework).

The ability of the first democratic local government to deal with basic infrastructure demands was further limited due to the coexistence of a wide range of anachronistic planning documents as well as overlapping institutions deciding and acting upon the urban space. For example, the older *Plan General* 1966, the *Ley de Tierras* 1975, and the numerous *Planes Parciales* that granted planning exceptions, the governments of Madrid (central), the emerging *Comunidades Autónomas* (regional), the national Ministries, the *Confederación Hidrológica* (water), and the RENFE (railway) and so forth. In terms of services, the situation was also complex. The new administration had inherited contracts with companies that had operated for decades under Franco and whose agreements limited the power of the municipality to negotiate the costs and control the quality of the services provided (see section 6.3). These situations not only exacerbated issues of competency, coordination and efficiency between departments dealing with infrastructure and service provision, but undermined the authority of the municipality vis-a-vis higher levels of government and non-state actors to perform its urban-related functions.

Lastly, there were serious (mis)management issues within the municipality at the time of transition, which extended throughout the 1980s. In addition to the local institutional chaos and constitutional contradictions concerning municipal legislation, finances and urban planning guidelines, internal dynamics were also rather chaotic. Indeed, transforming a highly bureaucratic and inefficient municipal organisation into a productive administrative entity at the service of the wider population was not easy (or certainly unachievable in a four-year term). According to the *Libro de La Ciudad 1979-1982* (Ayuntamiento de Valencia 1983), the organisation and/or functions of municipal departments and officials were an ocean of incoherences, contradictions, overlapping competencies, absence of hierarchy, and poor coordination. The main consequence of this was that none seemed to be responsible or accountable for essential municipal duties. Even though local finances had been affected by bad management for decades, for example, the administration never worried to modify or halt inefficient tax collection mechanisms, outdated tax rates, charges for public services and corruption. Similarly,

although the *Plan General* 1966 was in contradiction with the *Ley de Tierras* 1975, the administration failed to make the necessary adjustments for over a decade. Furthermore, the total separation between general administration and specialist departments led to continuous conflicts and disagreements that made it very difficult to define common agendas across the administration as well as clear tasks and objectives.

MAR DEL PLATA

The 1980s were difficult for Latin American countries due to the pervasive effects of the debt crisis. Therefore, it is commonly known as the ‘lost decade’ in regional macroeconomic and development literature (see Whitehead 1986 and Bertola and Ocampo 2012). For Argentina, in particular, it was a complex period of political and economic upheavals following decades of endless struggles to achieve and maintain democracy on the one hand and multiple efforts to stabilise chronic problems in the balance of payments and to control inflation on the other. In regards to the latter, Remmer *et al* (2000:426) note

“Argentina has been struggling with acute problems of economic stabilisation and adjustment since the 1930s, giving rise to a prolonged history of balance of payments crises, inflationary episodes, stop-go economic cycles, and related problems of political instability. These difficulties were far from resolved when the current democratic regime was established under the leadership of Alfonsín in late 1983. Inflation was approaching an annualised rate of 600%, the economy was in its fourth straight year of recession, the public sector deficit exceeded 20% of the GDP, debt payment obligations accounted for more than 100% of export earnings, and the nation’s international reserves were depleted [...]”

While Mar del Plata had indeed experienced the consequences of several macroeconomic crises and defaults throughout the 20th century, the local situation of the 1980s was exacerbated by the decline of industrial activities (and the ISI model) and incremental disinvestment in basic infrastructure and services from the 1970s onwards. This climate of prolonged instability and uncertainty made it very difficult for successive local governments (either commissioned by the military or democratically

elected) to provide sufficient services, facilities and infrastructure for the population. Furthermore, even after democratic transition, the inability of the municipality to keep up with greater pressures and demands due to rapid demographic growth as well as to confront ongoing economic woes both contributed to the urban fragmentation of Mar del Plata and the gradual consolidation of a dual city.

In order to account for the local dimension and multiple temporalities of crises experienced in Mar del Plata, it is essential to consider some of the institutional and urban issues inherited by the first democratic government in 1983. Following the demise of the fourth military junta and the end of the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional*, the municipality had to adapt its administrative structure and functions to the principles of democracy, which not only implied the reconfiguration of the institution itself but also of its dynamics and relationships with wider society. Although it was not until 1994 when the Constitution was reformed and new mandates for provincial and municipal governments introduced, the democratic commitment of the nascent political leaders was to find a balance between representativity and participation in order to regain social trust in local institutions (see *Así Crecimos 1983-1990*, MGP 1990). In a report published in 1990, Angel Roig (who served two consecutive terms as mayor between 1983 and 1991) described the situation at the time of transition and the 1980s more generally as follows

“After several military coups and juntas since 1962, democracy and participation had been forgotten across the social and political sphere by the time of transition. While the first months in office were somehow febrile, we acted very quickly to deal with the economic and political consequences of earlier military interventions. The budgets were insufficient, the crisis was widespread and persistent and the inherited institutional framework was very difficult to operate. In addition, through the 1980s, Mar del Plata attracted hundreds of families looking for better opportunities to overcome the crisis. These families came over not only from other Provinces but also from neighbouring countries. This significant population influx added extra pressure on already insufficient infrastructure and services across the city. Indeed, public resources were insufficient to keep pace with such accelerated demographic growth. Therefore, we adopted a strategy of

“counter-crisis” and the municipality worked hard with all the possible enthusiasm and strength to overcome pressing urban issues, exacerbated by both the ongoing crisis and the obstacles inherited from the salient military regimes” (MGP 1990:2)

Evidently, the combination of an unfavourable macroeconomic situation (due to the debt crisis), an unprecedented inflow of domestic and international migrants and insufficient investments in urban infrastructure and services made the 1980s particularly difficult for the newly elected government. As a result, a number of large urban interventions that had been delayed by military commissioners for decades had to be postponed by the first democratic leaders too. These became part of the so-called *Agenda Vieja* and remained unaddressed until the late 1990s when some projects were finally executed through the *Plan de Obras Mar del Plata 2000* launched by Elio Aprile (see section 8.2.2). While insufficient public investment certainly created extra pressure in urban infrastructure and services throughout the city, the situation was particularly critical in rapidly expanding peripheral areas. This uneven pattern of urban development contributed to the emergence and consolidation of a highly fragmented city. For RAF

“Mar del Plata is today a dual city in which the difference between coastal and inland areas is extreme and the urban conditions of the latter are worse than the worst districts of Greater Buenos Aires. However, this contrast is not the product of recurrent episodes of crisis alone, but of historical dynamics shaped by economic activities such as tourism for which the coastline has always been a priority for public and private investment – while the rest has remained relatively ignored”

For this reason, some of the documents of the first *Plan Estratégico* recognised two cities within Mar del Plata and the need to focus on areas that had been neglected by urban planning initiatives and public investment over decades. Although the plan emerged as a response to the 2001 crisis, such urban dichotomy and the critical situation of the periphery were longstanding issues that became more visible at a time of widespread political instability and socioeconomic uncertainty but that had indeed been in the making for several decades.

5.4.2 EPISODES OF CRISIS REDUX

VALENCIA

While the 2008 crisis seems to have been more complex than earlier episodes due to its widespread financial implications, particularly on the high levels of sovereign debt in countries like Spain, Valencia seems to have been more prepared to confront it than it was to deal with the multiple difficulties and tensions of transition in the 1980s. This is not to say that one episode has been worse than the other, but to recognise that the magnitude of the challenges that have emerged post-2008 are not completely unprecedented and to remember that the state of local institutions and the urban was perhaps more chaotic three decades ago than it is today. For SEP it is indeed difficult to see where the ongoing crisis will end – he believes that none really knows it given the haphazard and international nature of the financial instruments that influence economies today such as securities, derivatives, futures, hedges and so forth. The ongoing crisis has been attributed to the wider failures of a global financial system which despite having direct implications and traceable connections with local economic activities, is structured and functions in a way that is difficult to trace and somewhat unpredictable. Therefore, although the post-2008 circumstances are different to the 1970s and 1980s when European economies faced the effects of the energy crisis and deindustrialisation, there is no doubt that cities have experienced a similar pressure to respond to emerging financial challenges and to find alternative economic paths over the last years. In the case of Valencia, where the real estate and construction sectors at the core of the local economy were exposed to the crisis, the situation has been difficult. A high unemployment rate, for instance, has been a major feature since 2008 and a significant socioeconomic challenge for the municipality.

It is important to consider such differences between now and then, not only because they remind us that crises are not new and/or that the implications of recent episodes might be exaggerated in some respects, but because the circumstances at present seem to be as difficult to assess and to respond to as they were three decades ago. For instance, the ability and technical capacity of the municipality of Valencia to assess the financial crisis, its urban implications and to provide alternative policy solutions since 2008 seem to have been as limited as it was in the 1980s when it had to confront the

multiple challenges of democratic transition and deindustrialisation. For POC (11.03.16), who served as the Mayor of Valencia between 1979-1988, the main problem since 2008 has little to do with the severity of the crisis but with the relative paralysis of the local government

“I am not sure where will it all end but what I know is that 1) the social impact of the 2008 crisis has been considerably limited compared to the 1980s. There is much more coverage in terms of social welfare, urban infrastructure and services now than there was back then. The social issues of today are less pressing and urgent than they were in the 1980s when immediate action was required 2) there have not been any serious policy initiatives or municipal proposals to start an active process of recovery since the 2008 events. This is very serious. We implemented different interventions and programmes in the 1980s, which were not always successful but responded to the basic urban needs of the local population which in many cases lived in very poor conditions. At the moment, I see more uncertainty in the municipality, and fear to make firm decisions and possibly failing than anything else”

Valencia is definitely undergoing an important process of urban transformation as a result of recent and past episodes of crisis, in which new challenges for local actors (particularly local authorities) continue to emerge everyday. The post-2008 scenario has been complex and unpredictable due to the interconnected nature of global finances and local economic activities, as well as the blurriness and distortions that such connections entail. Therefore, and given the limitations of an incomplete federal system in which local autonomy is undermined by the political and economic power of the regional administrations (see section 7.3 for discussion), municipalities across Spain have found it difficult to assess the urban implications of the 2008 crisis as well as to provide alternative policy solutions. While government critics such as QUI have complained about the slow response and/or relative paralysis of the municipality in regards to the 2008 crisis, it is important to recognise that the nature and magnitude of the urban challenges faced at the time of transition and which QUI compares with the ongoing situation were fundamentally different. The basic infrastructure and service deficits to which the first democratic administration had to respond in the 1980s, for example, does

not represent an issue at present as they have been largely addressed. However, this does not mean that municipal departments have been procrastinating or waiting for inspiration since 2008. In fact, as I will discuss in section 7.2.1, municipal offices dealing with urban matters have undergone important administrative reforms over the last few years while trying to devise policies and strategies that are compatible with the new circumstances.

At present, Valencia is overall much better equipped in terms of basic infrastructure and services than it was at the time of transition in 1979 when the first elected government inherited a crisis that was not only urban but also profoundly institutional and political given the changes brought about by democratisation after decades of dictatorship. Times have certainly changed and so has the nature of the challenges faced by social, economic and political actors across cities. As RAJ notes, “After 2015, the elected government would certainly have to deal with issues of recession, huge municipal debt, a hypertrophic and failed urban policy model, and a local institution shaped by the practices and unfavourable values of a conservative administration and a leader that have been in office for six consecutive terms”. Certainly, following an endless chain of crisis-related events since 2008, future prospects might seem slightly bleak. Nevertheless, a review of the recent history of Valencia remind us that the obstacles and challenges that occupied municipal leaders and aldermen in the 1980s were eventually overcome, even when democracy was still fragile and decentralisation a slowly nascent process.

In an attempt to contribute to the definition of urban crisis through the experience of Valencia, it is important to remember that both crises of the early 1980s and late 2000s (as most crises, perhaps) were composed of a number of events that unfolded across the economic, social, political and institutional domains of the city. Furthermore, each moment of crisis or critical juncture was not an isolated event. On the contrary, each represented the ultimate expression of a long process in which solutions to urban issues and/or local administrative shortcomings that had remained unresolved and accumulated over time could no longer be postponed. In this respect, and certainly in the case of Valencia, urban crises do not seem to have a precise beginning or end date. Instead, they are always emerging and in the making due to a wide variety of reasons. They are made by multiple moments in which the challenges faced by some local actors might collide

with the interests and opportunities of others. Therefore, unleashing processes of struggle and competition in which each group tries to legitimise their own narrative and gain the support of the local state.

Indeed, such urban processes might coincide with wider crises (whether macroeconomic or related to global finances) and therefore gain more visibility through general discourses that tend to connect local specificities with wider events in a more generic and universal sense. However, the experience of Valencia shows us that urban challenges are always present in one way or another and they are not only susceptible to national or international crises but to subtle changes that are highly specific such as the decline of traditional production activities, the institutional legacies of authoritarian regimes, the absence of a competent urban planning department and/or the bad decisions of absolute leaders, for example. In Valencia, the events of 2008 have often been used to explain the failure of urban strategies that predate the actual crisis, even though such strategies might have been already under stress! (see section 8.3). This is not to say that there are no connections between the ‘global’ crisis of 2008 and the crisis experienced in Valencia (some of which could be traced and discussed), but to indicate that a number of local, specific and unresolved governance issues accumulated over time (see sections 6.2-3 and 7.3) have been often intertwined with explanations of financial crisis inspired from the experiences of Detroit or Athens, associated with wider systemic failures, that are not only relatively unsuitable to explain the case of Valencia but that have prevented alternative explanations from emerging.

Almost a decade since the onset of the 2008 crisis, and the end of a period of remarkable economic growth and ambitious urban policies and strategies in Valencia, it is understandable that current alternatives and future prospects do not appear to be very optimistic. Ironically, though, two of the fundamental urban policies that propelled such accelerated growth since the mid 1990s, namely the *Ley Reguladora Actividades Urbanísticas* (LRAU) and the *Plan Estratégico* (see sections 8.5 and 8.3 respectively), were the (in)direct outcome of earlier episodes of crisis and economic stagnation. They were both formulated and implemented under the administration of Rita Barbera (who served as mayor between 1991-2015) in response to the crisis moments of the transition, and fostered a development model that favoured the internationalisation of Valencia, its modernisation and placed large-scale infrastructure projects, tourism and mega-events at

the centre of such efforts. According to RAJ

“The conservative leader and her administration promoted a city vision and a policy model that was somehow incompatible with the economic traditions and strengths of Valencia. The assumption was that a modern and international city would encourage tourism and other tertiary activities able to generate enough economic benefits for the wider population. For two decades, virtually all public resources were invested in initiatives and projects that supported such ambitions. However, and despite significant investments in iconic architecture and international mega-events, neither the vision nor the benefits materialised”

Undoubtedly, such urban policy decisions had already put Valencia in a relatively vulnerable position before 2008, when the stress of the growth model fostered by the municipality overlapped with the wider financial crisis – unleashing a series of economic, social, political and institutional issues across the city. Furthermore, the strategic failures of the administration had gradually undermined the political confidence of municipal leaders such as Rita Barbera. Following her sixth re-election in 2011, a time when many thought that the crisis was only temporary and hopes for a rapid resolution were still latent, the municipality found it really difficult if not impossible to take meaningful actions beyond the extant urban policy model. While the discourses built around the 2008 financial crisis and the burgeoning debt crisis affecting Spain continued to be important around the time of re-election, they became increasingly insufficient to justify and explain the urban crisis affecting Valencia over time. Indeed, the high costs of earlier urban policies and strategies as well as the inability of the local government to recognise its failures became the subject of severe criticism in the years to follow and Rita Barbera and the conservative party were punished in the polls in May 2015 after twenty-four years in power (see addendum at the end of this section for more details about the emerging political forces at the local level, their electoral achievements in 2015 and their views concerning the management of the 2008 crisis and the content/direction of longstanding urban policy agendas).

The longterm study of urban crises through the experience of Valencia, particularly in relation to earlier episodes and local specificities, is indeed a productive exercise that

allows us to account for multiple temporalities and contextual events that would remain analytically undisclosed otherwise. This approach might prompt us to reconsider the ways in which we understand a given episode of crisis (whether the post-2008 experience of Valencia or any other city in relation to another) by acknowledging historical events or path dependence aspects that might be occluded by processes of conceptualisation otherwise. Indeed, the experience of Valencia since 2008 cannot be and should not be understood as a local expression of the so-called global financial crisis (though, of course, there might be traceable connections), but as an urban crisis that has been and is still in the making. A longterm and perhaps indefinite process of urban change and development has been composed by continuous and emerging moments of crisis that are locatable and specific although surely not unique in a world of cities.

MAR DEL PLATA

In order to expand our knowledge of urban crises from a global comparative perspective, it is important to look beyond the sites in which the “global” financial crisis (and the debates around it) originated and extended since 2008. The experience of Mar del Plata, for instance, provides us with important evidence for the study of crises as it suggests that they are not necessarily temporary (with immediate and/or predictable consequences), or even cyclical, but can be more permanent and therefore a normalised condition in which local institutions evolve and urban policy issues are dealt with regularly. Thus “crises” shape the ongoing and longterm urban development trajectory of cities. Also, unlike Europe and North America, the economy of countries like Argentina experienced a sustained period of growth since the mid 2000s due to an important increase in commodity prices worldwide and the unprecedented consumption of China. For DIM, the socioeconomic situation of the country and cities like Mar del Plata has recovered over the last decade despite the fact that Argentina had remained isolated from international financial markets since 2001. This is one reason why the financial crisis of 2008 did not have any direct repercussions for Argentina and other similar contexts in the South (see the ECLAC’s reports from 2008 and 2011 on Latin America, the Caribbean and China, for example).

Nevertheless, at the local level, such positive economic developments have neither

guaranteed the resolution of longstanding urban problems nor avoided the emergence of new ones. For PER, besides very few exceptions, Mar del Plata does not really have a good history of urban planning, large-scale urban development or strategic interventions. In fact, he believes that most of the urban policies and actual achievements of the last three decades have been the result of critical junctures rather than conscious attempts to solve chronic urban problems or anticipatory initiatives to devise a future vision or strategy for the city when the wider conditions have been favourable. At the time of the 2001 crisis, for example, the disruption of public works in terms of infrastructure and services was almost unnoticeable. After a decade of unsustainable debt and default (1980s) and a decade of adjustment programmes (1990s), it is not surprising that there were no major urban interventions in place at the time of the crisis. The only interventions at risk in 2001 were those under the *Plan de Obras Mar del Plata 2000*, an initiative that emerged from the electoral campaign of Aprile in the late 1990s by which longstanding and unfinished basic urban projects were to be financed through the collection of an additional local tax. In other words, as PER puts it “urban plans and projects only appear when there is a severe urban issue that cannot be hidden or delayed any longer and when there is a major crisis”. Therefore, in his view, urban and strategic initiatives in Mar del Plata have been more like responses that emerge in times of critical juncture when new alternatives are most needed, rather than deliberate municipal efforts to mitigate longstanding and emerging urban challenges.

For these reasons, it would be somewhat difficult to explain the recent urban development history of Mar del Plata without having to cite the implications of different episodes of crisis and their relation to particular forms of urban intervention. Indeed, Argentina has faced numerous episodes of default and bankruptcy which have had a profound impact on the finances and longterm urban development prospects of its cities. In any case, the combined impact of cyclical macroeconomic defaults and cumulative urban challenges over the last decades give us a sense that crises are a permanent feature of Argentinean cities rather than an exceptional condition. This view is shared and normalised by a wide range of local actors in Mar del Plata – whether from businesses, politics, or society at large. In the urban policy spheres, for example, there is no clear distinction between initiatives that have resulted from episodes of crisis and/or those that have been formulated and implemented by local governments in times of stability (which virtually do not exist). In other words, and for multiple reasons, it has

always been difficult for the municipal administration to respond to the increasing infrastructure and service demands of the city and indeed to produce a citywide urban strategy. After decades of frequent and intense episodes of crisis, repeated failures and disappointments, and insufficient resources, it has become somewhat customary to consider “crisis” (whether as sudden economic fluctuations or generalised uncertainty) as simply another indicator to consider in urban policy decisions and actual interventions.

Thinking crisis through the experience of Mar del Plata, then, shifts our attention from a condition that is normally understood as being cyclical and/or temporary to a more permanent one that seems to have consistently shaped the choices of urban policymakers as well as the decisions of planning actors and subsequently the landscape of the city. If we consider the state of urban areas in the periphery of Mar del Plata, for example, it is noticeable that some of them seem to have been in a constant crisis despite being part of the same municipal jurisdiction. Indeed, the uneven distribution of infrastructure, services and facilities over several decades has contributed to the formation of a fragmented city. For CIG, the problem is not only the actual dichotomy between a fully equipped waterfront and an underserved periphery, which has indeed created two cities within one, but the fact that such division is largely naturalised. These contrasting urban experiences are certainly not exclusive to Mar del Plata, as they are also observed in many other cities around the world, but their relative normalisation in the minds of social, economic and political actors has made it virtually impossible to mitigate the imbalances between the waterfront and the periphery over time. Indeed, the failure to recognise that such urban duality is actually a problem, and rather accept it as an inherent feature of the urban form of Mar del Plata, has limited the opportunities to break with such *status quo*.

Furthermore, episodes of crisis such as the one experienced in 2001 have exacerbated the precarious conditions of the periphery even further while responses have channelled already scarce resources to the coastal (and touristic) areas. Even though the 2001 crisis provided the conditions for wider social mobilisation and debate concerning pressing urban issues, efforts have been insufficient to address the multiple institutional obstacles that have been at the core of the uneven distribution of resources over time. For CIG, established public-private relationships and practices that have traditionally influenced

public investment priorities and decisions at the local level, for instance, certainly became more visible and the subject of widespread criticism at the time of the crisis. As a result, influential local actors that would normally lobby for their own interests made an effort to recognise the problems affecting poorer areas of the city and to help to secure their resolution whenever possible. This was indeed an important milestone creating a more empathetic/engaging form of urban governance but it did not mean that urban dichotomies ended or that unfavourable institutional practices that have perpetuated a dual city no longer exist, but that both have been recognised and become the focus of public scrutiny and deliberate action. Therefore, as PER notes, “it is hard to express the recent urban development experience of Argentina and Mar del Plata without thinking of crisis almost permanently. Unlike other countries and cities, episodes of crisis here are both very frequent and very severe”.

In addition to their relative frequency, the intensity of crises in Argentina has made the experience of cities and the challenges of municipal authorities more difficult to deal with. For OSC, there are fundamental differences between the financial crisis and contagion observed across North America and Europe in 2008 and the default and complete bankruptcy experienced in Argentina in 2001. Indeed, in his view crises do happen everywhere but not with the same intensity as in Argentina. He insists, “for us, major crises add pressure to already existing and sometimes longstanding issues at the local level. They are part of our cultural baggage and have been rarely fully overcome before the next one arrived”. These views are also shared by architects and planning professionals who believe that the frequency and severity of crises have undermined (and also shaped) the urban development path of cities like Mar del Plata. Moreover, they reflect the disappointment and frustration of local professionals who feel overwhelmed with an endless list of urban challenges that continues to grow after every crisis and who would like to see the built environment of their city substantially improved.

Finally, and from a comparative perspective, it is evident that Mar del Plata features the dualities and urban fragmentation of other cities around the world where some urban areas remain considerably underserved and largely neglected by municipal authorities (partly due to limited financial autonomy or resource allocation), and others display well developed infrastructure and services. In this respect, and despite having

experienced different temporalities and intensities of crisis, both Valencia and Mar del Plata seem to share urban features that evidence the relative permanence of crises conditions in less privileged areas of any city. For this reason, the study of urban crises should not be focused on single episodes in time or only highlight economic aspects, as this would simply obstruct conceptual innovation and perpetuate familiar theories.

ADDENDUM: CRISIS AND RECENT POLITICAL CHANGE IN VALENCIA

The inability of the local government to recognise the high costs and limited benefits of an urban strategic agenda heavily focused on a mixture of large-scale projects and mega-events (see Chapter 8) throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, and their failure to change the direction and content of such an agenda even after the 2008 crisis had started to affect the local finances, and had become the subject of severe criticism by the time of the 2015 local elections. As a result both Rita Barbera and the conservative party were punished in the polls in 2015 after twenty-four years in power. The *Partido Popular* lost half of the seats that had secured them a municipal majority in the past and were unable to remain in the government even with the support of *Ciudadanos*, another party. In what the media labelled as “a real political upheaval”, the coalition between the socialist party PSOE, *València en Comú*, and *Compromís* secured the control of the municipality with a total of 17 seats (El País 2015).

The emergence of these new local and regional political forces was also a response to the post-2008 scenario in which complex social, economic and institutional challenges have remained unresolved. *Compromís*, for instance, is a political coalition that emerged in Valencia in 2010 and participated in the regional, municipal and parliamentary elections of 2011 for the first time. It is constituted by the *Bloc Nacionalista Valencia*, the *Iniciativa del Poble Valencia*, and the *Verds-Equo del Pais Valencia*. The coalition’s manifesto outlines the confluence of their three different political visions: a progressive *Valencianism*, a modern left, and political ecology (see <https://compromis.net/>). In 2015, they did not only offer an electoral alternative to the usual conservative and socialist parties, but denounced the widespread corruption in the *Comunidad Valenciana* and advocated for an honest, transparent administration and a political agenda at the service of the interests of the majority. They also propose a new model of sustainable development that moves away from earlier urban policies with an

emphasis on economic growth toward a model of greater participation, self-government and a commitment to the defence of the interests of local communities. The success of *Compromís* in both the regional and municipal elections of 2015 was significant. At present, the coalition have mayors in 84 municipalities across the region, including Joan Ribo who succeeded Rita Barbera in Valencia. After two years of “brave policies”, Monica Oltra, the regional leader of *Compromís*, states: “we have to get rid of those who have corrupted our institutions and of those who use the Ministry of Interior and Justice to cover their corruption [...] we have to work for hundreds of families who had not only suffered the consequences of the crisis but the policy scams of the PP for two decades” (La Vanguardia 2017).

Similarly, *València en Comú*, initially known as *Guanyem Valencia*, also emerged in the post-2008 crisis scenario. It is a public citizen platform constituted in a political party in 2015 with the aim of participating in the municipal elections in the same year. It includes members of social movements and activist groups, and it is also supported by *Podem Valencia* (El Diario 2015a). The vision of the party is founded on principles of social rights, participation, democratic regeneration and a commitment to policies that foster the common good (<http://valenciaencomu.org>). In their political manifesto, the party calls for the defense of public resources and for a fight against corruption as well as transparency and a more honest and efficient public administration. In 2015, it obtained 9.92% of the total municipal votes, which gave them three aldermen in the local legislative body and the opportunity to form a coalition government with *Compromís* and the PSOE. The geographical distribution of the votes was fairly divided. While the conservative party continued to be the most voted list in central districts of the city, *Compromís* had the majority in the most peripheral neighborhoods and the youth vote (Love Valencia 25.05.15).

The key themes addressed by the emerging parties during the 2015 electoral campaign were related to the management of the ‘crisis’ at the urban level and the multiple controversies around the urban strategic agendas and models adopted by the conservative party under the leadership of Rita Barbera. For *Compromís*, “the urban agenda that we want to implement entails a new way of urban development, of responsible and sustainable policies, in contrast to the model of speculation and depredation carried out by the conservatives. We want to put an end to the proliferation

of large-scale and unsustainable projects that compromise the future of our heritage. We need to ensure that the land is developed where it is needed and not wherever the developer wants to” (Compromís 2015). In addition, *Compromís* is committed to a profound political change that brings about a new model of public administration based on transparency, participation and citizen collaboration. “We propose a law to close ‘revolving doors’ and to control the exercise of public office, a code of good practices of public officials, the limitation of the number of public roles to individuals, as well as a strict and transparent mechanism of financial regulation (Compromís 26.04.2015).

The electoral campaign of *València en Comú* was all about change, particularly administrative change, after so many years of conservative government. “The city must stop being an example of corruption in Spain and become a friendly, welcoming and free city made for the people” (Valencia en Comu 2015a). Their programme also included a number of measures against corruption and in favor of transparency, such as a new audit system by citizens and the launch of a Committee for the Investigation of Corruption. In addition, the party called for a new urban strategic agenda. “The city we want is green, with green neighbourhoods, allotments and gardens” (Valencia en Comu 2015b). The revision of extant planning regulation and the promotion of an urban development approach based on rehabilitation without destruction also featured prominently in their campaign as well as a call for more modest urban interventions, unlike the *Ciudad de las Artes y de las Ciencias* that not only cost the municipal and regional governments millions of euros, but that also became an example of waste and bad governance.

The candidates from these emerging parties carried out campaigns that brought them closer to social groups and communities through modest street acts and with restraint in the deployment and the organization of political events (El Pais 24.05.15). The results of the 2015 municipal elections not only showed the electoral defeat of traditional parties, but also the emergence of new forces that offered an alternative path and showed commitment for a more transparent public administration and a balanced urban development agenda.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter compared the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata to inform wider debates about crisis. It discussed how we might understand their experiences in relation to existing conceptualisations of “crisis” and related institutional and urban processes, which have been largely influenced by notions derived from capitalism, austerity, globalisation, and neoliberalism; mostly inspired by a relatively limited number of cases from North America and/or Europe, particularly since the 2008 “global” crisis. The chapter explored and examined narratives, responses and contextual specificities of crises, from which multiple dimensions, temporalities and intensities became visible across the two cases and reminded us that the notion of “crisis” should be informed by experiences from different geographical locations and time frames, allowing for conceptual experimentation and innovation.

Analysis of the most recent episodes of major crisis across Valencia in 2008 and Mar del Plata in 2001 encourages a much longer term and a more institutionally embedded approach to understanding crisis. This entails a move from macroeconomic events that often inform the analysis of crises to contextual specificities and historical pathways, through which numerous complexities, challenges, uncertainties as well as opportunities can be intuitively traced and examined. While the impact of these crises certainly had significant institutional and urban policy consequences in both cities, the outcomes were very different. In Valencia, the 2008 crisis brought an end to an ambitious strategic agenda that prioritised large-scale projects and mega-events, but did not cause immediate political upheaval. In Mar del Plata, however, the 2001 crisis unleashed widespread institutional chaos and the resignation of political leaders at all levels of government (as well as opportunities for new local leaders) and provided the conditions for the emergence of the first local strategic planning initiative.

In order to understand the urban dimension of major episodes of crisis and their consequences in the local institutional and policymaking environment, it was helpful to consider multiple narratives from local political, economic and social actors. In Valencia, the narratives of municipal officials (particularly those dealing with urban strategic matters) and political leaders such as Rita Barbera have been the most powerful on balance as they have been able to decide upon and shape the urban policy

responses to different episodes of crisis since the 1990s and to use such narratives for their own electoral benefit. However, the narratives and input of a wider range of social actors have also been important since 2008. While it is evident that they do not represent the most disadvantaged groups or the poor, they include higher education institutions and organised community groups that have actively engaged in the articulation of new strategic visions as well as infrastructure and service matters. In contrast to Valencia, the narratives of municipal and political actors in Mar del Plata have not been influential, either in shaping urban policy agendas or in gaining electoral advantage. The tactical manoeuvres of middle classes and local industries to pursue their own agendas, however, have been central in shaping institutional outcomes and urban development processes over the last decades. Furthermore, episodes of crises were narrated somewhat positively by the construction industry in Mar del Plata, where bricks and mortar constitute havens for investment and an option to shelter from currency depreciation.

In addition to the contextual specificities of moments of crisis and the different narratives of local actors, much can be learned from their multiple temporalities. In the cases of Valencia and Mar del Plata, it is evident that crises are not new and past episodes have unleashed economic, political, as well as social challenges. Although the 2008 and 2001 events seem to have dwarfed the magnitude of earlier crises and their consequences remain somewhat fresh in the memory of people, both cities have extensive experience of dealing with a mixture of inherited, recurrent and permanent crises. At the time of democratic transition in the 1980s, for example, they both faced a mixture of institutional, urban and political issues in addition to economic decline, all consequence of decades of authoritarian military regimes, public disinvestment, rapid demographic growth as well as ongoing processes of deindustrialisation.

In both cities, then, a long term approach reveals that crises often overlap with one another, and that their consequences accumulate over time: unresolved issues tend to become more complex due to multiple reasons in addition to cycles of crisis *per se*. As a result, both cities present features of social and urban fragmentation that, although have been exacerbated by recent episodes of crisis, are the result of decades of neglect and uneven public investment. Furthermore, crises are not only temporary but can become a normalised feature in cities like Mar del Plata where, in fact, there is not a clear

distinction between situations of crisis and non-crisis; institutional issues and urban challenges have always been present albeit at different intensities over the last few decades. Therefore, it would be difficult to explain the city's recent urban development history, and the forces shaping policy choices, without considering the long term implications of crisis.

Such a wide variety of experiences helps us to put in perspective aspects of the recent "global" crisis and to reconsider its wider implications for cities across the North-South divide. At present, Valencia appears to be well equipped, in terms of infrastructure and institutional capacity, to confront the challenges of the post-2008 crisis scenario despite its relatively limited financial autonomy and the apparent failure of its urban strategic model based on international competition, large-scale projects and mega-events. The experience of Valencia since 2008 cannot be and should not be understood as a local expression of the so-called global financial crisis, but as an urban crisis that has been long in the making and is ongoing.

The following chapter examines how different political, economic and social actors use the notion of crisis to influence institutional decisions and urban policymaking processes at the local level. Their individual and collective experiences can help us to better understand the complexity of the institutional environment in which urban policies and strategies are formulated and decided upon, including the diversity of public-private structures and relationships involved in such processes as well as the multiple ways in which municipalities might navigate federal systems in times of crisis.

CHAPTER 6: URBAN ACTORS AND THE LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the importance of considering local experiences and interpretations of crisis, as they help us to gain more nuanced understanding of non-economic processes of change that might (start to) take place during and after episodes of crisis. This chapter examines how and to what extent different political, economic and social actors might be able to influence institutional decisions and urban policymaking processes in response to episodes of crisis. Indeed, local actors are essential to the institutional transformations and urban responses developed in the light of crises. Their individual and collective experiences can help us to better understand the complexity of the social and political environment in which urban policies are formulated and decided upon, as well as the diversity of institutional structures and dynamics involved in such processes. As Panizza and Philip (2014:xvii) point out “crisis narratives are also “real” in that they are understood within the conflict of group interests and through institutional structures. The emphasis on the relationship between the political agency of human beings and the institutional structure they encounter, aim to change, and which aims to modify their behaviour, is a fundamental element in knowing crises”.

The actors discussed in the next section include a mixture of public and private actors that range from charismatic leaders and powerful individuals to a wide variety of business and professional associations, municipal technical and administrative staff and social groups. The third section deals with the local institutional environment within which the different actors interact in each city. The conclusion draws this together to consolidate the comparative insights generated, attending to the range of actors and the variety of ways in which they have shaped urban outcomes in times of crisis.

6.2 URBAN ACTORS

6.2.1 VALENCIA

In Valencia, several groups of actors have been involved in the transformation of local government institutions as well as the development of urban policies and strategies since democratic transition in 1979. They are all important and legitimate in multiple ways, as they represent the voices and interests of different political, economic and social groups.

CHARISMATIC LEADERS: RITA BARBERA

There is no doubt that Rita Barbera, who served as mayor of Valencia between 1991-2015, is one of the most influential local political figures of recent times. In 1990, when different alternatives to overcome the economic and institutional difficulties of democratic transition were needed, when there was a widespread feeling that Valencia was lagging behind and losing its position as a centre for culture, trade and business fairs in relation to cities like Barcelona and Seville, and when citywide strategies were becoming an important instrument to respond to the multiple challenges faced by cities, Rita Barbera foresaw the opportunity to campaign for the need of a strategic plan that would not only tackle the multiple issues inherited from earlier administrations but also to create a modern and competitive city. For JEM, “the plan was an important element of her first electoral campaign and was mixed with a discourse that promised to return confidence, pride and ambition to the Valencianos”. Following her victory in 1991, Rita Barbera became the strongest advocate and promoter of a citywide strategic initiative that was to influence important local institutional transformations (not only in terms of structures but also dynamics) and urban policy decisions in the decades to come. In the words of RIM, “in Valencia, the idea of the Plan Estratégico has been connected to the figure of the mayor herself from the very beginning. Here, the one who promoted the plan and started the process of diagnosis and assessment in 1991 was Rita Barbera”.

During her first term (1991-1995), Rita became an active relational leader within and outside local government circles who supported every action that helped to materialise the plan – including the establishment of offices outside the municipality to deal with

the phases of diagnosis and formulation. At the time, her enthusiasm and actions appeared as necessary steps to overcome the delays of bureaucratic procedures that allegedly limited the ability of earlier administrations to act upon the economic and institutional difficulties of transition, which had placed Valencia in a weak position vis-a-vis other Spanish cities. The relationship between Rita Barbera and the organisations in charge of different aspects of the strategic plan (*Pro-Valencia*; *Asociación Valencia 2015* and the CEyD) worked relatively well over the successive terms (1995-2007). Rita ensured that emerging offices and organisational changes had her support and the approval of the municipality. After all, these new institutional spaces were part of the changes that would allow Valencia to overcome the economic and political crisis of transition and to become a modern and competitive city. However, the direct involvement of Rita seemed to produce unintended consequences in the long term. For instance, while the establishment of organisations outside the municipality to deal with the strategic plan was indeed a welcome innovation, their very existence undermined the functions of preexisting municipal structures as well as their ability to respond to urban challenges over time. According to JEM, “any sort of urban innovation and strategic initiative observed in Valencia over the last decades has always come from outside the municipal structure, from organisations supported by the executive but not from the municipality itself. I respect the professionalism and technical work of the local bureaucracy but I do not see how they have expanded their remit or improved their expertise and performance over time – they have remained the same” (*ibid*).

The uninterrupted administration of Rita Barbera (and her close allies from the *Partido Popular*) was not only unusually long, but became increasingly problematic over time. While her charismatic and somewhat populist discourses allowed her to win successive local elections, the increasing political overconfidence and authoritarian behaviour often denounced by her critics did not help her to confront the institutional and urban challenges faced by the city over time. Instead, Rita seemed to use large-scale projects, mega-events and the strategic plan of the city as instruments to consolidate her own political ambitions. In terms of actual policies and strategies, Rita neither guaranteed continuity in the longterm formulation and implementation of projects that were to benefit wider sectors of the population nor did she have the willingness to change the direction of strategies that were increasingly questionable and contradictory with the declining economic situation of the late 2000s. After successive electoral victories,

perhaps unsurprisingly, Rita went from being a relational leader to an absolute leader who found it difficult to deal with change. As JEM recalls, “when the bid for the Americas Cup was awarded to Valencia in the mid 2000s, there was an exaggerated sense that Valencia had become a very important city nationally and internationally. Rita, of course, saw herself as the main driver of such achievement and thus she felt she was very important too. I believe she somehow lost the perspective on reality, and the sense of power, when dealing directly with the president of Spain and the committee of the Americas Cup”.

Nevertheless, Rita Barbera secured a fifth term in office in 2011 when the consequences of the 2008 crisis were well underway across municipalities. She also continued to influence institutional and urban strategic decisions directly as well as priorities and possible responses to the crisis. The *Fundación InnDEA*, which replaced earlier organisations dealing with the strategic visioning and development of Valencia (see sections 7.2 and 8.4), emerged in this period with the support of Rita. For EUR

“InnDEA has become an administrative hub and communication platform between the municipal executive, local government departments and public and private actors within the city and beyond. It has been instrumental in the articulation and operationalisation of a new strategic vision that is founded in ideas such as SmartCity, I+D+I (research and development), innovation and entrepreneurship, and which has been directly supported by Rita Barbera who identified them as economic priorities and key areas for crisis recovery”.

It is undeniable that Rita Barbera has been an incredibly influential actor in the recent institutional and urban development of Valencia. The establishment of organisations outside the municipality to deal with urban policy affairs seems to have suited her ambition to decide upon projects, strategies and the involvement of actors that would help her to yield electoral benefits over time, while undermining the ability of internal municipal departments to get involved without her direct support. At present BOI sees that some sort of *reduced* democracy has consolidated in the city over the last two decades, in which Rita Barbera has become an hegemonic figure following several consecutive victories, the possibility to build basic consensus across different

socioeconomic actors (beyond the local elites) has become increasingly difficult and wider participation has significantly declined. Therefore, in his view, initiatives such as the *Plan Estratégico* (that require participation and wider social engagement) are somewhat in contradiction with the model of *reduced* democracy observed in Valencia and have only provided opportunities for politicians and elites to pursue their own electoral and economic agendas.

LOCAL ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS ACTORS

Private capital holders have been important in the recent institutional/urban development trajectory of Valencia. They range from traditional economic elites to business groups that have been more or less prominent over different periods. The *promotores* (developers), for instance, constitute a group of powerful local families who have dominated the construction industry for decades (see Sorribes 2015 for a detailed study) and who have influenced important institutional and urban decisions both before and after democratic transition. As RAJ notes

“Valencia has been always governed by the same powerful families. This is an important feature because their power is independent from the mayor in office and thus it has not significantly varied over time. Members of those families are also *promotores* or developers and have made incredible fortunes by controlling urban land. For me, the only period in which the influence of such families was challenged was in the first democratic term after transition and the administration of Perez Casado. When Rita Barbera arrives in 1991, the municipality started to reconnect with families and developers who have been influential since the time of Franco. They have always been there”.

While the *promotores* lost some of their bargaining power vis-a-vis the municipality during the first democratic administrations in the 1980s, they quickly aligned with the political elite that emerged with the victory of Rita Barbera in 1991 and secured their privileged position for the following two decades. Indeed, this group does not operate isolated but rather in “partnership” with the municipality through multiple formal connections and informal networks. As RAJ points out “the *promotores* have always

influenced decisions concerning urban policy. They have found in the municipality a space to consolidate their interests and legitimise what I believe is an important institutional pathology: the phenomenon of state capture. This is very clear to many people”. In the early 1990s, for instance, the *promotores* worked closely together with the municipal executive in the lobbying of LRAU (see section 8.5.1 for details about its implications and consequences). This controversial legislation, which favoured urban developers willing to invest in large-scale projects, was approved by the government in 1994 on the basis that it represented a necessary measure to unlock the potential of land value and to reverse the stagnant economy situation following earlier episodes of crisis.

Indeed, the *promotores* used the crisis as a tactical vehicle to voice and mobilise their sectorial interests as well as to persuade higher levels of government of the need for a new land development legislation that could override local regulations. Following the approval of LRAU and the multiple opportunities opened up for large-scale urban development projects, the *promotores* realised that local resources were not enough to meet their ambitions and started to consider and bring in larger investors and financial partners. As a result, large banks such as the Santander Group and BBVA as well as more diffused private equity and asset management vehicles entered the investment pool that propelled development and construction activities for over a decade. Although indirectly, whether through concessions, partnerships or mergers, these non-local actors became increasingly (yet discreetly) influential over time and benefited from investments not only in brick and mortar but also in mega-events (POC).

In addition to the *promotores*, several business and commercial actors have been important in the articulation of institutional and urban policy responses to crisis since democratic transition. The *La Feria de Valencia*, the *Autoridad Portuaria* and the *Camara de Comercio*, for example, have all been involved in the formulation of several strategic agendas at some point in recent decades – particularly in the 1980s and early 1990s (RIM). While each organisation represents traditional sectors and/or industries that enjoy a relatively influential position at the local level, their interventions have been modest compared to the active engagement observed in developers. Their potential to shape institutional and urban decisions has been often undermined by their inability to communicate with each other, to work collaboratively, and to overcome conflicts of interest with the municipality. For the organisations (and consultants) in charge of the

diagnosis and formulation of the strategic plan, these issues constituted a serious challenge.

“The business elite of Valencia was not characterised by their ability to articulate or voice their sectorial interests and priorities nor by their willingness to contribute to common strategies for the future of the city, but quite the opposite. They were important precisely because they were able to obstruct and delay wider initiatives and projects in which they felt they did not have a prominent role. From the outside, these economic actors simply seemed too problematic to work with and this had terrible consequences for Valencia – particularly when competing with other cities for resources for infrastructure and large projects” (JEM)

The observation of JEM evidences that despite the relative power of such business groups, it has been their confrontational attitude and unwillingness to work collaboratively with one another what has ultimately undermined their ability to engage more actively in local institutional/urban decisions making processes. This does not mean, however, that they have been unimportant. While they might have not been able to shape institutional spaces in the same way that the *promotores* have done it, they have certainly influenced the ways in which some institutional/urban strategic responses have been made in times of heightened economic and political tension. As RAJ notes, “they are relevant local economic actors that step in and out important decision making circles within and outside the municipality. While they might do so in somewhat diffused and contradictory ways, by aligning with different political and socioeconomic actors each time, they have certainly challenged top-down agendas that involve the production, industrial and commercial spaces of the city”. In other words, they seem to have used their relative power in tactical ways over time and succeeded in influencing (albeit indirectly), whether through opposition or resistance, the form and content of some of the projects included in the first *Plan Estratégico*, which aimed to overcome the crisis of transition of the 1980s, the stagnant economic situation of the early 1990s and to transform Valencia into a modern and competitive city.

EXTERNAL CONSULTANTS AND EXPERT TEAMS

The role of consultants and their expert teams has been determinant in the institutional and urban transformation of Valencia ever since the commission of the first strategic plan. In the early 1990s, they emerged as an influential group of actors operating between public and private circles. They were not only instrumental in the establishment of new organisational structures outside the municipality to deal with the plan, but also in the creation and support of institutional spaces for communication and dialogue between urban actors. As in the case of Rita Barbera as Mayor, many of the professionals who worked in the earlier phases of the plan continued to do so until the late 2000s, while others moved across municipal offices and continue to deal with different aspects of urbanism at present. Having had the continuous and direct support of Rita Barbera herself, it is unsurprising that consultants were able to shape important decisions based on their expert and technical perspective while bypassing bureaucratic procedures and municipal structures that were deemed inefficient, backwards and ultimately the cause of earlier economic and political failures. According to FLA

“there is no doubt that the most influential figure in urban policy decisions over the last decades has been the director of the *Plan Estratégico* himself, Jose Maria Pascual, and his team of experts at the *Asociación Valencia 2015* and later the CEyD. Mar Martinez and Elena Roche, for example, were always involved in aspects of content and communication. From within the municipality, Eduardo Santón who was advisor to the aldermen in the area of social services and later an alderman himself played a very important role in administrative and legal aspects. There have been others according to specific areas, but they were the most influential in my view”

The communication vacuum and multiple conflicts that existed between key local economic actors, such as the business elites mentioned earlier, did not make the articulation of institutional and urban strategic responses to the stagnant economic situation of the early 1990s a smooth process. In fact, consultants had to spend a considerable amount of time and resources as mediators between public-private and private-private actors in order to move forward. For JEM, the director of the first plan, “If actor X was having problems with access to the port area, one would think that X

would contact the Port Authorities directly, but this was not the case. In fact, the port might have never heard from X before the problem had reached the media and public scrutiny”. This behaviour had terrible effects. In JEM’s view, there seemed to be too many problems around each single project: the waterfront interventions, the *Parque Central*, the *Parque Turia*, the station for the AVE (fast train), and so forth. The challenge to foster dialogue and consensus amongst relatively powerful actors was thus significant and required consultants to negotiate middle-grounds through which projects could be carried out and materialised despite the conflicting interests involved. This was further complicated with issues of misinformation. For instance, “when actor X opposed a project that actor Y was proposing, he/she would use lots of unrealistic facts, lies and things that were just irrelevant and unrelated. Therefore, communication was not only poor but also plagued with false and inaccurate information. This was not the case between public and private actors only, but also between/within large private organisations themselves” (*ibid*). However, the role of consultants as mediators of public-private interests has not gone without criticism and some even claim that their performance has always been biased towards the ambitions of Rita Barbera and the interests of *promotores* and developers (LIN and PAU). For this reason, GIM has described their tactics as a “smokescreen” that has helped the political and economic elite to hide real issues concerning wider participation and transparency.

Whatever the reasons behind their active role in the establishment of new organisations to deal with citywide strategies and/or the creation of institutional spaces to foster dialogue between urban actors, it is undeniable that consultants did enjoy a relatively privileged position while working for the municipality of Valencia. For JEM, the experience of working with the local government and politicians, as an external consultant, was overall positive: “I must say that our relationship with the municipality was pretty good overall. Rita, personally, was very supportive of the strategic plan and took it very seriously. It represented an important element of her ambition for Valencia: a message that she always made clear to the aldermen working in relevant areas. Thus the local administration and technical staff were always supportive. We functioned as an external organisation and therefore they did not see us as competitors. We always felt confident, respected and comfortable” (JEM).

While consultants like JEM and his team of experts coordinated the urban policy environment of Valencia for over a decade, and contributed to the articulation of ambitious strategic responses to overcome the stagnant economic situation of the 1990s, their preeminent role was largely dependent on their relationship with the local executive, Rita Barbera. This relationship became somewhat problematic towards the late 2000s. After successive victories, Rita seemed to find it increasingly difficult to accept any form of criticism, even from professional experts that advised her. As a result, too many bad decisions were made. In the words of JEM, “there was one scandal after the other, with the Americas Cup and the Formula One at the centre of the storm due to their excessive costs and alleged claims of corruption. When Rita is reelected in 2007, we decided not to renew our contract with the municipality. It was a pity because her discourse to recover local ambition and the ability to think big was lost and our efforts of many years became redundant”. At the onset of the 2008 crisis, the municipality did not have a clear strategic agenda nor a designated organisation or team to deal with it. Ironically, Rita found herself in a similar situation to that of 1991 but this time there was hardly anyone else to blame. In the words of JEM, “the municipality was very slow to intervene and to come up with alternatives to the policies and tactics that were not longer working in the late 2000s. What did the aldermen say to the Mayor for several years after 2008? This is the consequence of the global financial crisis. However, I would argue that there was a crisis of ill-conceived success, political overconfidence and institutional disarticulation at the local level, well before 2008”

Indeed, the incorporation of external consultants into the local institutional environment and urban policymaking processes in the 1990s was an important tactical move of Rita Barbera to produce an alternative economic and urban development agenda. However, and perhaps unforeseeably, the very existence of such expert teams seemed to undermine the ability of internal municipal departments to deal with the vision and strategies required over time. As a result, and without the support of consultants, the municipality found it particularly difficult to respond to the challenges exposed by the 2008 crisis and it was not until the establishment of InnDEA in 2012 that an alternative urban strategic initiative started to emerge (see sections 7.2 and 8.4 for details).

THE MUNICIPALITY

The ability of local institutions to respond to the conventional and/or cyclical challenges of crises, whether through organisational transformations, the articulation of urban strategies or otherwise, does not only depend on the political tactics of party leaders or the professional expertise of external consultants, but on the capacity of the larger municipal bureaucracy. Indeed, there are many actors within municipal structures whose roles are essential in everyday dynamics and who all contribute to what is often known as institutional culture (which I discuss in the next section). This is the case of both elected figures such as the aldermen as well as non-elected employees across technical and administrative areas. While the performance of the former might be influenced by their party politics, the role of bureaucrats might be more impartial and should be committed to relevant norms and regulations instead. However, such an assertion is merely theoretical. In practice, all municipal officials face multiple pressures and must continuously balance their duties between procedural correctness and the needs of politicians and/or powerful economic elites. For RAJ,

“Those who work in technical and administrative roles in the municipality of Valencia are rather conditioned by the political and economic forces of influential actors. This has nothing to do with their professional capacity or [in]ability to cope with external pressures, which are generally good, but with the way in which the institutional structures where they operate have been set up. Why? Local administrations in Spain has evolved in an unfavourable direction over the years. Even after democratic transition, governments have failed to create and foster institutions that are resistant to economic fluctuations and political upheavals. In Spain, episodes of crisis have repeatedly led to the reconfiguration of political and institutional alliances at all levels and therefore actors have also changed. Although many local professionals have survived such changes, politics are so pervasive that successive leaders have created new roles and positions above/aside existing officials – which have limited their autonomy and compromised their function”

The observation of RAJ is also shared by others who aimed to articulate an

administration based on the professional merits of its members (rather than their political views/support) in the early days of democracy, but whose efforts were abandoned by successive local governments. For this reason, they believe that municipal bodies continue to be susceptible to the political pressure and economic interests of powerful actors.

“I believe that all my obsession as Mayor of Valencia in the 1980s, and which I think I transmitted to my closest collaborators, was to build an administrative structure that could last forever, which could adapt to economic and political changes over time and could remain independent from the government in turn. When we recruited new economists to work with us at the municipality, for example, my ambition was to create a highly qualified team that could last for as long as they did a proper job. Indeed, this had to be democratically supported by the electorate. In the 1980s, many colleagues thought that to win an election and/or to be appointed in a public role meant to stay in forever. For me, it was clear that our political cycle would end at some point and therefore insisted to leave a professional and transparent administration” (POC)

“The most interesting thing for all the people I helped to recruit for the municipality at the time of transition was that I never asked them for a proof of party membership. There was a mix of political and ideological thinking and that was absolutely fine. The most important thing for me was their professional competency and their willingness to work hard and properly. Many of them had been university friends and/or even professors. There was no need for a party badge. In the late 1980s, after several years in the municipality, several economists, engineers and architects left in search of better opportunities and rewards. Thereafter, the efforts to build an apolitical local administration were abandoned” (SEP)

While the organisational structure of the municipality and relative weakness of its administrative departments might indeed explain part of the susceptibility of municipal officials to the pressures of political leaders and/or economic elites, it is not a case of whether politics dominate bureaucracy or vice versa. The evidence from both POC and

SEP illustrate the consistent importance of personal attitude towards questions of power or political alliances, and the ways in which individuals might be able to shape institutional decisions and make a difference from a position of power (despite the expectation of some of their peers). Furthermore, there are also elements of professional experience and personal charisma. For FLA, the response of municipal officials to dilemmas of a technical or political nature might vary between individuals according to their own degree of integrity, their personality and their wider connections and/or compromises.

“I am a technical official and my professional responsibilities and political affinities are clear to me. More generally, I believe that the balance between professional duties and political sympathies does depend a lot on the personality and charisma of individuals. There have been cases, for example, in which a particular delegation or officer within the municipality has been established for such a long time and has so much weight in the internal power relations that their particular working ethics, practices and dynamics are consolidated within the administrative structure and therefore cannot be influenced by new officials or politicians so easily. Nevertheless, there are of course delegations and technical/administrative staff that are systematically dominated by political leaders and agendas” (*ibid*)

Finally, amongst politicians and bureaucrats, the *asesores* (or advisors) are important figures within the municipal structure and dynamics of Valencia. They occupy positions of trust and work closely together with the aldermen. Although their primary role involves the provision of technical support to the latter, they must comply with and contribute to the political aims of the party that appointed them. They are part of the municipal payroll but not of the municipal administration itself. For TXA, they play an essential role between multiple urban actors and are able to influence both institutional and urban policy strategies directly.

“In practice, we have the political sphere in charge of making decisions and the technical sphere that supports the politicians. Then we have the legislative and administrative spheres. In Spain, we also have an intermediary figure: the *asesor* or advisor, who is a very knowledgeable

individual that provides expert support to the legislative body in particular topics. For instance, the alderwoman dealing with innovation affairs has one advisor specialised in SmartCity themes and another one in entrepreneurship. These advisors also have the political duty of establishing and maintaining good institutional relationships with different urban actors, both public and private, as well as ensuring that their recommendations and the decisions and actions of the aldermen do not produce negative consequences for the population and/or their own political careers. The *asesores* are then figures of knowledge and institutional action who are present throughout the entire process of formulation of urban policies and strategies” (*ibid*)

SOCIAL ACTORS: PARTICIPATION AND MOBILISATION

Finally, social actors have also played an important role in the articulation of institutional and urban policy responses to episodes of crisis since democratic transition. They have resorted to different forms of expression, mobilisation and pressure over time. In the 1980s, for instance, Valencia hosted a number of powerful movements organised around basic infrastructure and service demands whose combined efforts forced the first democratic government to act upon the most pressing urban issues in a relatively short period of time (POC and SEP). As GIM recalls, “the new administration had to consider the input of well established neighbourhood associations, some of which had operated as political instruments of Franco for decades. They sometimes brought a plan of their own, including a map, a report and a list of demands. We could not ignore these groups and had to respond carefully and diligently to all of them. It was a rather delicate period”. However, after some of their basic demands had been met, the socio-political function and collective power of numerous neighbourhood associations started to decline. As democracy consolidated, key leaders were co-opted by mainstream parties, in which many became participants of clientelistic relationships and abandoned their community activities outside the political sphere (*ibid*). As a result, the active mobilisation and engagement observed in the earlier years of democracy experienced a relative halt towards the mid 1980s. In fact, and according to SEP, social peace reigned across Valencia in 1988 when social attention shifted to the multiple political attempts to destabilise the government of the *Partido Socialista* and earlier demands for basic

infrastructure and services had been covered.

In 1991, when Rita Barbera was elected for the first time, participation had become a relatively distant subject in the minds of people and one that remained dormant for several years until new forms of mobilisation and/or resistance to large-scale urban interventions emerged in the 2000s (see Xambo and Gines 2012). Ironically, although institutional channels for participation have always existed, none of them seems to have worked in reality and urban actors have become increasingly wary of them. As QUI notes,

“theoretically, the population of Valencia has always had access to a *Consejo de Acción Social*, a *Consejo de Ciudadanos*, and a *Junta de Distrito*, but what do they really mean in terms of participation? Perhaps not much, because when these councils gather it is only to legitimise decisions that have been already made. They are formal spaces of participation in which decisions have been made a priori. The same can be said about the *Plenos* of the municipal legislative body. We have a collection of stories and anecdotes about them and of how they have been occupied and used by some groups to restrict the participation of others”.

Furthermore, from the mid 1990s, social movements not only seemed to be absent (and/or largely inactive, given the climate of economic and political stability that prevailed for almost a decade), but also discouraged by political leaders and neglected by the municipal administration. As a result, the level of socio-political engagement, public debate and response achieved by social movements a decade earlier virtually disappeared. In practice, more often than not, participation has become a *buzzword* over time, which has been used to legitimise decisions already made rather than to foster debate and consensus across urban actors (I will discuss this in relation to the *Plan Estratégico* in section 8.3).

Nevertheless, following the 2008 crisis, communities have revived some of the effervescent spirit that characterised them in the 1980s. Indeed, the crisis has not only altered the *status quo* of local socio-political relations (which had remained relatively calm between the mid 1990s and the mid 2000s), but the tactics and responses of social

actors who have grown increasingly dissatisfied with extant political alternatives. This has given rise to new forms of social organisation and intervention often defined as resilience (see Barnes and Hall 2013). Local communities have shifted away from strategies based on targeted demands and resistance vis-a-vis the state toward strategies based on direct action and intervention. According to MAL, community action has been successful in some areas, including her own neighbourhood. “We departed from the organisational base of our longstanding association five years ago and have achieved small yet significant gains. We have strengthened our connections within the neighbourhood, based in social, cultural values and common concerns. This has allowed us to materialise projects such as the *Huertos Urbanos de Benimaclet* (or allotments for orchards and farms), which entailed the recovery of about 6000 square meters of abandoned urban land, in which approximately 400 people can now harvest fruits and vegetables freely” (*ibid*). Image 01 shows the *Huertos Urbanos de Benimaclet*.

In addition to communities and their multiple forms of mobilisation and action, higher education organisations such as universities, technology and business schools also belong to the constellation of social actors. In Valencia, they have played an important role in the articulation of strategic responses to the various socioeconomic, political and institutional challenges that have emerged in times of crisis. Moreover, universities have been instrumental in the incorporation of wider social concerns into the strategies and recommendations they have advanced to the local government. The relationship between the *Universidad de Valencia*, the *Universidad Politécnica de Valencia* and the municipality, for example, dates back to the 1980s when professionals who had worked for the universities and become active members of the *Partido Socialista* occupied numerous political and bureaucratic positions. Although this relationship became increasingly problematic following the victory of the *Partido Popular* in 1991, universities managed to remain involved in urban debates through different schemes. RIM remembers the tension between the *Universidad Politécnica de Valencia* and the municipality in 1993, during the early phases of the strategic plan, and how their institutional relation was reconfigured.

“They seemed irreconcilable at times. We had to find alternative ways to bring them back together, despite their contrasting political views. As a result, we introduced the *Cátedra Ciudad* (an urban studies programme



Image 01. Different views from the *Huertos Urbanos de Benimaclet* (Pictures by the author).

focused on Valencia) as well as a doctoral scholarship for research dealing with local urban issues. While the former has produced good results over the years and fostered good inter-institutional relations up to present, the latter did not last for very long. In fact it was awarded only once and withdrawn shortly after the scholarship was awarded to a research project on urban mobility that was deemed to be too critical of the official mobility agenda” (RIM)

All in all, universities seem to have maintained a relatively steady presence across local institutions and policy circles over time. Even though research based criticism towards municipal interventions seems to have triggered tensions between universities and the local government, other programmes such as the *Cátedra Ciudad* have remained in place. Furthermore, new forms of engagement have emerged. Following the 2008 crisis and the need for new urban strategic initiatives, universities have gained a more privileged position in recent years (see section 5.3.1 for evidence). For EUR, both public and private universities and a mixture of technology, business and research centres have been vital for the articulation of post-crisis strategies. “The I+D+I [spanish acronym for research, development and innovation], an initiative at the centre of a new city strategy aimed at attracting investment, creating new jobs and fostering sustainable development through innovation, emerged from the collaboration of multiple local higher education institutions. Likewise, the consolidation of the *Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria La Fe* in 2014, which serves as a hub for social innovation and exchange between hospitals, health professionals, and researchers, was only possible due to the active involvement of universities” (*ibid*).

It is evident that a variety of social actors have played an active role in the institutional and urban policy environment of Valencia. Even though they have been on the lower end of a power hierarchy dominated by political leaders, external consultants and economic elites, their collective efforts have certainly influenced many of the decisions made by politicians and/or the local bureaucracy throughout time. This was particularly visible in the 1980s, following democratic transition. While such efforts have not been necessarily continuous (and social movements certainly experienced a decade of relative inactivity from the mid 1990s onwards), they have reemerged and become more visible since the 2008 crisis. This has been the case of social movements and universities, both

of which have sought new forms of expression and ways of intervention over the last years. Therefore, and while participation continues to be a challenge for local governments, the role of social actors seems to be particularly important in times of heightened economic and political tension.

6.2.2 MAR DEL PLATA

In Mar del Plata, multiple actors have been involved in processes of institutional transformation and urban policymaking since democratic transition. These individuals and groups are all important and legitimate, as they represent the views of different socioeconomic and political groups. However, their ability to influence institutional decisions and urban policy agendas varies according to their social and/or economic power and how they might use it under particular circumstances. As DIM points out “social actors are not all the same and they are differentiated from one another mainly by their socioeconomic power as well as the influence they might have on state decisions and actions”. Although more influential actors might use their relative power vis-a-vis the state to bargain for administrative and urban policy changes that would benefit their sectorial activities more or less permanently (albeit they might tactically retreat in times of crisis), popular groups seem to gain momentum, more recognition and a greater ability to defend and voice their interests vis-a-vis local powerful groups and the state in times of economic uncertainty and political instability. The actors examined here are not analysed through a particular theoretical or deductive classification but based on empirical findings regarding their ability to influence institutional and urban policy decisions at the local level, particularly in times of crisis.

POWERFUL INDIVIDUALS: ALDREY IGLESIAS

Unlike the case of Valencia, where the most influential individual in local institutional and urban policy decisions since democratic transition has been the mayor herself, comparable economic and political power has been associated with a businessman in Mar del Plata, Aldrey Iglesias. Originally from Spain but Argentinean national, Aldrey is considered a tycoon and one of the most powerful individuals of recent times. In Mar del Plata, he is widely known as the *patron* (or the landlord) of the city and has benefited quite significantly from state decisions concerning the adjudication of

concessions and greater flexibility for the development of large commercial (and controversial) projects over the last three decades. He is the largest individual private investor in the city and his portfolio includes local media businesses, casinos, luxury hotels as well as commercial real estate.

For CIG such economic power and the fact that Aldrey literally owns part of the city has earned him widespread and somewhat exaggerated respect across sociopolitical circles. Furthermore, it is popularly believed that all democratic mayors have had to receive his consent and to maintain good relationships with him in order to exercise their functions smoothly and ultimately to remain in office (AOZ). Although he has never pursued a political career, he has built and maintained a close relationship with all the mayors in power. Despite numerous changes of local leaders, parties and political agendas over time, he has been close to whoever has been in office and the colour of the government in turn seems to have been relatively unimportant at shaping his political networks. In fact, some local critics believe that his business career benefited from his connections with high ranking officials during the military dictatorship when they held regular meetings at the *City Hotel*, close to the *Plaza de Mayo* in Buenos Aires, which was managed by Aldrey. The coverage of these public-private relationships, however, has been rather limited and for that reason the public image of Aldrey has remained relatively obscure and even associated with dishonest dealings, which many journalists fear to criticise (RAF). Moreover, Aldrey is well connected beyond the municipality and his formal/informal networks expand through the regional and national levels. At present, says RAF, Aldrey, Daniel Scioli (the governor of Buenos Aires) and Gustavo Pulti (the mayor of Mar del Plata) appear to maintain a relatively familiar and public friendship circle. Similar to the case of Rita Barbera in Valencia, a mixture of personality and charisma have allowed Aldrey to influence important political actors and consequently institutional and urban policy decisions for decades.

In terms of interventions that have had a visible impact in the urban landscape of the city, for instance, there are two well known cases that illustrate the influence that Aldrey has had across political circles within and beyond Mar del Plata and the importance of informal connections for the materialisation of some of his business endeavours. The first one involves two of the most luxurious hotels and local architectural landmarks, the *Hotel Hermitage* and the *Hotel Provincial*. According to RAF, Aldrey was not only able

to obtain a license for the construction and operation of a private casino (which have always been a monopoly of the state) at the *Hermitage*, but to gain permission to expand the casino along the coastline almost two decades ago. Meanwhile, in the late 2000s, Aldrey obtained the concession of the *Provincial* (owned by the Province of Buenos Aires) through the Spanish group NH in an operation tainted by its lack of transparency. The second case involves the renovation of the iconic *Ex-Terminal de Omnibus*, which was being transformed into a commercial and cultural centre at the time of fieldwork and opened to the public in november 2015 under the name *Paseo Aldrey*. In this project, Aldrey also appeared as one of the main investors who publicly endorsed the bid of the local architectural firm that won the concession. However, the bidding process and the municipal decision were blurred by their lack of transparency, procedural shortcomings, and even corruption as well as a number of accusations from other bidding groups – particularly the firm that represented the proposal of the renown global architect Cesar Pelli.

It is evident that Aldrey Iglesias has benefited from important decisions concerning the concession and/or renovation of sites of significant emblematic value for Mar del Plata such as the *Hotel Provincial* and the *Ex-Terminal de Omnibus*. His name (or that of his companies) has featured in the largest and most important private investment deals seen in the city over the last couple of decades. According to GOB the ownership of the newspapers *La Capital* and *La Prensa* in Buenos Aires has allowed him to position himself and his businesses strategically between the public and private domains, and to influence relevant state decisions. Large media campaigns, for example, have been often used to support the business initiatives of Aldrey and to undermine the efforts of competitors as well as to manipulate social and political opinions. Furthermore, as RAF notes, in Argentina (and perhaps worldwide), owners of newspapers and media enterprises such as Aldrey have built large fortunes that have allowed them to expand their business portfolios in other areas, particularly in the real estate, construction and hospitality sectors. While it might be difficult to determine the exact influence of Aldrey in local institutional and urban policy affairs beyond what has become publicly available, and it seems that his public image would surely benefit from more transparency, there is no doubt that he has been an important local actor in the recent urban history of Mar del Plata, who despite criticisms has always invested in the city and contributed to the improvement of important yet neglected areas surrounding the

LOCAL ECONOMIC ACTORS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS

Similar to the case of Valencia, developers and a number of professional organisations that represent the interests of the construction industry more generally constitute traditional and powerful actors in the urban policymaking sphere of Mar del Plata. The *Colegio de Martilleros* and the *Centro de Constructores y Anexos*, for instance, feature at the top of the power hierarchy and have influenced important institutional and policy decisions concerning urban matters throughout time. In 2001, the time of the crisis, these two organisations played an important role at lobbying for the adoption of a citywide strategy. As DIM recalls, the institutional agility and technical capacity of these actors were determinate in the earlier phases of the first strategic plan of Mar del Plata, although the methodological and logistical implications of adopting a citywide approach were still not very clear for some of its advocates and/or many local actors. Given the severity of the crisis and the limited number of alternatives available to the municipality, however, the initiative of the construction sector provided an opportunity and put pressure on the local government by helping to initiate an unprecedented process of public-private engagement that served as platform for the articulation of a mixture of projects that were not only to serve sectorial interests, but also wider social objectives as well as responses to the crisis and a common urban agenda.

While the interventions of constructors did lead to the articulation of the first strategic plan for the city, which is considered to have been an overall positive experience despite later implementation issues, some of the earlier decisions of the *Martilleros* and the *Constructores* were bias in favour of developers and the construction sector. The constitution of the first *Junta Promotora*, for example, which later became the *Comisión Mixta* and the organisational base of the strategic plan, was more or less orchestrated by these professional organisations from the very beginning, which acted as gatekeepers and restricted the access of non-business groups. According to KIC, most members of the *Junta Promotora* belonged to the private corporate world and represented local businesses and professional associations but virtually no social actors with the exception of a few trade unions that happened to belong to the construction industry as well. Furthermore, the participation of key community actors such as the

Sociedades de Fomento (neighbourhood associations) and local sports clubs had been disregarded by the *Martilleros* in the earlier phases of the process (GOB). For these reasons, earlier proposals were more focused on issues of urban infrastructure and how to stimulate construction activities rather than social and productivity issues exacerbated by the crisis.

Nevertheless, the ability of the *Martilleros* and the *Constructores* to influence urban policy affairs observed a relative decline following the 2001 crisis. It is unclear whether this was due to a tactical or temporary retrenchment of the sector or a response to the pressure of sociopolitical actors given the severity of the crisis. In any case, by 2003, when the first phase of the plan had officially started and the privately-led *Junta Promotora* had been replaced by a more diverse and inclusive *Comisión Mixta*, the institutional atmosphere was more balanced in terms of public-private engagement and social participation. For JAM, who co-represented one of the largest local architectural studios, the tone of influential actors such as the *Colegio de Martilleros* did change quite significantly over time, particularly after the methodological implications of embarking on a citywide strategy and the importance of participation became clearer to them. The involvement and approach of the architect Roberto Monteverde (an experienced consultant in the subject and the director of the plan) was also fundamental in the creation a more balanced institutional space. As a result, the articulation of the plan was not dominated by any particular group and it was rather seen as an opportunity to move forward after months of widespread crisis and few feasible alternatives. The private interests of *Martilleros* and other business groups gradually became secondary as the priority was to learn from the crisis, to debate ideas and to build consensus across socioeconomic and political actors for a better future (*ibid*).

In addition to the *Martilleros* and the *Constructores*, there are other organisations that have had an important role at shaping institutional and urban policy decisions in the recent history of Mar del Plata. The *Colegio de Arquitectos*, the *Colegio de Ingenieros*, *Centro de Ingenieros* and the *Colegio de Técnicos* are all good examples. Although individually they might not have the lobbying capacity of the construction sector to influence municipal decisions, their collective effort and ability to build on their local, national and even international networks have helped them to gain more visibility and to increase their participation in local urban affairs over time. They have been very active

at inviting international consultants and organising public-private events in order to learn from the successful experiences of other cities. For instance, guests such as Tony Puig (Barcelona) have emphasised the importance of including marketing elements and branding strategies in the urban agenda of the city, while Jorge Melguizo (Medellin) has discussed the benefits of investing in urban infrastructure and public spaces as well as the power this can have to tackle social inequality and polarisation. For BIG, it is indeed useful and perhaps even necessary to have international experts and to hear about their cases and experiences. Local policymakers, researchers and practitioners from different fields can only benefit from their knowledge and insights about issues that are also common to Mar del Plata. Nevertheless, she believes that the capacity and potential of local architects and engineers has been somewhat undermined by the presence of international experts, as many decision-makers tend to valorise partial experiences from elsewhere without reservation and to disregard the suggestions of local professionals. In the presentation of Melguizo about Medellin, for instance, AOZ recalls how he played down and ignored local state transformations and wider political shifts following the death of Pablo Escobar and the gradual fragmentation of his drug cartel in the early 1990s: “His presentation was indeed brilliant and he could certainly sell the experience of Medellin, but some of us wanted to know more about the economic and political background and the circumstances that enabled such changes rather than the successful part of the story” (*ibid*).

Furthermore, beyond the benefits of learning from international experts, it is important to consider that the individuals behind the professional organisations that often invite them are normally well connected with officials and decision-makers within municipal departments. Therefore, they might have a parallel agenda when they invite a specific consultant to discuss local issues. For instance, they might wish to justify a particular technical approach or to influence a local intervention by citing the benefits achieved somewhere else through the opinion of an expert. Again, in the case of Melguizo, the invitation and public events were organised by the *Colegio de Ingenieros* and the *Centro de Ingenieros* with the support of the ENOSUR (the executive office of the municipality dealing with urban services). While the director of one of these local organisations was also the head of the ENOSUR at the time of the visit, such type of connections are not unusual or merely coincidental. On several occasions, for instance, board members of these professional organisations have occupied municipal positions

in technical departments dealing with infrastructure and services which have helped to build closer public-private relationships. Indeed, this situation has triggered different opinions, particularly around issues of transparency, conflicts of interests and the criteria behind public decisions concerning urban interventions. According to AOZ, “not long ago the director of the *Colegio de Arquitectos* was also the head of the *Secretaria de Planeamiento* at the municipality. This obviously raised the alarms amongst the members of the *Colegio*, as holding both positions created a conflict of interest. It was unclear whose interests were being represented and defended: of the members of the *Colegio* or the city. He was on both sides of the counter and the image of the *Colegio* was damaged for quite sometime”.

A further complexity is that key figures behind these professional organisations very often operate behind the scenes, without having to face public scrutiny, which makes it difficult to trace who is lobbying for what and how. For AOZ, however, some organisations have made important efforts to improve their levels of transparency and to have greater public accountability since the crisis of 2001. The *Colegio de Arquitectos*, for instance, did eventually implement changes whereby board members cannot hold any public position while exercising their private functions. These changes as well as the institutional agility of their board members and the leadership of their directors have all helped to consolidate closer links between the *Colegio de Arquitectos*, the *Colegio de Tecnicos*, and the *Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata* over time. Collectively, they have not only benefited from the institutional rebalance triggered by the crisis, in which the dominance of the construction sector has relatively declined, but from wider recognition and greater involvement in urban policy debates. At present, it is difficult to imagine that if the municipality or other local institution need to discuss a particular urban issue or intervention, the architects, technicians and representatives of the university would not be invited. The review of the document of the latest strategic plan of Mar del Plata (directed by Ruben Pesci since 2013), for instance, was commissioned to a delegation formed by municipal actors as well as a mixture of professionals from the organisations mentioned above. Throughout 2014, the delegation attended a number of workshops in Mar del Plata and La Plata (where the studio of Pesci is located) and produced a number of corrections and suggestions that were incorporated in a preliminary report published the same year (DIM and see the report MGP 2014).

Lastly, in addition to the construction sector and the professional organisations, several business and commercial actors have been important in the articulation of local responses to crises and ongoing pressing issues since democratic transition. The *Camara de Balnearios*, the *Union de Comercio, Industria y Producción*, the *Camara de la Pesca*, the *Camara de Hoteleros y Restaurantes* and the *Camara Textil* represent some of the most important economic activities of the local economy and therefore not only lobby initiatives that might favour their own sectorial interests, but put constant pressure on municipal offices dealing with the provision of basic infrastructure and services that are essential for their operations and productivity (NEP). While each organisation represents traditional sectors and industries that have had a relatively privileged position at some point in the recent past, their interventions and connections with the municipality appear somewhat modest compared to the level of influence and engagement of the actors discussed above. For GIO, as a touristic city, the hospitality and leisure sectors have gained more prominence over the years while the productive sector (fishing and textile industries) has gradually declined. As a result, the public administration has had to deal with the needs and pressures of each group. Although some of their demands might be contradictory and appear unreasonable at times, KIC emphasises that it is important to remember that they are not enemies of the municipal authorities, but rather economic actors that navigate an increasingly complex institutional environment in which public-private interests coexist and must be negotiated over and over again.

THE MUNICIPALITY

While powerful individuals such as Aldrey Iglesias and a number of professional organisations have had a relatively privileged position to influence local institutional and urban policy decisions over time, the municipality has had to deal with their pressures and demands while having to respond to the needs of the wider population as well as the immediate and longterm consequences of numerous episodes of crisis. Therefore, the municipality is the most important public actor, constituted by city mayors, political leaders, elected officials and bureaucratic figures whose functions are essential in everyday public-private institutional dynamics and who contribute to the local institutional culture. In Mar del Plata, the municipal executive leads the most important local processes and city affairs. The mayor is perhaps the most important

municipal actor, but it has never become an hegemonic figure as in the case of Valencia. The legislative functions of the municipality are undertaken by the *Honorable Consejo Deliberante* (HCD), where the aldermen debate and approve local regulatory changes, including those concerning urban policy decisions. It is also where national and provincial laws are adapted and translated into local decrees, actual norms and/or administrative procedures.

In theory, the functions of the executive and the aldermen are highly intertwined as neither of them is able to act independently from the other and they must deal with a wide range of external and often contradictory pressures before they reach a specific decision. However, the internal dynamics of the municipality are not exempt from power relations and hierarchies. According to KIC

“Unless it has changed recently, it used to be the case that when the files passed down from the *Secretaría* on to the HCD, they were already charged with amendments and demands from the technical office of the executive. In fact, they contained all sorts of politically-driven arguments rather than technical recommendations. I am not sure this had to do with the lack of professional formation in the part of the executive or their advisors. When I was at the *Comisión de Obras y Planeamiento*, the most difficult cases came down from the *Secretaría de Planeamiento* somewhat incomplete, without appropriate assessment or supporting documentation”

For AOZ, this has nothing to do with ignorance or poor professional training, but with the calculated actions of officials who are not fully committed to their public function and often resort to non-technical and/or political claims in order to justify decisions that will only benefit privileged groups outside the municipality. This is often known as political clientelism or exchange of favours, both of which seem to have seen a sharp rise over the last years, according to RAF, with several scandals involving the municipality and influential actors such as Aldrey Iglesias (see section 8.3).

Indeed, there are also situations in which the interests of the executive might contradict those of the HCD. In such cases, when there is no consensus, the final decision can only benefit a specific group and only be detrimental for the rest. This is a constant dilemma

for municipal actors dealing with urban regulation and decisions concerning the provision of infrastructure and services. They must mediate between different socioeconomic groups: enduring the pressure of the most powerful actors and ensuring that wider public interests are protected. Nevertheless, municipal authorities can rarely achieve completely balanced decisions and there have been cases in which the municipality has had to favour the demands of the most influential group. At the end of the day, says KIC, it is difficult for the mayor of Mar del Plata and presumably of any city in the world to dismiss the requests and/or demands of powerful actors or to respond to the needs of those who trusted and elected them only. This does not mean that the municipality must be submitted to the influence of economic and/or political elites, as indeed they must be regulated too, but to recognise that municipal decisions and policymaking processes are never free from the influence of powerful actors. As KIC recalls in relation to his own experience in the municipality:

“I have been an alderman, and in all honesty, even if my former colleagues disagree, the role of the aldermen and their advisors come second, or even third, in any actual process of decision-making. There are other more influential actors. This is not to say that we have no function or that we have no reason to be in the municipality, but almost every discussion/debate that takes place in the HCD has already passed the executive offices and other [private] circuits before it comes to us. We are the last ones to be consulted, and just because we are the only ones able to grant legal legitimacy to whatever local decision. We have no real room for manoeuvre or autonomy. Normally, decisions have been made along the way between the executive and the other actors involved or the beneficiary parties” (KIC)

While the influence of the aldermen in the HCD might seem limited and somewhat conditioned by the decisions of the mayor, executive officers and the influence of external powerful actors, NEP believes that there are many committed aldermen and advisors within the municipality who are in a constant duty inside and outside the institution itself and beyond their designated responsibilities. For him, after three decades of experience in the municipality, one will always find officers who are more active and more keen to get involved in community affairs and to solve wider social problems than others, despite the challenges and limitations of their political

compromises. Indeed, it depends on the personality, work ethics, commitment and the ability of individual municipal actors to resort to wider networks. Public-private relationships, for instance, are not only used by private actors to voice their demands or gain municipal legitimacy, but also by public actors in order to gain private support and/or to mobilise resources for a particular initiative. These kind of symbiotic relationships are particularly visible between municipal offices dealing with urban planning, infrastructure and services and the professional organisations discussed above (*ibid*). Finally, and particularly in times of crisis, the aldermen have unintentionally become mediators of conflicts in which they have not jurisdiction nor expertise. As NEP recalls, “in 2001, people came to the HCD to make demands that we could not fulfil, but many of them were our own neighbours so we had to listen to them and try to do something to help them”. For him, these situations have become more and more common over the last years as the municipality and the HCD have clearly become the only formal institution and government office to which most ordinary people have direct access.

SOCIAL ACTORS: PARTICIPATION AND MOBILISATION

Last but not least, it is important to consider the role of different social actors in the recent urban development history of Mar del Plata as well as some of their contributions in the articulation of institutional and urban policy responses in times of crisis since democratic transition. Indeed, the composition and ability of different groups to intervene and to influence local decisions have varied over time as well as their priorities, forms of expression and mobilisation. The interventions of the social elite through the *Asociación de Propaganda y Fomento de Mar del Plata* since the 1940s, for instance, were essential for the formulation and approval of one of the first planning documents to consider the city as a whole, says DIM in reference to the *Plan Regulador* of 1958. The association was very active and used its own resources not only to invite prominent figures in the field of urbanism, such as Carlos della Paolera (an Argentinean engineer and architect trained as urbanist at the *Universidad de Paris*), but to counterbalance the agenda of the *Comisión Pro-Mar del Plata* which defended the interests of the oligarchy of Buenos Aires in the city and for whom Mar del Plata was only a summer holiday destination. Although the interests behind the local elites engaging in urban affairs might have been different from those of less privileged actors,

it must be recognised that their interventions contributed to the materialisation of a planning document that set important infrastructure and service standards for the entire city and which remained as an implicit reference for municipal departments dealing with urban matters in the decades to come (see section 7.3.2).

At the other side of the social spectrum, and partly due to the rapid demographic growth observed throughout the second half of the 20th century as well as the increasingly uneven distribution of infrastructure, facilities and services across the city, popular groups and movements have become more visible and vocal over time. They have organised themselves around common issues and basic demands and adopted multiple strategies in order to voice their problems and gain local government attention. The *Sociedades de Fomento* and the *Audiencias Publicas*, for example, constitute two longstanding mechanisms of wider participation. While the former have been an essential vehicle for communication between communities and municipal authorities, also performing the functions of neighbourhood associations, the latter have served as an open platform for interaction and debate between social and business actors. Nevertheless, according to RAF, the *Audiencias Publicas* in Mar del Plata have become more common over time because the decisions that result from them are irreversible and indisputable, and not because the opinions of potentially affected communities would be taken seriously or because they are an administrative requirement in many cases. This is to say, once a particular urban initiative has been publicly debated and a final decision has been reached between the parts involved, there is no legal mechanism to reverse it or void it. Indeed, they are an attractive mechanism for developers to gain legitimacy in contested situations. In some cases, business actors even mobilise resources, speakers and supporters in order to dilute public debates and concerns until they reach their desired outcome. For social actors and communities, on the other hand, these *Audiencias Publicas* are often a *payasada* or simply a joke, in the words of RAF.

While the *Sociedades de Fomento* have been indeed an effective platform for communities to voice their issues to the relevant municipal offices and to articulate their collective needs and demands, the internal structures and dynamics of some of these organisations have not always developed in a favourable direction. In terms of participation, for example, some of them have performed somehow poorly, obstructing wider social engagement and greater diversity as well as implementing obscure methods

for the election of their leaders and key representatives. According to KIC, the fact that they represent social interests, the common good, communities and neighbourhoods does not mean that power relations are not at play or that they are free from the challenges and limitations of any other political organisation. For him, participation is a contentious, subjective and relative topic that does not just happen organically and requires of coordinated efforts in order to work properly. In some cases, he says, you might find that the president of X neighbourhood association has been voted in by twenty members of the local community only and still claims the power to represent thousands. Ironically, there is limited transparency and accountability in these cases and the same community leader might remain sitting comfortably with a rubber stamp exercising an arguably legitimate position for decades and regularly calling for greater participation and inclusion (*ibid*).

After years of disappointment and frustration amongst popular sectors and disadvantaged segments of society, which have not only failed to find a space to voice their needs or to articulate solutions to some of their most pressing issues in the *Sociedades de Fomento* but which have experienced the limitations of the *Audiencias Publicas* to consider their views, it is unsurprising that many of them have become wary of conventional participatory channels and have started to see participation as just another *buzzword*. According to KIC, “I know this might sound politically incorrect but I believe that many ordinary citizens do not want to *participate* anymore. They are simply tired of listening to the promises of politicians to grant communities greater participatory power in urban development processes and frustrated with the practical complexities and limitations of bottom-up approaches that rarely materialise in anything tangible”. For him, the common citizen wants to see real changes, more infrastructure and better services rather than new experiments in which every single opinion is supposed to count. If you think of the waterfront infrastructure, he emphasises, you realise that people use it a hundred times more today than they did a decade ago. They jog in the morning, afternoon and evening. The roads are lighted, the sidewalks even, and the landscape well maintained, even though none of these improvements underwent a wider public consultation, beforehand (*ibid*). Similar to the case of Valencia, in which the limited participation of social actors in decisions concerning large-scale architectural interventions along the *Turia* in the early 2000s did not necessarily translate into later failure or disuse, there is no doubt that the improvements along the waterfront in Mar

del Plata as a result of the *Cumbre de las Americas* in 2005 produced an important social effect and an increase in the use of public spaces, despite earlier criticisms (details about these interventions are discussed in section 8.3).

Finally, the disappointment and frustration experienced by popular actors over time combined with the threat that recurrent episodes of crisis might wipe out their hard-earned achievements all of a sudden (which can also happen to a wider range of socioeconomic actors), seem to have prompted the emergence of more aggressive social responses and tactics to exert political pressure. While more opportunities for social participation and community mobilisation have emerged in times of economic uncertainty and political instability, and popular movements have certainly gained greater recognition and ability to voice and defend their interests vis-a-vis local powerful groups and local authorities (as noted in Chapter 5), crises have also provided the conditions for the emergence of forms of mobilisation whereby a mixture of opportunist and disenfranchised actors have turned into violence (and/or become susceptible to it) as a tactical means to achieve their political and allegedly social aims. According to NEP, the needs of popular sectors have often been used as an excuse to justify violent acts that in reality aim to serve the political ambitions and agendas of local leaders. Although it is difficult to assess the costs and benefits of violent demonstrations or their immediate and longterm consequences, he believes that such tactics have become more common and reached new levels since democratic transition, virtually replacing the pacific demonstrations of the past.

The economic situation of the 1980s and structural adjustment measures of the 1990s, for example, did certainly trigger widespread discontent and angry demonstrations as a way to express resistance and to protest against the hyperinflation that followed the debt crisis and the policy responses that aimed to address it, but rather suffocated segments of the population already undergoing hardship. In 2001, however, the anger of the masses reached unprecedented levels of violence and the actions of organised groups became more complex and difficult to trace and to be contained by the state. Within the *piquetero* or “picketer” movement, for instance, some factions specialised in violent interventions over time and left aside their earlier commitment to defend popular interests, to voice social demands and to solve basic urban issues to align and use their force to pursue political aims and to perform tactical moves against particular leaders

and parties in power (*ibid*). Unfortunately, these developments have not only undermined the image of some social movements and their potential to achieve real social change, but also unleashed perverse political games between those in power and those in the opposition at the cost of social welfare in which violence is somewhat justified.

6.3 LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENTS AND CULTURES

6.3.1 VALENCIA

It is evident that the local bureaucracy has been shaped by a wide range of administrative and technical actors who have faced the dilemmas of professional integrity, social commitment as well as the political and economic pressures of powerful figures since democratic transition. At the same time, their combined performance and actions have contributed to an institutional culture that seems to have gone through different phases and levels of alignment with the political/economic elites throughout time. Following decades of dictatorship, for instance, the administrative and technical functions of the local bureaucracy had been largely outsourced to the private sector. As a result, and in addition to the political and economic difficulties of transition, the new democratic leaders had to deal with an institutional culture characterised by a mixture of operational inefficiencies, unwilling officials, longstanding loyalties, blurred practices and corruption. For POC, the magnitude of the challenge and the actions required were significant:

“In the 1980s, one could easily distinguish between bureaucrats and politicians. We had officials with democratic ambitions, but also those who hoped that transition failed. Therefore, we decided to transfer the latter to different departments with less chances to plot against us – a tactic that worked out very well. Also, one must consider the limited number of professionals employed by the local government at the time. From the few engineers and architects inherited from the military regime, some were so corrupt that they never took holidays. We had an architect to whom I said: well, how about a promotion from planning officer to planning coordinator? Indeed, he did not want the new post because the planning officer had more

control over actual applications and money. He was later caught with an envelope full of cash under a plan and was immediately sent to the archives. He then requested holidays and the promotion” (POC:11.03.16)

These problems were not only observed within the municipality. In an effort to end with the vicious cycles that plagued municipal dynamics and to strengthen the local bureaucracy, the government systematically challenged contractors that provided public services as well as some of the most influential professional associations throughout the 1980s. The contractor responsible for rubbish collection, for example, had profited for decades from a weak administration that blindly endorsed clauses and conditions that benefitted the owners of the company rather than the city and the wider population (POC). After decades of dictatorship, the local bureaucracy seemed neither qualified to articulate more efficient solutions to public services nor sufficiently strong to bargain better deals with existing providers. This was the case across several municipal areas of responsibility. For GIM, the 1980s was not only a decade of difficult institutional decisions and transformations, given the political and economic implications of transition, but also of uncomfortable relations with powerful local actors such as the *Asociación de Promotores y Constructores* (APC).

“The APC was a professional association that brought together developers and constructors. In the 1980s, it was a very important and influential local actor and the municipality had to consider them for all kinds of urban debates. We were in contact with them more or less permanently, but our communication was rarely smooth as they were not happy to be told what to do by an official like myself. They had problems to comply with emerging administrative and regulatory procedures. For example, in order to obtain a *Cedula Urbanística* [or building permission] that was normally granted directly and irrevocably by the ordinary planning department, developers/constructors needed the definite approval of a new office dealing with citywide infrastructure and services matters. This, of course, created tension and friction with the APC” (GIM)

Indeed, the reversal of such dynamics within and outside the municipality became a priority for new democratic leaders and officials throughout the 1980s. However, as

democracy and decentralisation unfolded, political and economic spaces became increasingly complex and somewhat porous at the local level. New tiers of government emerged, notably at the regional level with the *Comunidades Autónomas*, as well as new actors and alliances between traditional elites. These changes gradually pushed municipal authorities to an awkward position vis-a-vis powerful economic groups. POC recalls “when we decided to interrupt and revise plans to extend land zones for commercial use, we had the representative of Carrefour (the French conglomerate) in our office the next day. We then told him: we are reviewing the land-use legislation at the moment and we are unable to process your application until we have decided the new terms. His reaction was: fine, do as you please, my friend Rafa in the *Generalitat* (regional government office) will sort it out for me. Thanks anyway!” (*ibid*)

By the early 1990s, efforts to rectify and strengthen the local bureaucracy from within had been virtually abandoned while powerful economic actors had started to bypass municipal procedures and to lobby for changes in land development legislation and other areas at the *Generalitat*. The approval of the LRAU in 1994 is a classical example of the latter (see section 8.5), discussed and drafted by *promotores*, the municipal executive Rita Barbera and officials at the *Generalitat* without the involvement of the local legislative body or the relevant municipal departments. The progressive alignment of actors across different levels of government entailed a shift from an ambition to constitute a local bureaucracy based on professionalism, transparency and resilience during the years of transition to an actually dependent, complacent and crisis-prone local institution.

Lastly, after six successive terms, there is no doubt that the local bureaucracy and wider institutional culture have been influenced by the urban policy strategies and organisational changes fostered by Rita Barbera. The drastic shift from policies focused on the provision of basic infrastructure and services of the 1980s to the citywide strategic ambitions of the 1990s, for instance, was also accompanied by a change in the functions and remit of municipal offices dealing with urban affairs. While actors such as the *promotores* regained the power that the first democratic governments sought to tame and consultants assumed a central role, the authority of technical and administrative officials within the municipality diminished over time. For QUI and GID, the commitment to public service, to following administrative procedures, technical

guidelines and delivery timelines started to dissipate with the arrival of urban policy agendas that focused on city marketing, international competition and large-scale projects that were mostly commissioned to external expert teams. From an organisational perspective, a number of administrative changes and the replacement of structures that somehow guaranteed a certain level of accountability in the management of resources have also contributed to the weakening of the local bureaucracy. As RAJ observes

“In the early days of democracy, there was a delegate from the *Ministerio de Hacienda* (or Inland Revenue) located in the municipality more or less permanently. He was in charge of monitoring the transfer of resources from the national government and public expenditure. There were also the *interventores* (or inspectors), who were in charge of reconciling that the expenditure corresponded to the original budget, and the *secretarios* (or secretaries) whose role was to ensure that procedures were legal. The role of these figures has been perverted over time and local political leaders have introduced legislative changes whereby the secretary can be appointed directly by the mayor. These changes have only helped to remove controls that would have enforced transparency and limited the discretionary spending of politicians in office”

It is evident that the local bureaucracy has undergone multiple transformations since the 1980s. While earlier democratic leaders made significant efforts to reverse the vicious dynamics inherited after decades of dictatorship and to strengthen the technical and administrative capabilities of local officials, evidence shows that their ambition never materialised. Meanwhile, political and economic elites increasingly used their power to undermine the authority of technicians, administrators and legislators and thus limit their ability to confront external pressures – whether from powerful actors and/or episodes of crisis. As a result, it seems as if a culture of complacency and strategic alignment rather than commitment to wider social good has consolidated within the municipality over the last decades. Indeed, this is not an ideal situation, but neither is it a deliberate choice of municipal officials who actually strive to overcome multiple pressures in their everyday functions. Rather, it is an ongoing challenge facing decentralised systems as well as an illustration of the consequences of pervasive

political power.

6.3.2 MAR DEL PLATA

In order to understand the institutional culture of Mar del Plata, it is essential to consider the local institutional environment and the conditions in which public-private relationships unfold. Evidently, the private sector has always put significant pressure on the municipality and continuously tried to gain more flexibility and autonomy than the local authorities have been able to grant. The public sector, on the other hand, has had to balance its decisions between the pressures of the former and their commitment to fulfil the needs and protect the interests of the wider population. Nevertheless, this has never been an easy task. Indeed, the executive as well as legislative and technical officers have had to face multiple pressures from different socioeconomic actors over time, while having to deal with their individual (and sometimes contradictory) political compromises. For KIC, “the local institutional environment of Mar del Plata might not be ideal, but there seems to be some sort of equilibrium between what could be done, what has to be done, and what is actually done. In other words, between ideal, feasible and actual scenarios”. Technical officers, for instance, are normally able to understand and support the needs of politicians, even though their actual role is to ensure that norms and procedures are in place. After all, municipal decisions are often political rather than technically driven. The mayor might say to a technical team: “Hey guys, I had a meeting with X group and they wondered whether we could reassess the maximum height on the construction of X building in X district. As a result, the technical team would have to consider such possibility and justify whether it is possible to amend the earlier restriction or not. However, they already know that there is a political interest in doing so and most likely would respond accordingly” (*ibid*). The consequences of this type of relationships are quite unpredictable, says DIM, as the mayors tend to make important urban decisions by themselves or with their executive team, without passing through the relevant urban planning departments or consulting the content of the strategic plan.

Furthermore, and in addition to the unfavourable influence that power relations between private and public actors and within the municipal hierarchy itself can have on the performance of both elected officials and the larger administrative bureaucracy, it is

important to consider that the poor working conditions in which many of them operate on a daily basis have also undermined their professional capacity, potential and motivation over time. Municipal decisions and administrative procedures, for instance, can be significantly slow while the list of basic requirements endless and actual processes complicated or even redundant. As a result, the municipality is often associated with inefficiency and its employees with unhelpfulness and even laziness. For KIC, however, this is not an issue of unwillingness or bad attitude and remind us that most technical and administrative officers operate with very limited resources: two computers can be shared by up to eight people, there are no vehicles to supervise new projects, no career development support and no structure to reward hard work. After working in such conditions for many years, KIC emphasises, undesirable and unfavourable behaviours start to become normalised features of the local institutional culture. Furthermore, “even if you equip the municipality with brand new technologies and equipments today, its dynamic is already slow and the attitude of employees not very positive. The damage is done” (*ibid*).

Nevertheless, unlike the longterm public-private alignments observed between municipal actors and local economic and political elites in the case of Valencia after four decades of authoritarianism and six consecutive terms under the leadership of Rita Barbera, the institutional environment of Mar del Plata has been more dynamic and unexposed to the influence of the same leader or administration over extended periods of time. While mayors have been influential figures, for instance, they have rarely been in office for more than two consecutive terms (not even during dictatorship when they were assigned from Buenos Aires) and therefore have never become hegemonic leaders like Rita Barbera in Valencia. Furthermore, for NEP, there has always been some sort of equilibrium between different parties and local forces, and political majorities and large coalitions have been relatively uncommon in the municipality. For him, having a large number of political blocs interacting in the HCD and local leaders and officials renewed in every electoral cycle has guaranteed a more balanced institutional environment and prevented the imposition of the ideas, priorities and agendas of singular political groups and their supporters to a large extent. This is not to say that the institutional environment and culture of Mar del Plata is free of inefficiencies and/or longstanding loyalties that can lead to unfavourable practices and even corruption as in the case of Valencia, but to point out that these issues are somewhat more difficult to trace and

explain in a context in which continuity, whether in terms of political leadership, policy implementation and institutional stability has virtually never existed.

In a nutshell, the institutional environment and culture of Mar del Plata might be better understood through the highly politicised nature of its bureaucracy on the one hand and the impact that different episodes of crisis have had on the configuration of public-private relations on the other. In regards to bureaucracy, KIC believes that the overall level of professional training and expertise of the administration, the aldermen and their advisors, for example, have worsened over time. Indeed, this is partly a consequence of some of the issues discussed above in relation to the external and internal pressures faced by municipal employees and the poor conditions in which they often work, but also the pervasive and pernicious effect of politics and the contradictions embedded in the organisational structures of the municipality and even the electoral system. According to KIC, “we need less politics and more professional conviction. A team of twenty people does not necessarily perform better and faster than a team of five committed professionals. Frankly speaking, we might be able to cut half of the municipal administration without noticing any difference”. Furthermore, as AOZ notes, from the six or seven advisors that each elected alderman is entitled to have, not many have professional training or relevant experience. They are appointed based on relationships of trust and/or party arrangements rather than expertise in the area in which they are expected to work. As a result, and unsurprisingly, bureaucrats are frequently committed to their political goals rather than the administrative or technical function they are meant to fulfil. Indeed, they have other reasons to be where they are and other sources of legitimacy: whether it be the representation of a particular popular sector or the unconditional loyalty to their party or elected leader, for example. Lastly, as KIC notes, popular choices are rarely associated with the professional or technical capacity of elected individuals, but with their charisma and personality. Therefore, there is no reason to expect them to form a highly qualified team nor to make well informed technical decisions while in office.

Finally, the public apparatus and extant institutional culture of Mar del Plata has been undoubtedly shaped by the recurrent nature of crises. Indeed, the frequency and intensity of each episode have not only contributed to the worsening working conditions of municipal actors or to increase their susceptibility to external pressures and/or their

dependency in higher levels of government, but to recalibrate (even if temporarily) the local power relations and the ability of different socioeconomic actors to influence local government decisions. According to AOZ, for instance, public-private relations underwent an important process of reconfiguration following the 2001 crisis: “while more dominant actors and established networks became somewhat moderated for a while, less prominent ones gained more permanent visibility”. For her, a more egalitarian local institutional environment, in which private actors such as the *Martilleros* and *Constructores* have never recovered their pre-2001 dominance, has remained over time while greater cross-sectorial engagement, negotiation and cooperation have gradually become recognisable features of the local institutional culture.

Lastly, it is important to note the impact that crises can have on the emergence (and demise) of new political leaders. As NEP recalls, the impact of the 2001 crisis in the local institutional environment was indeed unprecedented and profound, but it also provided the conditions for the emergence of new leaders such as Daniel Katz who, despite the reigning uncertainty and chaos, acted very intelligently and managed to articulate an effective strategy and a solid political alliance with incoming leaders at the provincial and national levels despite their party differences. While the institutional/political environment of Mar del Plata has been rather dynamic and seen multiple mayors since democratic transition, the observation of NEP suggests that episodes of widespread instability have had some sort of self-correcting effect in the local culture of leadership whereby the failures of some actors are penalised and the institutional agility of others rewarded without having to wait a complete electoral cycle. Therefore, the longterm effects and recurrent threat of episodes of crisis, together with issues of limited professional formation, the influence of power relations between public-private actors and multiple municipal hierarchies, all contribute to the complexity of the institutional culture of Mar del Plata.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined how and to what extent different political, economic and social actors have been able to influence local institutional decisions and urban policymaking processes in Valencia and Mar del Plata over the last three decades, particularly in times

of crisis. It also provided an analysis of the institutional environment in which individual and collective actors interact and of the multiple forms of public-private relations that have shaped the local institutional culture since the time of transition. While the comparison allows us to identify broad similarities across the two cities, in terms of “categories” of actors for example, it is evident that each city brings out new nuances and highlights particular forms of interaction, intervention, organisation and participation. However, this does not necessarily mean that such differences make the cases incommensurable. It means that together they bring into view a wider range of aspects that are key for understandings of both local institutional transformations and urban policy innovations that emerge in response to crisis not only in Valencia and Mar del Plata but in other cities across the North-South divide.

In terms of individual powerful figures, for instance, the comparative approach allows us to bring into analytical conversation a charismatic leader such as Rita Barbera in Valencia and a business tycoon such as Aldrey Iglesias in Mar del Plata. While Rita is a political figure and Aldrey a private investor, they have both benefited from a strong personalistic approach and from wider connections and networks across different levels of government. Furthermore, they have both been able to shape a number of urban policy decisions over decades by asserting pressure on other local actors and/or municipal departments dealing with urban affairs.

This comparison also brings into view “absences” that are often identified as institutional weaknesses when considering single case studies. The lack of political and policy “continuity”, for instance, is often seen as an unfavourable institutional feature in Mar del Plata. However, and somehow ironically, the successive re-election of Rita and of members of the *Partido Popular* as aldermen for twenty-four consecutive years does not necessarily portray “continuity” in a positive light nor as a desirable institutional feature. As we have seen in Valencia, it has contributed to the emergence of complex bureaucratic issues and the consolidation of an urban policy agenda shaped by the interests of political leaders rather than a shared strategic city vision.

There are a wide variety of local economic actors across the two cities, including powerful sectors such as developers, traditional industries and professional organisations. Each of them has intervened in local institutional and urban

policymaking processes in different ways and capacities throughout time. In Valencia, *promotores* (developers) constitute the most influential local economic sector, with a longstanding tradition of power and controlled by prominent families even during decades of *Franquismo*. Although their bargaining power vis-a-vis municipal authorities relatively diminished following transition, the sector realigned and consolidated a close relationship with local officials as well as political leaders since the early 1990s. In Mar del Plata, the most powerful economic actors are the professional organisations related to construction activities (the *Colegio de Martilleros* and the *Centro de Constructores y Anexos*). They have influenced important urban policy decisions, such as the adoption of the first strategic planning initiative following the crisis of 2001. They “retreated” from local political affairs between 2002-2003 and played a less prominent role in the formulation phase of the plan in 2004, but it remains unclear whether this was tactical or their response to ongoing social and political instability.

In regards to external consultants and expert teams, both cities have extensive experience. However, the role of these professionals was much more significant and sustained in the case of Valencia where they were able to shape organisational structures and urban strategies with the direct support of the Mayor for over a decade since the mid-1990s. In Mar del Plata, consultants have come and gone over many decades, mainly invited by local professional organisations and with the support of municipal offices in some cases. Although the first strategic initiative was directed by a consultant from Rosario and his team for several years (see Chapter 8), they never enjoyed the same privileges and authority observed in the case of Valencia.

Lastly, a wide range of social actors have engaged in multiple institutional and urban policy processes in both cities since the 1980s. They have resorted to different forms of social expression, mobilisation and/or pressure over time. In Valencia, social movements were organised around basic infrastructure and service demands in the 1980s and exerted significant pressure on the first democratic government to fulfil their needs. While these type of movements declined over time due to different social and political reasons, new forms of mobilisation and community action have emerged since the 2008 crisis whereby many neighbourhoods have strengthened their organisational capacity and developed their own projects. In Mar del Plata, social movements have been organised around common issues and basic demands for decades. While

mechanisms for wider participation and communication between communities and municipal authorities have been in place, also for decades, they have been insufficient to channel the multiple demands of different socioeconomic groups. As a result of collective disappointment and frustration, there has been a steady increase of aggressive and violent forms of demonstration since the 1980s, particularly in times of economic and political instability.

While the behaviour and actions of different political, economic and social actors are important in their own terms, as each represents particular interests and groups, their combined performance and actions have contributed to the consolidation of distinctive political landscapes and institutional cultures in each city. A mixture of uneven power relations, bureaucratic weaknesses, public-private alignments and social pressures, however, constitute important municipal features in both Valencia and Mar del Plata. In regards to the local bureaucracy, for instance, municipal administrators and/or technicians have increasingly faced the dilemmas of professional integrity, social commitment as well as the pressure of powerful economic and political actors since democratic transition. From a political perspective, the leadership of Rita Barbera and her ability to shape both local institutional and urban policy decisions for over two decades is unquestionable. She managed to remain in office at the peak and even after the 2008 crisis. The political landscape of Mar del Plata has been, on the contrary, more dynamic. Although mayors have been influential figures, they have neither occupied office for more than two consecutive terms nor become hegemonic leaders. Furthermore, episodes of crisis have had a self-correcting effect in the local leadership culture, by punishing and rewarding the institutional agility of municipal actors to deal with moments of widespread instability.

Clearly, the study of these shared features and the multiple changes they have undergone in each city over time reveal the high level of complexity of the institutional environment in which urban policies are formulated and decided upon as well as the wide range of actors and interests at play. The diversity of actors, government structures and dynamics, and the extent to which they change in times of crisis expands existing accounts of urban governance as well as studies of crisis inspired by political economy. More attention to local actors, the political landscape and the institutional culture of cities like Valencia and Mar del Plata can inform wider understandings of urban crises

elsewhere, especially concerning their non-economic causes and consequences, as well as wider debates concerning the diverse and complex origin of urban policy outcomes. The next chapter draws on these insights and examines the relationship between crises and institutional transformations in Valencia and Mar del Plata since the 1980s, with a particular focus on the crises of democratic transition and the ongoing challenges of decentralisation and federalism.

CHAPTER 7: CRISES AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the relationship between crises and local institutional transformations. It draws on the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata following processes of democratisation and decentralisation as well as several episodes of crisis since the 1980s. This will help us to expand our understanding of some of the wider circumstances and processes shaping trajectories of urban governance and urban policy across these cities. It will also explore how major crises might be actually translated into changes in government structures and/or wider institutional dynamics, according to the interests and abilities of different actors to mobilise and induce change. Here, crisis is presented as an exceptional condition that might enable or hinder institutional adaptation and innovation within municipal structures as well as the reconfiguration of relationships amongst socioeconomic and political actors introduced in the previous chapter. The experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata illuminate how crises might effect local change across the organisations, actors and dynamics behind urban policy-making processes. This is considered in the following section.

The third section then examines the wider institutional transformations driven by political crisis, with a particular focus on democratic transition and economic/political decentralisation. Indeed, political instability and crisis feature among the main drivers of changes in the broader structures within which local institutions are located and the relatively recent history of cities like Valencia and Mar del Plata provide us with valuable evidence for analysis of these processes. While episodes of major macro-economic crisis might create the need within institutions to adapt to new realities (as discussed in the previous section), the political and social tensions of democratic transition as well as the ongoing challenges of decentralised administrations (which tend to become more visible in times of economic downturn) are essential to understanding the long term path of local institutions and urban development. In this the operational complexities of federalism and the importance of intergovernmental relations for cities like Valencia and Mar del Plata in the articulation of responses to episodes of crisis as well as urban policy agendas is also made clear. The experience of both cities demonstrates that institutional agility and the ability to make use of cross-scalar

relations have been essential for municipal operations, particularly because greater autonomy has often meant more responsibilities but not necessarily more resources.

Lastly, the conclusion considers the analytical insights gained from the comparative and longterm approach taken through this chapter, notably concerning the specificity of political events that have had important implications for the institutional and urban policy shifts observed over the last few decades in our two case study cities.

7.2 EPISODES OF CRISIS AND INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATIONS

This section deals with and highlights some of the local institutional transformations experienced in Valencia (2008) and in Mar del Plata (2001) as a result of significant episodes of crisis, with a particular focus on changes that had consequent implications for urban policymaking processes. It examines some of the most visible changes that have taken place at the local level in times of critical juncture, of decision and change, in a context of institutional porosity (and opportunities) following deep economic crisis, financial default, political instability and social pressure, which subsequently opened up possibilities for distinctive paths of urban policy responses and outcomes, including new forms of social intervention and/or engagement.

Although the consequences of wider episodes of crisis might indeed permeate through the structures and dynamics of local institutions, triggering new and exacerbating existing issues, it is precisely within the institutions themselves and through the changing interpretations and priorities of municipal actors (together with those of local influential elites and pressure groups) that negotiations and decisions concerning their actual effects and possible responses take place. Therefore, local institutions are not only impacted by crises, but also mediate and determine their local nature and the responses to the multiple issues that derive from them. This section focuses on a number of relatively recent developments, while the following section (7.3) draws on a number of institutional transformations that unfolded at the time of democratic transition and highlights the implications of political crises.

7.2.1 VALENCIA

As the previous chapter discussed, the 2008 experience of Valencia suggests that moments of crisis can provide opportunities to induce change in the configuration of both institutional structures and dynamics amongst public and private actors. In terms of structures, the 2008 crisis triggered important changes across municipal organisations and departments dealing with urban policy. The emergence of InnDEA (a municipal office dealing with urban strategic and development matters) in 2012, for example, was the result of a process of internal reconfiguration that started in 2008 and took several years to materialise. For MAL, InnDEA was definitely the result of important administrative changes in the local government following years of economic difficulty in which public resources needed to be maximised due to budget cuts, and multiple offices and departments had to be merged. InnDEA was therefore the outcome of a municipal decision that saw different internal projects, departments and functions put together, namely the *Fundación para la Innovación de Valencia*, (FIVEC, focused on new technologies and innovation) and the *Centro de Estrategias y Desarrollo* (CEyD, focused on strategic planning). The changes from one form of organisation to the next, however, did not happen instantly. Although the macroeconomic crisis affecting municipal finances started in 2008, the CEyD continued operating and producing strategic proposals (at least on paper) for almost two years until it was clear that there were no resources to implement large infrastructure projects or mega-events under the extant economic conditions. The final decisions about InnDEA and its successive consolidation came about in 2011 when the municipality realised that the crisis was more severe than anticipated and the alternatives limited.

From a more technical perspective, EUR emphasises that it is not easy to change the strategic focus and policy direction of the city. The strategies of the CEyD were mainly founded on large-scale infrastructure projects and mega-events, which, according to some, were already not working for Valencia by the mid 2000s. With the onset of the 2008 crisis, the shortcomings became clearer. It was imperative to devise new strategies and to establish new priorities by building on existing strengths and capacities and without having to start all over from scratch. Henceforth, government departments dealing with urban policies and strategies were also obliged to revise and reframe their functions, their priorities and their objectives (*ibid*). As MAL recalls, there was a period

of “wait-and-see” in which some studies were commissioned from consultancies such as Deloitte in an attempt to find new ideas and sources of inspiration. For EUR the new strategic model needed to be more flexible and diverse than the previous one and, most importantly, able to adapt to changes in the availability of public resources, the wider economic environment and the social demands and tastes of urban actors, but it has taken some time to come up with alternatives.

The crisis of the urban strategic agenda and of the municipal departments responsible for its formulation and implementation were amongst the main drivers of the institutional transformations that ensued in Valencia following 2008. Indeed, a shift in the content and direction of new urban strategies and projects also required the reconfiguration of the municipal offices and actors dealing with them. It is indeed essential to consider the pressure faced by the municipality to reframe extant urban policies and strategies in line with the critical economic situation of the late 2000s in order to better understand the choices and decisions that shaped the organisational reconfiguration and institutional path of the municipality, and according to which new structures and a renewed vision of strategic planning emerged in the early 2010s with the establishment of InnDEA (see section 8.4 for more details).

The transition from CEyD and FIVEC to InnDEA also entailed changes in the ways the former offices were related to particular local government divisions and departments, which not only had organisational implications but also consequences in the remit and function of the new entity. The CEyD, for instance, had depended on the *Departamento de Grandes Proyectos* since its opening in the late 1990s when the phase of development of the *Plan Estratégico* started. The CEyD was then the main local government arm in charge of planning and implementing large-scale infrastructure projects for over a decade, when the municipality decided to reduce the number of offices dealing with urban policy matters. In 2012, when InnDEA officially replaced the other two organisations, the *Departamento de Grandes Proyectos* ceased its operations (as a result of the ongoing municipal reforms). Therefore, InnDEA started operating under the remit of the *Delegación de Innovación y Proyectos Emprendedores*. As a result, the vision, aims and projects of InnDEA are influenced by themes such as innovation, entrepreneurship, and smart/intelligent cities, while the urban strategic side (as conceived during the CEyD) has remained secondary and virtually forgotten over

the last few years.

In addition to the changes observed across municipal departments dealing with urban policies and strategies since 2008, and considering the important role that social actors have had in shaping the local institutional environment-culture in which earlier urban policy initiatives have emerged (as discussed in section 6.2.1), the crisis of 2008 also created the conditions for new forms of social mobilisation and intervention to emerge. Indeed, Valencia has observed a number of community organisations and movements emerge since the onset of the 2008 crisis, which are highly diverse in their purpose and tactics and more focused on collective action and/or mobilisation rather than the basic demands that characterised them in the 1980s. For GIX, these community-led initiatives are also a reflection of the limited engagement that has existed between society and the municipality since the 1990s, particularly after having Rita Barbera and the *Partido Popular* in office for six consecutive terms.

“There has never been real participation in Valencia, not even consensus in the formulation of the strategic plan. Unfortunately, we have twenty-four years under the same municipal administration and political leader. The municipality is very comfortable as it is. What we have now, particularly since 2008, are a number of social groups and community organisations trying to gain visibility vis-a-vis local authorities and fighting to bring about change to their neighbourhoods. The *salvem* movements in the El Cabanyal and the La Horta are evidence of such collective efforts” (*ibid*)

While the view of GIX highlights that social participation has been a weakness of the municipality over the last couple of decades, it also recognises that the crisis has provided the conditions for the actual emergence of alternative forms of mobilisation. Neighbourhood associations, for example, have recognised that in the midst of crisis (and indeed due to longstanding issues of participation) they cannot expect much from the local government, therefore they have opted for mechanisms of *auto-gestión* – to produce proposals and solutions by and for themselves in order to bring change to their communities. For MAL, there have been achievements of diverse nature and scale as a result of community-led projects as well as social-pressure movements such as the materialisation of the urban *La Huerta of Benimaclet*, the consultation process and

extensive revision of the *Plan General Ordenamiento Urbano* (PGOU) over the last few years, and the pausing of contentious large-scale projects such as the regeneration of the El Cabanyal (until wider consensus is reached). The Parque Central, another large infrastructure project (which had been part of earlier strategic plans), has been approved after years of discussion and negotiation but will not be constructed until the sources of funding are publicly debated/consulted.

These new ways of social engagement and mobilisation are indeed part of the local institutional changes observed in Valencia over the last decade, in which social actors have somewhat regained the visibility they once had in the 1980s (albeit through new and different ways of intervention). This is in itself good news for the wider institutional environment of Valencia, in which social participation had been diluted and somewhat discouraged throughout the various administrations of Rita Barbera and the PP. These collective efforts seem to have had a positive impact in the institutional environment in the sense that local communities have largely succeeded in stopping controversial urban interventions in areas such as the *El Cabanyal*, and forced the municipality to revise (and consult on) significant projects such as the *Parque Central*. Furthermore, in some cases, local social movements have not only resisted the implementation of municipal interventions but have actually articulated and provided solutions to a number of urban issues, as in the case of the *Huerta de Benimaclet*.

This is not to say that the interaction between municipal and social actors has been smooth or without frictions (see the work of Luis del Romero Renau 2011; 2014; 2015 for a number of examples and a detailed analysis of local urban conflicts), neither to say that social movements have always succeeded in their demands, but to recognise that the multiple forms of community action and social mobilisation that we have seen in Valencia since the 2008 crisis seem to be opening up the institutional environment in which urban policies are debated and decided upon. Although the variety of concerns, approaches and tactics reflected across the community initiatives that have emerged over the last few years has made it difficult to coordinate wider interventions whereby permanent mechanisms for social participation could be institutionalised (which has been criticised by Sorribes 2001; and Xambo and Gines 2012), it is undeniable that their localised yet accumulative actions have had a positive impact in the local institutional environment and certainly hold the potential to yield future benefits. After all, such

initiatives have brought together groups that had remained at the margins of processes of urban policy consultation and outside of any form of participation beyond municipal elections for too long and despite the promises of democracy and decentralisation.

This thesis has argued for a long term analysis of local institutional change, so it might be too early to understand (or indeed predict) the impact of social movements and their potential to engage in the formulation and/or implementation of urban policy agendas, particularly after the emergence of new political forces and a new government coalition since 2015. Finally, unlike the organisational reforms discussed above, it will take some time before the full impact of the latest crisis is reflected in local institutional dynamics and socio-political relations in particular, given the haphazard and evolving nature of the social processes involved.

7.2.2 MAR DEL PLATA

This section is about the relationship between the 2001 crisis and some of the local institutional transformations that ensued at the time, particularly those that enabled the emergence of the first strategic planning initiative in the city. As in the case of Valencia, the crisis created the conditions for important transformations across the municipal environment of Mar del Plata. In terms of institutional dynamics, following the macro-economic default of 2001, public and private actors also entered a state of crisis that made them reconsider their attitude towards one another. Even those that would have normally opposed each other, for instance, saw the need to communicate and to find common ground and consensual agreements in order to move forward. As KIC recalls,

“the municipality needed to decide how not to let the population starve in light of such a major crisis, and to revise what had gone so wrong and how it could move forward in a different way. The municipality was like a large cargo ship sinking in 2002, which actually did sink! We had to get the boats ready and everyone had to start rowing in the same direction, otherwise we would have all drowned”

It is worth noting that this was not an attitude of the municipality or politicians alone, many businesses and communities were worried with the emergence of new actors

(sometimes with violent tactics) such as *piqueteros* and looters. While the uncertainty of the crisis and the severity of the issues unleashed were determinant in the changing attitude of local actors and their willingness to work together, the overall context also facilitated the introduction of new urban policy tools in the local agenda. For KIC “The crisis definitely had a strong impact on urban policy in Mar del Plata and it made the adoption of the first *Plan Estratégico* for the city possible. The crisis was not a symbolic excuse or a mere justification to get away with a dodgy plan. Local actors genuinely grew up and became more mature with the experiences of 2001 and 2002”.

Although the municipality of Mar del Plata was already expanding its institutional relations in the late 1990s and establishing links with cities such as Rosario (which already had a largely successful strategic plan in place), such local government tactics did not have much to do with the desire to learn from particular urban policies but from reconfiguration processes enabled by decentralisation – including the organisation of municipal departments and their functions. These developments took place over a time of political stability and confidence, when the Mayor Aprile enjoyed high levels of popularity and acceptance. Nevertheless, strategic planning was not an urban policy priority for himself or his administration. It was not until the onset of the 2001 crisis, the new socioeconomic, political and institutional reality and the support of new political leaders that strategic planning became a feasible possibility. For PER, it was a combination of political disaffection and the loss of trust in institutions which prompted emerging local leaders to reconsider the potential of strategic planning as an urban policy tool through which to foster reconciliation and generate consensus among different actors as well as produce alternative solutions to move forward. The institutional circumstances, narratives of crisis and political motivations that shaped the urban policy choices of Mar del Plata in 2001, were therefore somewhat different from Valencia – where the mayoral candidate Rita Barbera, for instance, articulated a strong narrative of economic stagnation and crisis to which she promised to respond with a new strategic planning approach that would make Valencia a modern and competitive city.

Indeed, the 2001 crisis not only altered the *status quo* of public-private relationships and set the conditions for the implementation of new urban strategic approaches, but opened up new spaces for wider debate and participation. The climate of distrust between

socioeconomic and municipal actors following the resignation of Aprile, the resulting leadership vacuum and institutional chaos, and the emergence of the first *Plan Estratégico* in the midsts of the crisis, all contributed to a process of collective dialogue and reflection in which different experiences and visions of Mar del Plata were brought into conversation. As PER recalls, it was clear that the selfish attitude of some sectors were not helping anyone to overcome the crisis and collective thinking was needed.

“Those who attended the meetings and workshops of the *Plan Estratégico* had the opportunity to meet face to face and talk with others facing similar/different worries, everyone had the chance to defend their own views and challenge those of others. People exposed their problems but also listened to those of others. It was also an opportunity for individuals and groups to find common grounds with others and articulate new alliances from which to negotiate with the municipality. None of this happened before the 2001 crisis, urban policy concerns and decisions were always dealt with hermetically, in a more corporate and sectoral manner between key economic actors and the local government, without open consultation” (*ibid*)

In hindsight, some have claimed that such collective efforts were somewhat symbolic and more of a manoeuvre of emerging political leaders to recover the legitimacy of municipal power following widespread chaos (LAX), while others have criticised the limits of the participatory spaces opened up then (NEP). After two decades of experience in the municipal environment of Mar del Plata, LAX and NEP both agree that what really increased in times of crisis was the lobbying capacity and bargaining power of local socioeconomic elites rather than the common citizens. “These elites have a greater chance to voice their concerns to the municipality, to shape the dominant narratives of local crisis and to engage and influence urban policy decisions much more than others”, says NEP. Nonetheless, and whatever the aims and/or limits of such processes, they encouraged institutional and political change. As PER states, “I believe that the *Comisión Mixta* could have been more open to participation in the early stages of the plan (i.e. the identification and assessment of pressing urban issues and priorities), but I also believe that the variety of urban actors that engaged the commission and the first workshops was both wide ranging and unprecedented”.

Moreover, it seems that the processes of participation and policy innovation initiated in Mar del Plata following the crisis of 2001 have produced a number of longterm benefits. The *Plan Estratégico*, for instance, helped to improve communication between urban actors, to identify key priorities, and to articulate common visions by accounting for the experience of groups that had been previously ignored and/or overwhelmed by the opinions of influential sectors. For PER, the process of collective dialogue and reflection initiated by the *Comisión Mixta* was positive then and continues to be at present, as some of the urban actors who gathered there for the first time continue to meet today and the communication practices developed across sectors at the time became a permanent local institutional feature over the years.

The change of attitude of economic, political and social actors from an usually hostile and confrontational position to a more constructive way of communication, their ability to identify and voice common concerns and to reach consensus in terms of responses, are indeed evidence of an important shift in the local institutional environment in which urban policy agendas are debated and decided upon. The adoption of a citywide and long term strategic approach to confront the 2001 crisis did not necessarily lead to the reconfiguration of existing municipal structures, but to the creation of a new platform for policy debate and a more transparent and participatory space for local actors from different socioeconomic sectors to engage in a new strategic vision for Mar del Plata. This view was corroborated by interviewees when asked what were the most important changes they considered illustrated local institutional change following the 2001 crisis.

In terms of planning regulation and construction, the crisis also created the institutional conditions that allowed for a number of changes across the urban normative framework of Mar del Plata. Indeed, episodes of crisis might enable municipal leaders to justify decisions that would be controversial otherwise and/or might make them vulnerable to the pressures of powerful actors to effect normative amendments that respond to their particular economic interests.

“There are two faces of crisis when I think of urban policies. First, there is a significant increase in the degree of flexibility of planning regulations and normative parameters. [In 2001], after months of crisis, there was almost no investment and almost no employment. As a result anyone coming to the

municipality with an application for a construction project was given priority, even if it did not meet some of the basic requirements. We just needed to get things moving across the city. Second, there is (or should be) an opportunity for thinking collectively, not only how to get out of the actual crisis but to reflect and devise how to emerge stronger for the next one” (KIC)

Therefore, the 2001 crisis affected local decision-making processes concerning urban regulation and policy in two phases that involved different kinds of processes. Firstly, an almost reactionary phase that entailed swift responses aimed at producing instant solutions and tangible results for the most pressing issues. Hence, more spontaneous and less reflexive. Secondly, a more profound phase that entailed longterm responses, collective debate and reflection (and which set the ground for strategic planning). Given the magnitude of the economic collapse and institutional breakdown of 2001, it is unsurprising that the priority of the municipality was on responses that could achieve rapid and tangible results. Daniel Katz, who emerged as political leader in 2002, found in the crisis the justification to pass a special decree that made the regulation of construction activities more flexible and hoped to help to reactivate the local economy. The decree was supposed to have a transitory effect, for six months initially, but has remained in place ever since and its clauses are still effective at present (DIM). Although there is no doubt that such a measure helped to encourage construction activities at the time, its successive extensions and flexibility have allowed for abuses over the years. As KIC notes, “many people has ended up doing whatever they wanted and we will have to wait to see the extent to which such flexibility has left a particular footprint in the urban landscape of the city”. I discuss this in section 8.5.

Moreover, some economic actors took advantage of their relative power vis-a-vis the municipality at the time of the crisis and lobbied for the swift processing and sanction of controversial measures that, given their unfavourable impact on local tax revenues, the environment or cultural heritage, would be difficult to pass otherwise. As DIM recalls, the *Centro de Constructores y Anexos* and the *Colegio de Martilleros*, for example, put pressure on the legislative arm of the municipality to approve a decree whereby developers and construction firms were exempt from paying local property taxes for newly built units until these were purchased by their final owners. They argued to the

municipality that such a proposal was in line with national legislation that exempts car makers and dealers from paying any taxes until the new units are bought by an individual or other party, and the decree was passed in the mid 2000s (*ibid*). At the same time, in a separate interview, the president of the *Colegio de Martilleros* stated that their relationship with the municipality, the mayor and the legislative power, has always been as ordinary as it would be with any other local institution – “I believe there is no special treatment or preference to the requests we make before the legislative body” (MUD).

In addition to the municipal decision to loosen construction regulations (by removing height and density restrictions – see section 8.5) and the pressure of developers to reduce their tax liabilities (to encourage the sector and help reactivate the economy), the crisis of 2001 also affected the direction of wider and long term urban policy agendas. The demise of the *Plan de Obras Mar del Plata 2000* and the emergence of the *Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata* can be traced to the crisis of 2001. They were both implemented by the local government and were both influenced by the local economic elites to some extent. While the former is said to have been largely inspired by executives of the *Colegio de Martilleros* who insisted to the mayor that a series of basic infrastructure and service projects (e.g. roads) needed to be prioritised and dealt with in order to attract investments in the late 1990s (AOZ), the *Centro de Constructores y Anexos* and the *Colegio de Martilleros* were key in the constitution of the *Junta Promotora* that later became the *Comisión Mixta* of the *Plan Estratégico* (see section 8.3). For DIM, they were both important actors in the initial push for the plan, although many of them might not have been entirely sure initially as to what strategic planning was and what its implementation entailed in terms of participation.

Although the experiences and evidence examined in this section do not exactly “match” the sort of examples discussed in the case of Valencia in section 7.2.1, it does not mean that they should be dismissed as inappropriate evidence of institutional change, whether in a strict sense or not. The answers and examples provided by participants are precisely the supporting evidence of a wider perception of transformation in the local institutional environment. There is virtually no secondary literature that explicitly deals with the relationship between crisis and institutional change in the case of Mar del Plata, so the claims presented throughout the section draw on the first-hand experience of officials,

politicians and socioeconomic actors who have been directly involved in processes of institutional change in times of crisis. The comparison of the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata opens up the analysis of local institutional transformation to different kinds of processes that emphasise the reconfiguration of internal municipal structures in the case of the former and of wider public-private and/or state-society interactions in the case of the latter.

Furthermore, the flexibility of planning regulation enabled by the 2001 crisis is an illustration of institutional change in terms of municipal dynamics and decision-making processes, particularly within departments and among officials dealing with applications for construction projects that were to generate new employment opportunities. The 2001 crisis also undermined and/or weakened the ability of municipal actors to negotiate with local economic and business elites lobbying for controversial changes in tax, cultural heritage and environmental regulation, which illustrates the porosity of local institutions in times of critical juncture. The case of Mar del Plata demonstrates that institutional transformations do not always materialise through changes in administrative or municipal planning structures as such, but often through more nuanced changes in the bargaining power, the strengths and weaknesses of the local institutions themselves, and/or the attitude among those operating within them. Therefore the need to understand institutions in their broader sense.

All in all, it is evident that the 2001 crisis created exceptional conditions that allowed a number of transformations across the institutional dynamics of Mar del Plata to unfold. Given the precarious economic situation and widespread social discontent, emerging political leaders sought to intervene through the urban legislative framework and articulated responses that could help them both overcome hardship by encouraging activities such as construction (for which changes in urban regulation were required) and regain institutional legitimacy, social recognition and control over local affairs by widening participation and fostering dialogue across urban socioeconomic actors (for which the strategic plan became a suitable and timely instrument). While there might be disagreements in regards to the results of such political tactics and/or the extent to which they were influenced by the local economic elites, there is no question that the crisis triggered wider institutional change – even where municipal officials and leaders might have not been in a position to resist external pressures and commit to their social

responsibility. In any case, as GOB notes, the demands and pressures of powerful elites on the municipality certainly served to generate changes that responded directly to their economic interests (such as the aforementioned changes in urban regulation), but also led to the implementation of initiatives that indirectly benefited wider social groups (such as the *Comisión Mixta* of the *Plan Estratégico* in which *Sociedades de Fomento* from poorer neighbourhoods found a space to participate and a formal channel to engage in wider urban policy debates).

7.3 POLITICAL CRISES: DEMOCRACY AND DECENTRALISATION

This section examines the wider institutional transformations driven by political crisis, with a particular focus on democratic transition and economic/political decentralisation. Indeed, political instability and economic crisis feature among the main drivers of changes in the broader structures within which local institutions are located and the relatively recent history of cities like Valencia and Mar del Plata provide us with valuable evidence for their analysis. While episodes of major macro-economic crisis might create the need within institutions to adapt to new realities (as discussed in the previous section), the political and social tensions of democratic transition as well as the ongoing challenges of decentralised administrations (which tend to become more visible in times of economic downturn) are essential to understanding the long term path of local institutions and urban development.

In both case studies the political crisis of transition helped to break with the *status quo* of institutions shaped by military regimes – which were not only authoritarian, but inefficient and corrupt. Furthermore, the greater autonomy that followed the political transition enabled local governments to establish administrative mechanisms and specialised departments to deal with both immediate and longterm urban development matters. Indeed, decentralisation has brought about numerous positive changes across the economic and political structures and functions of local governments while deepening local democracy to some extent. However, the significant rise in the range and number of responsibilities assumed by or devolved to municipalities as a result has also increased their vulnerabilities over time. The argument of this section is that it is precisely the intertwined nature of political and economic crises that has made possible many of the institutional changes observed in cities like Valencia and Mar del Plata

over the last decades, where crises have shaped processes of democratisation and decentralisation while, ironically, municipal offices have become increasingly responsible for the articulation of distinctive and innovative responses to mitigate the consequences of recurrent episodes of crisis.

7.3.1 VALENCIA

Following the decades-long military dictatorship under Franco, local institutions were in a critical state at the time of transition. The institutional chaos was also reflected in the precariousness and abandonment of maintenance of basic infrastructure and services across the city in 1979 (as noted in section 5.4.1). Therefore, and in order to mitigate some of the most pressing urban issues, the first democratic government had to confront and act upon multiple issues affecting both administrative structures and dynamics as well as urban planning documents and regulations (which I briefly discuss below). Furthermore, the local institutional environment became more complex due to changes and multiple processes unfolding alongside transition. The active involvement of society through neighbourhood associations, the emergence of an intellectual and ideological paradigm in favour of democratic values and social transformation, the Constitution of 1978 which granted greater autonomy to regional and local governments but failed to provide appropriate guidance for the establishment of the latter, are all examples of the multiple sources of institutional tension and pressure that operated in Valencia throughout the 1980s. For QUI and FIG, the magnitude of the interventions required to confront the institutional challenges of transition was rather significant and only possible due to the optimism and voluntarism of democratic political leaders as well as the aldermen who were not professional politicians but who had firsthand experience from social movements and understood the problems and needs of the local population.

DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

There is no doubt that the situation of local institutions in Valencia by the time of transition was rather critical. Therefore, following their victory in the 1979 local elections, the *Partido Socialista* had to confront a municipality where administrative structures and dynamics were chaotic. While the abandonment of basic infrastructure

and the insufficiency of services were at the core of social demands, the newly elected government found it particularly difficult to respond to such pressing issues without first addressing some of the institutional obstacles that limited their actual ability to manoeuvre the situation. Indeed, and despite the constitutional amendments of 1978, the legal and financial base of local institutions at the time of transition remained unchanged and therefore extant legislation was in contradiction with the expectations, capacities and responsibilities of the new municipal governments. In fact, The *Ley de Bases de Régimen Local*, tailored to the needs of dictator Franco in 1956, remained in place until 1985 when the legal base, jurisdiction and political arrangements of municipalities were rectified and 1988 when the *Ley Reguladora de las Haciendas Locales* established the financial regulation for local governments. In the words of POC, the first elected mayor of Valencia, the coexistence of old and new legislations made the institutional environment more complicated than needed and more fragile than it could have been: “in reality we had transitioned to democracy with new values and ambitions, but the legal situation was still the same. If I wanted to become a dictator I could have done it without problem because the imperative legal framework would have been on my side”.

While necessary changes to municipal legislation were delayed for several years and it became clear that the priority of the political elite was to consolidate the *Comunidades Autónomas* or regional administrations (which had never existed in Spain with the exceptions of Catalonia, the Basque Country and possibly Galicia until 1939) rather than the municipalities, the first democratic government of Valencia actively intervened in areas that did not need to wait for legislative amendments and made significant efforts to confront the institutional chaos that reigned across local institutions by 1979. These efforts were particularly visible within the municipal organisation itself, where a mixture of (mis)management issues and blurred bureaucratic practices inherited after decades of dictatorship constituted serious obstacles that needed to be addressed immediately (see sections 5.4.1 and 6.3.1 for details). For POC unfavourable institutional dynamics can often lead to bureaucratic inertias that are difficult to challenge or change over time. In Valencia, such inertias were associated with issues of absenteeism, poor coordination, inefficiency and even corruption. Nevertheless, the democratic will and commitment of the newly elected municipal leaders and officials helped them to confront such adverse institutional scenario. For POC, it was evident

that institutional inertias in Valencia had moved in an unfavourable and pernicious direction over decades, but he was certain that if the new administration actively intervened to disrupt and control them, it was a matter of time before they either changed or disappeared. Indeed, his ultimate aims were to put an end to the dynamics that had dominated the municipality under dictatorship and to foster a productive local institution at the service of the wider population.

“At the time of transition the surviving institutional inertias of the *Franquismo* were so obvious for us that it was relatively easy to act upon them. The advantage was that we knew the municipal actors at the root of the problems: how they operated and what was their Achilles heel. Also, the municipality had delegated so many responsibilities to the private sector that it was not too difficult to convince the few remaining officials to work on our side after private incentives had disappeared. Of course, we faced resistance but many embraced our democratic vision between 1979 and 1983. I think we did manage to produce a major turn in local institutional dynamics throughout the 1980s, despite normative limitations and the resistance of political adversaries” (*ibid*).

While the economic uncertainty and political tensions of transition made confronting the chaos of local institutions somewhat difficult, the account of POC evidences that it was possible to induce important changes within the inherited administrative framework. Furthermore, this was possible despite the poor working conditions in which officials had to perform their duties on a daily basis. SEP, for instance, recalls how a new architect had to be allocated a cloakroom to work in because the office space was insufficient and precarious. For him the achievements of transition were therefore miraculous. Indeed, they managed to influence a rather unfavourable institutional environment and set of practices without even providing appropriate office space and/or basic equipments as a form of incentive. As POC and SEP remember, however, there was an atmosphere of enthusiasm, motivation and hard work despite the material limitations, officials understood that it was a transitory phase in which opportunities were scarce and could not be wasted and were keen to perform their duties while resisting the unethical temptations of the past. Their view is also shared by GIM, QUI and FIG, for whom the wider institutional context and the attitude of those occupying

public functions during the process of transition were characterised by optimism despite the political fragility of the nascent democracy which became clearer after the 1981 coup d'état.

From a financial perspective, the optimism of the first democratic government was also essential to improvise responses and solutions to the critical economic situation of transition. Although the local government had to wait for almost a decade until the *Ley Reguladora de las Haciendas Locales* (1988) was passed, municipal leaders and officials sought to develop an administrative procedure through which they could plan the local budget and estimate the resources needed to finance urgent urban infrastructure and service programmes (see below). In spite of the political fragility and the widespread crisis of the early days of democracy, new leaders and officials were optimistic about the future and did not hesitate to improvise administrative tools that could help them to confront the financial difficulties inherited and subsequently respond to the multiple urban issues faced.

“We assessed several economic alternatives for the large interventions required in the periphery and all the neighbourhoods across the city. Therefore, we had an idea of the costs and the resources needed to finance them. The estimated figures, of course, exceeded the resources available in the municipality. It was a period of widespread change and there were neither clear financial structures nor fixed streams of revenue. Valencia required the involvement of the *Comunidad Autónoma* (the regional government) in order to finance such urban interventions. The problem was that during the first years of democracy, the *Comunidad Autónoma Valenciana* did not actually exist. It was in a transitory phase and was not constituted as such until 1983. There was no administrative structure to go to. Everything in Spain was in a process of formation” (PEZ).

These institutional manoeuvres to respond to the legal/financial loopholes of transition in the early 1980s set an important precedent for the development of internal administrative structures over time. However, it is important to bear in mind that these early institutional interventions were articulated in a context of widespread economic and political crisis and their main priority was to provide swift and feasible solutions to

pressing financial (and urban) issues. Therefore, some of the contradictions and shortcomings of the early democratic and federal system have remained somewhat embedded in the municipal institutions of Valencia, even after periods of growth and stability. In fact, some of the core legal and financial issues have remained unresolved and have consequently undermined the ability of the municipality to deal with its multiple responsibilities – particularly in times of crisis. For PEZ

“There have not been substantial developments in terms of financial autonomy since the 1980s. The Constitution of 1978 contains two important aspects concerning the administrative organisation of the territory: 1) concerned with *Comunidades Autónomas* or regional level and 2) concerned with *Administraciones Locales* or municipal level. However, nothing has been done to fulfil the financial mandates of the latter and without the complete control of local resources, little can be done in other areas. Even after the *Ley de Bases de Régimen Local* (1985) and the *Ley Reguladora de las Haciendas Locales* (1988), financial autonomy has remained incomplete and municipalities have continued to be dependent on the regional government”

As the 1980s unfolded and the efforts of the first democratic government to rectify unfavourable bureaucratic dynamics as well as to mitigate the inherited institutional chaos started to yield results, pressing urban issues at the core of social demands became the next priority. Although the legal and financial regulatory context of the municipality continued to be an obstacle until the mid/late 1980s, the achievements of the *Partido Socialista* in terms of infrastructure and service coverage by the end of the decade had been significant (see section 8.2 for details). These urban improvements were only possible due to the ability of the socialist government to gain control of urban affairs through swift and tactical interventions in the organisational structure of the municipality, which allowed them to bypass and/or override some of the inherited bureaucratic obstacles as well as to articulate and implement the actual responses needed to mitigate critical urban issues and to reverse adverse planning processes. Indeed, the multiple developments observed in terms of urban policy, regulation and actual programmes throughout this period were not only shaped by a mixture of social demands and the commitment of the socialist administration but, crucially, by the

economic uncertainties, the political tensions and the institutional limitations and possibilities of democratic transition.

According to GIM, the director of the *Dirección de Servicios de Urbanismo* (DSU) set up by the first democratic government, there were two broad areas that required urgent intervention at the time of transition. The first one was concerned with the provision of basic infrastructure/services and the second one with the reversal of a series of planning regulations and actual urban plans (see section 8.2.1 for details). They were both equally important although for different reasons – the former was socially sensitive as it concerned the basic demands of neighbourhood associations while the latter was more political as it involved dealing with the planning legacies of dictatorship. Given the unfavourable features of the inherited local institutional environment, the wider economic and political tensions, and the critical state of communities across Valencia (all of which have been examined in earlier sections), the government sought to establish new structures to deal with the most pressing urban issues. The DSU was the first one to be created, primarily in charge of the formulation and implementation of the *Programa de Urgencia de Actuación Municipal* (1979-81), the *Programa de Actuación Municipal* (1981-83) and the *Programa de Intervenciones Urbanas Especiales* (which focused on the periphery) in a thorough and timely manner. According to GIM, it was the first time that an office as such existed in Valencia and this was in itself an important achievement in the early days of transition.

“We created a multidisciplinary and qualified urban department, including local professionals with knowledge of the characteristics and problems specific to each area. We measured the state of infrastructure and services of 92 neighbourhoods across Valencia with limited technical resources, but with the optimism of the nascent democracy. We needed to consider every step/intervention very carefully. Indeed, urban planning regulations had to be modified and actual plans needed to be either amended or made from scratch, but their execution had to wait. Instead, we needed to provide immediate solutions to communities living in precarious conditions. The logic behind our hierarchy of interventions was therefore given by the urgency of particular urban problems” (*ibid*)

Nevertheless, the socialist government also made significant efforts to intervene in tactical areas of urbanism. Indeed, and similar to the case of basic infrastructure and service provision, the reversal of inherited urban regulations and plans required an institutional platform through which necessary procedures and amendments could be performed. As a result, new organisational structures and professional teams were established within the municipality. This was realised through the creation of the *Gabinete de Estudios Urbanos y Territoriales* (GEUT), which soon became the main division to process and execute urban affairs at the local level. The GEUT was configured by a small group of professionals that not only produced substantial reports containing exhaustive revisions of extant urban policy documents, but also initiated multiple procedures to amend adverse regulations and to halt large-scale projects that had been formulated in the 1960s and 1970s and that had become increasingly unpopular even before transition. The importance of the GEUT and some of its main actions and interventions in the urban arena will be discussed in the next chapter.

DECENTRALISATION

The capacities of the first democratic government to deal with the crisis of infrastructure and services across Valencia and the reversal of adverse urban planning regulation were not only possible due to the emerging democracy but to the autonomy granted to local governments in the Constitution of 1978. Although the implications of transition were profound for Valencia and the manoeuvres of elected leaders and officials to confront urban issues rather remarkable, it was the local autonomy legitimated in the constitution which made the procedures and interventions of the municipality both possible and legally binding. However, the early days of decentralisation were also difficult. As mentioned above, there were numerous contradictions between constitutional mandates, municipal legislation and the new regional administrations which exacerbated the local effects of the wider economic and political crisis. Therefore, the municipality not only had to deal with the challenges of the latter but also with the intricacies of a nascent federal system. In order to understand the implications of local autonomy following transition and the actual ability of the municipality of Valencia to confront episodes of crisis, it is important to consider some institutional issues at the root of decentralisation as well as the longterm experience of Valencia at navigating the economic and political landscape of federalism.

The early days of decentralisation were marked by the Constitution of 1978 and the local elections of 1979 when the *Partido Socialista* was elected in Valencia (and most municipalities across Spain). As discussed in earlier sections, these were times of widespread crisis, economic uncertainty, political tensions, institutional fragility and active social mobilisation. As a result, decentralisation was a very slow process from the start. For POC, the establishment of *Comunidades Autónomas* made its progress even slower. These regional administrations defeated the institutional purpose and potential of municipal autonomy from the very beginning, as they reinstated the tutelary role and centralist controls that Madrid had held for decades under Franco. Furthermore, in Valencia, the creation of a regional administration to operate between Madrid and the municipality seemed somehow unnecessary and contradictory. Indeed, the *Comunidades Autónomas* had never existed in the institutional framework of Spain, with the exceptions of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia who had fought for their autonomy over centuries and whose institutional gains recognised in the *Estatutos de Autonomía* had been forfeited in 1939 with the onset of the Civil War and the dictatorship of Franco. For cities like Valencia, decentralisation was somewhat incomplete, as it did not confer political or economic autonomy to municipalities but rather to the new administrative structures at the regional level. This is not to say that important decisions are only made by the *Comunidades Autónomas*, but to recognise that the autonomy of Valencia is founded in a federal system with numerous contradictions and that the ability of its government to deal with a larger set of responsibilities and limited control over resources and to confront episodes of crisis also depends on intergovernmental relations.

While the first democratic government must be praised for its institutional ingenuity and ability to provide rapid and feasible solutions to multiple legislative, financial and urban issues in the midst of crisis and despite the challenges of transition, the attempts of successive administrations to settle unresolved regulatory issues and/or to consolidate local autonomy have been rather modest. By the early 1990s, Valencia had managed to overcome the difficulties of transition and widespread crisis, but the contradictory and overlapping competencies of local and regional administrations made decentralisation a complex process. Although the municipality gained an increasing number of competencies and functions over time, financial autonomy continued to be a serious

issue and the resources received from higher levels of government were largely insufficient.

Following the *Ley Reguladora de las Haciendas Locales* (1988) and the numerous legislative battles between municipal, regional and national governments concerning financial rights and attributions, it seems that local authorities could do little to improve the situation. As a result, new actors, new public-private relationships and new forms of dependency started to emerge in the institutional landscape of Valencia. The absence of an autonomous and robust financial base has increasingly left the local government at the mercy of private capital – particularly of developers. For GIM, “It is like the story of David and Goliath, in which David is the municipality and Goliath the developers”. This is indeed a difficult situation, because the municipality can hardly tell developers that their applications for large-scale projects cannot be granted when it actually needs the resources that they are ready to pay for. Therefore, in GIM’s view, the fundamental problem is that the municipality is not autonomous, but rather *heteronomous* and significantly dependent on the power of economic actors as well as the institutional agility of local politicians to work with their counterparts across higher levels of government. Unsurprisingly, the consequences of this kind of relationship have been unfavourable and relatively unpredictable in the long term. For instance, while a number of private development projects since the mid 1990s caused visibly undesirable effects in the natural environment and urban landscape of Valencia, their aggregate effect in the local property market seemed to contribute to the growth and subsequent explosion of a bubble in the late 2000s. Furthermore, according to GID, the boundaries between public and private interests have increasingly become as blurred as they were before transition, or even more complex, as local political leaders and officials have become so close to powerful economic actors that they even play tennis together.

Furthermore, the enforcement of transparency and accountability has been relatively modest if not absent in Valencia and thus decentralisation has also been tainted by corruption. For BOI this is a common feature of weak bureaucracies, in which the absence of effective audit mechanisms combined with relatively low salaries and/or investment in the professional development of officials increase the susceptibility of public actors to external economic temptations. However, for SEP, corruption in Valencia is also the (in)direct result of an excessively rigid municipal structure that has

failed to incorporate monetary rewards and other forms of incentives into the local institutional environment. For him, beyond improved audit and salaries, both bureaucratic flexibility and a wider structure of incentives are essential to foster administrative efficiency, to enhance motivation, to reward meritocracy and crucially to deter corruption. However, after decades of decentralisation, these two areas have never become a municipal priority and the local institutional environment continues to be known by quite the opposite features. According to POC,

“it is difficult to operate a municipality that is so rigid, that obstructs the possibility to reconfigure the functions and/or responsibilities of internal departments according to emerging challenges and demands, and that cannot reward its best professionals for performing better than the average. In the early days of democracy, public sector jobs were sought after because they were seen as relatively unconditional lifelong contracts once entry was secured. Thus, we considered the possibility to reform the contractual terms of public employment very seriously and to introduce mechanisms that allowed flexibility and efficiency. The trade unions, however, wanted to secure jobs forever”.

It is precisely in such environment of post-democratic transition and still unfolding decentralisation, characterised by uneven public-private relations, blurred administrative practices and a municipal structure that is inflexible and therefore a source of institutional problems rather than solutions, that successive political leaders and officials have continued to perform their multiple duties until the present times. Following the victory of the *Partido Popular* in the 1991 elections, for example, urban policies and strategies gained an important position in the local government agenda. The conservatives, similarly to the socialists in the 1980s, actively intervened in the municipal structure to create an alternative institutional platform to deal with urban matters. This time, however, the main focus was longterm strategic ambitions rather than basic infrastructure and services. The conception of *Pro-Valencia* (1993), the *Asociación Valencia 2015* (1998), the *Centro de Estrategias y Desarrollo* (2004) and the InnDEA (2012) are all examples of successive institutional manoeuvres of the conservative government to outsource municipal functions concerning the formulation and coordination of citywide urban strategies (see Chapter 8 for details and earlier

sections for specific discussions). Indeed, the necessity, ingenuity and achievements of such local strategising entities outside the municipality (yet closely monitored by leaders such as Rita Barbera) have been largely criticised and questioned by the local political opposition for over two decades. For GIM, the multiple initiatives launched by the municipality to deal with city strategies and allegedly overcome internal bureaucratic and technical deficits since the creation of *Pro-Valencia* in 1993 have only served as a big smokescreen to hide the interests of local elites.

“I do not believe these organisations have had any significant impact on the course of local economic or urban life. They have neither helped to strengthen the economic position of Valencia in the metropolitan area nor provided alternative infrastructure visions beyond the large-scale iconic projects that have shaped Valencia. They produced a bunch of documents without any guidance for implementation. The data from the surveys and interviews carried out between 1993 and 1995 across multiple sectors, for instance, did not contribute to any operational programme. I attended some of the debates in which a particular idea was discussed and after some exchanges people left with no concrete decisions. It was all a joke” (*ibid*).

Unsurprisingly, the content and direction of the urban policy agendas articulated by the numerous offices created by the municipality since the early 1990s had become increasingly controversial by the 2000s. Their organisational and strategic interventions had not only supported the political and economic interests of local elites, but had also entailed an unprecedented expenditure of public resources and level of indebtedness (see section 8.4). Ironically, the municipality of Valencia seems to have wasted some of the opportunities opened up by decentralisation, as many of the urban policy initiatives and projects developed locally and which were meant to contribute to the wider strategic vision of the city were tainted by the repeated interference of Rita Barbera and the adverse influence of powerful local economic actors (as noted in Chapter 6). According to FLA, Valencia has indeed confronted multiple episodes of economic difficulty since transition and experienced greater financial pressure due to decentralisation – whereby more responsibilities have not involved more resources. These might partly explain why municipal leaders and the local bureaucracy have become increasingly susceptible to powerful economic elites and have favoured

superfluous and costly urban strategies, justifying high indebtedness, over the last two decades. Nevertheless, as FLA emphasises, although Valencia clearly does not have the financial autonomy of cities in Catalonia or the Basque Country, the shortage of public resources can not fully explain the poor institutional development, the bureaucratic complacency and/or the controversial urban agendas observed in the city. While decentralisation has supported democratisation in many cases (in Valencia and in Spain more generally), it is evident that its journey through Valencia has seen the emergence of new institutional challenges too. In fact, it seems as if a combination of democratic freedom and local autonomy have made the municipality increasingly prone and/or vulnerable to episodes of crisis.

After three decades of democracy and decentralisation, the onset of the 2008 crisis has put under significant pressure hundreds of municipalities across Spain (and Europe!) for almost a decade. In Valencia, it has gradually exposed the costs of unfavourable institutional features that have consolidated since the 1990s. Therefore, the municipality has not only had to confront the challenges posed by the crisis, but also address a number of internal issues that have made the consequences of the crisis more complex and difficult to deal with at the local level. Ironically, and perhaps inadvertently, the municipality of Valencia seems to have used the opportunities opened up by democratisation and decentralisation to favour a mixture of public-private relationships, internal administrative practices and urban policy agendas that have made it more vulnerable to crisis rather than to constitute a robust institutional base able to resist economic and political adversities. This is not to say that Valencia could have avoided the crisis outright, but perhaps it would have been able to confront it differently and/or more assertively had it not had to waste time and resources dealing with its own institutional dilemmas.

Indeed, the 2008 crisis unleashed and exacerbated a number of issues across the social, economic, political and institutional domains of Valencia, which have continuously challenged the ingenuity of local leaders and officials to provide immediate solutions and to articulate alternative visions for the future over the past few years. However, this has been difficult for a municipality that has not dealt competently with a number of longstanding and unresolved issues concerning its own autonomy and has continued to depend on the decisions of regional and national governments, on the subsidies of the

European Union since 1986 and, crucially, on the possibilities and hindrances of the very decentralised structures and dynamics it created and nurtured since the 1990s. Paradoxically, the institutional relationships, practices and policy approaches that shaped the municipal environment of Valencia for nearly two decades before 2008, have proved neither flexible enough to adapt to the new circumstances nor suitable to deal with emerging challenges. Even after almost a decade of crisis, it seems that the municipality has found it difficult to disengage completely from earlier institutional dynamics characterised by blurred public-private relationships and even corruption (despite having adverse wider implications). Similarly, it has not proven possible to move beyond the old institutional framework despite important transformations across municipal structures since 2008 – particularly in areas dealing with strategic policy matters. While this might be a deliberate attempt by Rita Barbera and the *Partido Popular* to maintain the *status quo* after several successive terms in office, it might also be a sign of the limited choices available to municipal leaders and officials to drive local institutions in a more transparent and accountable direction.

Furthermore, it is unclear whether municipal priorities and efforts should continue to concentrate on the longterm consequences of the 2008 crisis or rather on the strengthening of its own structures and the rectification of unfavourable dynamics that have made the institution less resilient to episodes of crisis. In terms of finances, for example, the 2008 crisis has not only exposed the fragility of the financial structure of the municipality but the continuity and widespread nature of adverse practices such as corruption. Therefore, in Valencia, the crisis in municipal institutions is no longer an issue of incomplete local autonomy, insufficient transfers from regional or national governments, or local inability to secure European funds, but of dishonest and fraudulent practices amongst local political and economic elites. While the municipality alone could hardly do anything to change the former, it could certainly intervene to discourage and end the latter. For FLA, “it is essential to restructure local finances and to restore trust in the public sector in order to be able to articulate genuine, feasible and sustainable responses to the crisis”. If nothing is done to confront corruption within the local institutional environment, he says, every municipal attempt to deal with the current financial challenges would be in vain and the outcomes only temporary.

Corruption in Valencia has been connected to the formulation of urban strategies that

have not only favoured large-scale projects and costly mega-events, but also public-private interests. While the financial constraints of the municipality might have indeed created the conditions for corruption, SEP believes that so has the policymaking environment in which urban interventions and strategies have been formulated over the last two decades. For him, urban policy agendas have been strongly influenced by a local economic elite dominated by the interests of developers, by political leaders that found such pervasive policy approach convenient for financial and electoral reasons, and by a complacent bureaucracy that failed to defend wider social interests (but whose attitude and actions, on the other hand, helped to secure additional funds). Unfortunately, says SEP, Valencia has become a symbol of corruption since the onset of the 2008 crisis and the number of cases unveiled since then has been scandalous. They involve spectacular architectural projects such as the *Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias* designed by Santiago Calatrava, events such as the Americas Cup and the Valencia Summit (by the Instituto Noos), and dozens of contractual agreements for the provision of services such as rubbish collection (by EMARSA).

Evidently, corruption can have far-reaching and unpredictable consequences across diverse policy areas and economic sectors that, despite their possible implication in earlier crises, might still have the potential to contribute to the articulation of new institutional responses to ongoing challenges. Thus, it constitutes a serious threat for both the municipality itself and the prospective solutions that might emerge from it. In the case of Valencia, processes of democratisation and decentralisation seem to have contributed to the consolidation of new local institutional spaces that have served as a fertile ground for the proliferation of corruption. The creation of new organisational structures outside the municipality to deal with strategic planning matters, supposedly more timely and efficiently than the usual departments, also facilitated the consolidation of blurred public-private relationships during the early-mid 2000s; from which scandals around issues of bribery, embezzlement, tax evasion and even money laundering have emerged over the last years. The *Gürtel* case, for example, has unveiled a number of illicit activities that involve the funding of political parties and the awarding of contracts by the local and regional governments to construction companies and several agencies responsible for infrastructure, transport and tourism in an obscure manner, all of which were carried out for over a decade (El Diario 2015b; El Pais 2017). At the same time, corruption linked to mega-projects and mega-events appears to some to be one of the

main causes of the local distortions that triggered and exacerbated the experience of the 2008 crisis in Valencia. Therefore, the institutional responses aiming to deal with the financial reality of Valencia at present would not only have to mitigate and provide alternative solutions to wider issues inflicted by the crisis, but to confront and address issues within municipal structures and dynamics themselves.

Indeed, such endeavour once again requires the ingenuity and commitment of municipal leaders and officials to find feasible and sustainable ways to continue to perform their functions, but also their capacity and commitment to enforce transparency and accountability within the institution itself as well as to reconfigure their relationships with external economic actors. However, closer public-private relationships based on personal, professional, political, and/or strategic connections seem to have become a stronger obstacle over time. While in the 1980s three groups of local actors and their individual aims and interests were distinguishable between municipal leaders, private developers and neighbourhood associations, the differences between one another started to disappear in the 1990s (see sections 6.2-3 for details). For GID, the alignment between municipal and powerful economic actors has strengthened over the last two decades, while the bargaining power of social actors has virtually dissipated. After several terms of conservative governments at local and regional levels and a decade of construction boom since the mid/late 1990s, it is unsurprising that multiple overlapping networks between public and private actors had consolidated in Valencia well before the onset of the 2008 crisis. Although such relationships might not necessarily evoke suspicion or distrust, they have often been associated with issues of corruption, particularly in more recent years.

Lastly, after decades of decentralisation, political autonomy has been under threat since the onset of the 2008 crisis. As in the case of local finances, the political functions of Valencia have always been undermined by the very existence of the *Comunidad Valenciana* and the interference of regional officials to whom the Constitution of 1978 transferred a series of responsibilities previously held by Madrid. Meanwhile, the municipality has been left to navigate a complex and incomplete federal system in which it has managed to develop numerous programmes and functions over the years and despite contradictions in constitutional mandates. For POC, the journey of Valencia through federalism has been relatively successful over the last three decades, even

though there are pending legislative issues to be resolved. For him, after all, the local governments are the most democratic institutions that exist, which offer all citizens direct access to politicians, officials and formal institutional channels (at least theoretically). In the case of Spain, there are 8100 municipalities under the exact same legislation. Therefore, POC insists, they are the only institutions that are truly transversal and equal across the entire country.

Nevertheless, after five years of crisis, the approval of the *Ley de Racionalización y Sostenibilidad de la Administración Local* (LRSAL) in December 2013 has jeopardised the immediate and future prospects of a municipal institution that has striven to maintain its autonomy for three decades. For BOI, the law constitutes the latest attempt to gain control over local expenditure even though the budget for municipalities has been relatively small compared to that of the regional government throughout the democratic period. For him, it is a sheer attempt to recentralise the few competencies that some municipalities have developed and the many functions that have been delegated over the last decades with the excuse to optimise the use of resources. In reality, he argues, the LRSAL creates new loopholes between the national, regional, provincial and local administrations that are not only prone to corruption but also facilitate the transfer and/or sell-off of public services to private firms. Furthermore, the LRSAL has put under threat a number of social programmes that the municipality has adapted to the needs of local communities over time – which is a priceless achievement of decentralisation in itself. In Valencia, for example, these programmes involve care homes for disabled children and the elderly as well as centres for the attention of immigrants. While the Constitution of 1978 grants autonomy to regional and local governments to different extents, the LRSAL seems to aim at the formal reversal of the few but significant advances achieved by municipal authorities themselves over the last decades. However, in practice, intergovernmental relations and cross-scalar operations have always played an important role in the resolution of local affairs and beyond legislative dispositions and formal structures.

7.3.2 MAR DEL PLATA

At the time of transition, in 1983, Mar del Plata faced multiple serious difficulties not only due to the economic challenges unleashed by the debt crisis and the rapid decline

of industrial activities, but the political tensions and institutional complexities of democratisation. From an institutional perspective, the issues inherited by the first democratic administration and the actions required to confront them were somehow similar to those observed in Valencia. The newly elected leaders and aldermen, for instance, not only had to operate alongside constitutional mandates that contradicted the new democratic values and the limitations of a municipal administrative framework that did not adhere to the principles of federalism and/or local autonomy until 1994, but to deal with a number of urban issues without appropriate financial structures in place nor sufficient resources available. Indeed, these institutional shortcomings limited the ability of the new local administration to deal with an increasingly fragmented city in which infrastructure deficits and service pressures had accumulated over time due to a combination of rapid demographic growth, the expansion of new settlements in peripheral areas, uneven public investment and the over-construction of high-rise buildings in central/coastal locations.

DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

In Mar del Plata, the democratic institutions inherited a city shaped by earlier construction booms fuelled by the investment incentives of the real estate market, the flexibility of extant planning legislation and the absence and delay of mechanisms to regulate these sectors, amounting to the infrastructure deficits and service pressures confronted by the administration throughout the 1980s. The *Ley de Propiedad Horizontal* (1948), for instance, had triggered an unprecedented and long term process of urban transformation that saw the demolition of hundreds of the iconic houses and chalets that characterised the urban landscape of the city and the over-construction of high-rise and density buildings along the most important avenues and adjacent streets of the city. According to AOZ, the demand for residential property and the acceleration of construction activities were triggered by two important factors in the years of Peronism, particularly between the late 1940s and early 1950s. Firstly, the rise of mass tourism as a result of trade union achievements and new contractual legislation that stipulated paid holidays for all and, secondly, the introduction of several favourable credit schemes through which people (mainly from Buenos Aires) were encouraged to buy second homes and were given two or three decades to repay their mortgages.

Nevertheless, in order to gain a nuanced understanding of the political dimension of the situation at the time of transition, it is important to look beyond the immediate challenges faced by municipal authorities in 1983 and to consider the wider institutional context, the socioeconomic conditions and the political ideologies that characterised the preceding decades. In this respect, it is fundamental to consider the implications of a longstanding socialist tradition in local politics, which started in the 1920s with Teodoro Bronzini, Rufino Inda and Juan Fava as mayors of the *Partido Socialista* and managed to survive the *Década Infame* (as the 1930s came to be known) despite a *coup d'état* against president Hipólito Yrigoyen and a widespread electoral fraud across provinces and municipalities. The socialists regained force in the 1940s, at the time of Perón's administration. They maintained a continuous presence in the *Honorable Consejo Deliberante* and therefore were able to challenge the corporatist regime at the local level. In fact, Bronzini was the only legislator to represent the socialists in Buenos Aires and the entire country between 1948-1951.

As PER points out, Mar del Plata was indeed one of the few “enclaves” of the socialist party in Argentina before transition and there is no doubt that their social approach had influenced the rationale behind urban policies for decades. At the local level, he says, socialist governments went beyond the Peronist slogans of provincial and national leaders as well as the use of the city as a show window to promote mass tourism. They not only invested in basic infrastructure, sewerage, street lighting and pavement, but also in the construction of squares, public spaces and libraries that improved the living conditions of dozens of communities. Throughout the 1950s and 1970s, Mar del Plata became a centre of mass tourism in which the construction, fishing and textile industries also flourished and the socialists worked incessantly to mitigate the consequences of such a rapid urban expansion. The decline of such a socialist tradition started in 1976 when a series of leaders of the *Partido Socialista* were appointed by the military junta to work alongside the authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, the efforts of earlier socialist leaders to foster a democratic society based on participation and socioeconomic progress did not disappear completely and the core principles of such a longstanding political tradition left an imprint in local institutions even after democratic transition. Although socialist efforts were not sufficient or consistent enough to counterbalance the consequences of rapid urban growth, and the construction boom observed in the third quarter of the 20th century, they are in sharp contrast with the total disinvestment and

urban neglect observed in Valencia for decades before transition.

According to RAF, though Argentina had undergone intermittent periods of democracy and military regimes between 1930-1983, the socialist tradition had remained largely untouched

“the socialists had dominated local politics before the military dictatorships, during the various authoritarian administrations (which discredited their image to some extent) and even in democracy. Prior to transition, for instance, we had mayors with a strong social commitment such as Jorge Raul Lombardo, who advocated for a model of urban development that not only provided for basic infrastructure and services, but also public facilities and introduced a new system of municipal schools unique around the country in the early 1960s” (*ibid*).

Indeed, these local developments were not isolated from the industrialisation and welfare models that characterised the wider social, economic and political environment of Argentina through the mid-twentieth century. For PAZ, Argentina was the only Latin American country to boast an integrated society with a very high level of literacy and full employment conditions by the early 1970s. In contrast to other cities, successive socialist administrations in Mar del Plata had adhered to the principles of the welfare state model for decades before transition and to the conviction that the municipalities were responsible for the articulation and implementation of urban policy agendas that replicated such principles locally and guaranteed equal access to infrastructure, services and facilities (PER; see also Ferreyra 2013 for a study of the social democratic values and progressive ideas that guided local government actions in the 1950s-1960s). It is important to account for the implications of these wider historical processes and local developments at the time of transition, not only because they help us to understand some of the logics behind earlier urban interventions and/or the features of the institutional environment in which they were produced, but because they shaped the socioeconomic and political context inherited by the first democratic government as well as a kind of “socialist” approach to deal with urban matters.

Unlike the case of Valencia, where after four decades of uninterrupted military rule the municipality was virtually bankrupt and extant institutional structures and procedures

insufficient to confront the severity of the urban crisis, the experience of Mar del Plata shows us that the longstanding socialist tradition in local politics and the prevailing conviction that planning tools could be used to improve urban life contributed to the articulation of a number of interventions that had aimed to halt/reverse some of the consequences of earlier waves of rapid urban growth and to regulate new developments despite continuous political struggles and instability. While it remains unclear whether there was a sustained logic behind the approach and interventions of the mayors commissioned by the military juntas to deal with urban issues, KIC and RAF believe that, by the time of transition, earlier efforts had amounted to an implicit “sense” of local planning even though some initiatives had not delivered what they promised and others had been disrupted by recurring political crises. This is neither to deny that there were serious administrative difficulties nor that extant urban legislation might have been somewhat anachronistic by the time of transition, but to highlight that both the institutional circumstances and the severity of the urban challenges faced by the new democratic leaders were different to those observed in Valencia – where no visible institutional efforts to deal with urban issues were made during the forty-year dictatorship of Franco.

Although the municipality of Mar del Plata had to face a number of urban issues and the challenges of a highly and increasingly fragmented city at the time of transition, it inherited an urban policy framework that was not completely unsuited to dealing with the situation. The four decades that preceded transition were certainly filled with political instability and military interventions which, together with the gradual decline of the industrial and welfare state model, were somewhat reflected in the inconsistent and uneven public investment pattern of earlier governments. However, in terms of urban planning and regulation, municipal interventions show us that there were repeated attempts to mitigate the consequences of rapid urban growth as well as to improve the living conditions of communities across ever expanding peripheral settlements. In fact, some of these earlier plans and regulations became the basis of democratic interventions after 1983 and have continued to influence urban policy decisions up to present.

As DIM notes, for example, the *Plan Regulador* (1958) that set the parameters and guidelines to regulate the construction of new developments not only arrived late, when the *Ley de Propiedad Horizontal* was well underway, but only lasted for a few years

when the military coup disrupted its actions in 1966. Indeed, the plan had important urban policy implications for Mar del Plata because it did not only aim to halt and/or reverse over-construction activities but to improve the standards of urban life, particularly in terms of infrastructure and services, throughout the city. At the time, says DIM, urbanists were convinced that advanced societies were in a constant process of economic progress and modernisation and that cities needed to provide the conditions for such process to happen. In Mar del Plata, he argues, the conception and aims of the *Plan Regulador* were inspired by the principles of the welfare system as well as wider public policies that characterised the period of industrialisation in Argentina, and the political belief that the state should intervene directly in urban matters in order to secure/foster social inclusion and more equal opportunities. Nevertheless, the ambitions of the plan ended with the coup of 1966, after which construction activities continued to be accelerated and uncontrolled. In fact, the construction sector experienced another explosion in the 1970s when several thousands of square metres were built simultaneously and residential space multiplied. According to OSC, “there were enough new properties to accommodate two million people when our population was scarcely two hundred thousand”. Ironically, he says, apartments in new high-rise developments were bought as investments rather than homes, which means that the issue of affordable and adequate housing also intensified in this period.

As a result, and in an effort to mitigate the consequences of over-construction and high density in central areas and to deal with the underserved and precarious living conditions of peripheral areas, the Province of Buenos Aires approved the *Ley 8912* in 1977. According to the new legislation, the municipalities of cities like Mar del Plata were required to adhere to and enforce new parameters for the construction of high-rise buildings and to produce and implement a regulatory framework that ensured the provision of basic services in areas zoned for new urban development (Medina 2014). Although the *Ley 8912* was a product of the military dictatorship, says DIM, it had a progressive and social approach and a strong theoretical and technical base supported by prominent architects and planners of the time. According to RAF, the new law also included important urban aspects and planning prescriptions that not only helped to contain some of the excesses observed at the time (at least temporarily), such as the designation of more land for urban use and real estate speculation, but provided the basis in which the *Código de Ordenamiento Territorial* (1979) that continues to regulate

local planning at present was formulated.

Institutionally, the *Plan Regulator* and the *Ley 8912* set important precedents in local planning and urban regulation and continued to be important references even after transition in 1983. This was partly due to the fact that they had been formulated as responses to a variety of urban issues that had emerged and intensified over the decades, and which continued to be a challenge in the 1980s (as noted in section 5.4.1, in relation to the increasingly fragmented nature of the city). Nevertheless, it was also a reflection of the powerful rationale behind the social approach of earlier municipal administrations to deal with urban matters. After transition, says DIM, the urbanist culture of Mar del Plata experienced a phase of inertia in favour of traditional ways of planning and some of the principles of the *Plan Regulator* and, more explicitly, the *Ley 8912*. Furthermore, and according to KIC, the professional and administrative efforts of earlier socialist governments to improve urban legislation and living conditions across the city had become part of a collective memory that survived the worst episodes of authoritarianism and continued throughout the 1980s. Politically, therefore, new democratic leaders not only had to confront a number of institutional contradictions that limited their local autonomy and their ability to access financial resources, but the challenge to maintain an approach to planning inspired in the industrial and welfare models of earlier periods in an economic context dominated by the debt crisis and an uncertain economic outlook. Neither the enthusiasm nor optimism of democratic transition helped the newly elected government to confront the consequences of wider transformations whereby Argentina underwent a painful process of de-industrialisation and economic restructuring that, according to DIM, accelerated the decline of the planning model and the welfare approach advocated by the socialists. For him,

“the socioeconomic and political transformations observed in Argentina in the 1980s made it impossible to maintain the social equality and the welfare state that had characterised urban life in previous decades, where workers from rural areas who migrated to larger cities could find a decent job and had free access to healthcare and education for their children. While the socialist principles of the *Plan Regulator* continued to be important references for the new democratic leaders, it was simply impossible to materialise them” (*ibid*).

As a result of the decline of the industrial and welfare state models, and the successive weakening of the socialist approach to planning interventions, urban expansion issues continued to outpace the efforts of democratic municipal leaders throughout the 1980s. Furthermore, as DIM notes, there were no concerted efforts to debate and formulate an alternative urban plan or to make a substantial revision and/or amendment to the inherited urban regulatory framework for almost two decades. In fact, the *Código de Ordenamiento Territorial* (1979) drawn on the *Ley 8912* has been only amended by municipal decrees on an *ad hoc* basis over the past three decades, either to grant exceptions or to impose new restrictions to developers and construction firms (RAF). Meanwhile, it was not until the formulation of the *Plan Estratégico de Mar del Plata* in 2004 that the planning gap left since the disruption of the *Plan Regulador* in 1966 was closed. For Cignoli *et al* (1997) and Medina (2012), conceptually, the relatively moderated actions of the municipality to deal with urban planning and legislation matters throughout the 1980s can be interpreted as a consequence of the institutional uncertainty posed by the decline of Fordism and a shift toward globalisation, which required the implementation of an entire new model of economic, social and urban policies. This is not to say that urban matters became less important following transition, but that the efforts of municipal leaders were somewhat modest due to the impossibility to maintain the earlier socialist approach to planning in the critical economic circumstances of the time.

Unsurprisingly, the introduction of structural adjustment measures at the national level by president Menem since 1989 exacerbated the infrastructure and service deficits of cities like Mar del Plata and put under threat earlier efforts to foster social equality such as the municipal school system. By the early 1990s, the post-transition inertia in favour of traditional planning observed by DIM and the socialist rationale that influenced earlier interventions noted by KIC had become somewhat distant memories in the local institutional environment. In their place, other “logics” started to shape urban policy decisions and interventions with unpredictable consequences. According to KIC, political ambition and electoral opportunism, for instance, can help to explain the rationale behind certain urban interventions observed in Mar del Plata over the last three decades. For him, since 1983, local political leaders have increasingly appealed to voters with the promise of a number of infrastructure and service projects which do not necessarily respond to a wider urban agenda but rather to their own political

manoeuvres and power ambitions. The outcomes of such a politicised approach to dealing with urban matters have been mixed. While initiatives such as the housing programme of the *Barrio Centenario* have ended in large-scale urban planning disasters (and virtually impossible to reverse), others have worked out relatively well – particularly along the coastline (GIC and PER).

Unfortunately, as GOB points out, excessive politics combined with the absence of stricter urban regulation and a longterm planning vision have facilitated the development of a number of isolated and unconnected projects since transition, which have not only been unevenly distributed across the city but often left incomplete after a change of administration. Nevertheless, and although it is clear that urban initiatives based upon the electoral tactics and promises of politicians have not always delivered, it is undeniable that the most important urban interventions observed in Mar del Plata in the past three decades have been the product of the combined effort of local, provincial and national political leaders (see Chapter 8). For JAM, it is true that the municipality could have done much more in terms of urban planning since 1983, but he notes that “it must be recognised that Mar del Plata is not the most disorderly city in Argentina”. The *Código de Ordenamiento Territorial*, he says, might certainly need to be revised and updated but it has been without doubt the most important urban regulation document since transition; providing important planning controls for urban development, restricting over-construction and land speculation, and ensuring that public and private interventions meet basic infrastructure and service requirements.

DECENTRALISATION

The elections of 1983 did not only put an end to one of the worst episodes of military dictatorship in Argentinean history, but also marked the return of democracy and provided the institutional as well as political conditions in which to resume debates around federalism and decentralisation at the local level. However, unlike the case of Valencia (and Spain more generally), neither the existence of national, regional and local administrative structures nor the complexities of intergovernmental relations were completely new in Mar del Plata or Argentina at the time of transition. This does not mean that there were not institutional challenges to be dealt with by the municipality in terms of political and economic autonomy. As LEM points out, the welfare model

consolidated over decades of industrialisation, and which somehow contributed to the development of a socialist approach to urban planning in cities like Mar del Plata, was heavily centralised. This meant that municipal finances had mostly depended on the resources transferred from *La Nación* (the national executive office) through the Provincia de Buenos Aires and, crucially, on the political agility of the *comisionados* appointed by the military juntas and/or elected mayors to negotiate with higher levels of government. Mario Russak, for instance, gained wide local respect and a good reputation as *comisionado* between 1978-81, particularly for his ability to deal with authoritarian leaders of the junta and to negotiate local budgets in favour of the municipality (RAF), which later helped him to be elected as democratic mayor between 1991-95. While this was an exceptional case given the fact that voters had generally punished anyone who had been involved with earlier authoritarian regimes (NEP), the democratic return of Russak also reflected the political culture of Mar del Plata where “the actions of earlier military governments did not necessarily make people shiver” and, on the contrary, his earlier efforts as *comisionado* were recognised and rewarded with reelection (RAF).

The early days of decentralisation were slow and difficult in Argentina. Financially, new municipal leaders not only had to deal with the decline of industrialisation, the welfare state model and the consequences of the debt crisis, but also with a series of institutional contradictions that limited their access to resources and thus hindered their ability to perform their functions. These issues have continued to undermine municipal efforts to gain greater economic autonomy even after decades of transition. The municipality of Mar del Plata relies on the revenue it raises from local taxes and contributions, but fundamentally on the transfers it receives through the *co-participación* system – whereby *La Nación* transfers resources to the *Provincia de Buenos Aires* and successively to the local governments. For LEM, this is a perverse system of revenue sharing, not only because it is founded in a number of indicators and formulas that are unable to account for the multiple and diverse needs of hundreds of municipalities across the country, but because the resources transferred are largely insufficient to run autonomous local administrations. In Mar del Plata, approximately 90-95% of the municipal budget is absorbed by fixed expenses, from which 80-85% is used to pay for the salaries of municipal staff and the difference to pay for municipal services such as waste collection, which only leaves 5-10% to cover for the costs of an

ever growing list of responsibilities and virtually nothing for investment in infrastructure and services (RAF). As NEP puts it, if significant functions were to be fully decentralised and all the administrative responsibilities devolved to the municipality, one would expect such a decision to be accompanied by an increase in the *co-participación* transfer of the province. However, he recalls, when the possibility of a local police force in Mar del Plata emerged, it became clear that the only way to finance it was through the introduction of a new local tax. The idea never actually prospered because even though people wanted to have more security, they were not ready to assume a new tax liability and the province was not ready to transfer more resources.

As a result of such financial limitations, even after the introduction of constitutional mandates that granted autonomy to provincial and local administrations in 1994, the municipality of Mar del Plata has become increasingly porous and susceptible to the influence of higher levels of government. After all, as NEP notes, the largest pool of public resources continues to be controlled by *La Nación* the only way to secure additional revenue for the municipal budget is through the political agreements that local leaders are able to negotiate with their provincial and national counterparts. Indeed, and given the shortcomings of the *co-participación* system, intergovernmental relations and the institutional agility of local leaders are essential in order to secure more local resources and to meet an ever growing number of functions and responsibilities. For mayors, this has often meant maintaining a state of political subjection vis-a-vis provincial governors and even representatives from the national executive in order to receive the necessary resources (*ibid*). The socio-political implications of such financial situation are also important because such dependency has somewhat limited the ability of municipal authorities to fulfil some of their functions and, ultimately, to meet the expectations of local citizens with regards to democracy and greater decentralisation.

From a political and legislative perspective, decentralisation has also been slow and incomplete in Mar del Plata. For KIC, the process has not only been undermined by the limited access that the local government has had to financial resources, but also by the inability of the municipal offices to meet the expectations of the local population in terms of administrative and technical capacities. For instance, says KIC, many social actors expect that the *Honorable Consejo Deliberante* (HCD) or the legislative arm of

the municipality deals with issues concerning labour rights and demands for basic infrastructure and services, but this is not actually the case. While the HCD have neither the legal remit nor the resources to deal with labour and/or urban demands, the situation is highly frustrating for both municipal officials for not being able to respond accordingly and social actors for being unable to find the support they need/expect from their local government.

Furthermore, some of the municipal offices that have been created to deal with urban planning and regulation matters since the 1990s seem to have responded to a partial process of de-concentration of functions rather than a complete decentralisation of powers. The *Delegaciones Municipales*, for instance, have neither the capacity to plan their own budgets nor to make independent decisions (NEP). Therefore, they can only provide administrative guidance rather than solutions and the *delegado* appointed by the mayor is only there as a representative of the executive office rather than a decision-maker. The institutional efforts of democratic leaders to advance the decentralisation project have been further undermined by the fact that Mar del Plata, particularly its coastline, is subject to overlapping jurisdictional boundaries in which the *Provincia de Buenos Aires* and *La Nación* continue to play important decision-making roles. As KIC notes, it is essential to account for the absurdity and the contradictions of the Argentinean federal system in order to understand the institutional and urban developments of cities like Mar del Plata in recent decades, which in theory (and constitutionally) should have sufficient political and economic autonomy to decide upon its own institutional and urban affairs.

From an urban policy perspective, the contradictions and complexities of the federal system in Argentina are best illustrated in a number of local attempts to create new mechanisms to gain greater control over financial resources, to incorporate new ideas into urban legislation and to establish specialised departments to deal with particular urban issues. In the case of Mar del Plata, some initiatives have been relatively successful despite their intergovernmental implications and others have failed due to the inability of the municipality to maintain them without the support of the *Provincia de Buenos Aires* or *La Nación*. According to KIC, for instance, the municipality became pioneering in the study and assessment of the environmental impact of large commercial developments and infrastructure projects in the 1990s, although it was

originally expected only to ground provincial legislation at the local level. For him, this was a very positive experience from an intergovernmental perspective, as the municipality not only managed to create an interdisciplinary team to deal with environmental urban issues but to work closely together with other government departments and jurisdictions in order to articulate new environmental standards and administrative procedures as well as to produce environmentally informed recommendations and decisions. In a similarly positive view, SEG believes that the establishment of the *Departamento de Movilidad Urbana* is another achievement of the municipality to exert its decentralised powers and to gain control upon transportations and mobility affairs in the city.

Nevertheless, other local institutional manoeuvres to gain greater autonomy over local finances and urban land matters, for example, have amounted to less positive experiences. As NEP recalls, a municipal decree that granted a greater level of discretionary powers to the mayors to manage the resources raised through local taxes and contributions ended up as a loop for embezzlement and corruption rather than a means to assert economic autonomy. Furthermore, the decree was not only blurred in terms of transparency and/or accountability but also in contradiction with provincial and national legislation concerning the appropriate use of public funds and criminal law (*ibid*). In terms of urban policy innovation, the attempts of the *Secretaría de Planeamiento Urbano* and the *Instituto de Desarrollo Urbano* to introduce a strategic mechanism whereby the municipality could purchase urban land in the 1990s did not end well either. RAF, who was himself an author and advocate of the local government initiative, remembers how the provincial government undermined the attempts of the municipality to gain greater control over urban land and how it all became a highly political game in which he was legally prosecuted for alleged corruption.

It is undeniable that the municipality of Mar del Plata has made continuous efforts to position itself in and navigate through the complex economic and political landscape of federalism over the last three decades. For KIC, the overall experience of democratisation and decentralisation has been positive despite a number of shortcomings, and the relationship between the state and society has certainly changed for the better. Indeed, local government offices are closer and more accessible than provincial authorities and/or national ministries based 500 kilometres away in the

capital city. As NEP points out, “the aldermen are generally available to listen to the needs of social and economic actors experiencing difficulties, and even though they might not be able to provide them with immediate or direct solutions, the municipality would normally support their cases and serve as intermediaries to deal with the relevant government bodies”.

Nevertheless, according to KIC and NEP, decentralisation has been particularly slow in cities within the *Provincia de Buenos Aires* due to a number of unresolved issues concerning provincial and municipal jurisdictional competencies and autonomy since the constitutional amendments of 1994. Moreover, the fact that municipalities have become the most visible door for citizens to voice their multiple discontents has not necessarily represented an advantage. In Mar del Plata, says KIC, where there is no real economic nor political autonomy, it is frustrating to have to deal with endless lists of problems and demands without being able to actually address them. While the provincial government has opened local branches where some administrative services can be accessed without having to travel to La Plata (the capital of the *Provincia de Buenos Aires*), these developments only reflect institutional gestures that have not helped municipalities to gain greater control over key local affairs.

After three decades of democracy and decentralisation, it is difficult to assess where exactly the most significant institutional challenges lie in the case of Mar del Plata (and where current priorities and future efforts should concentrate): whether in the way that municipal structures have been set up or in the way in which particular municipal dynamics have developed over the years. While it is evident that there are constitutional issues to be addressed in terms of local financial and political autonomy, and that the overlap of provincial and municipal competencies has hindered the ability of local leaders to fulfil their functions, it must be recognised that informal arrangements and tactics have contributed positively to the decentralisation experience. These have been particularly visible in times of crisis when the ingenuity and institutional agility of local leaders and officials have been put to work in order to provide immediate solutions to some of the emerging issues as well as to overcome more conventional administrative obstacles. The crisis of 2001, for instance, provided the socioeconomic, political and institutional conditions for the articulation of the first *Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata* (see section 5.2) and facilitated the renegotiation of public-private contracts that led to

the improvement of services such as transportation and waste collection. As NEP recalls, “It was the first time in 80 years that the negotiation of the contract for the provision of transport was debated publicly. We had had decades of a precarious and monopolistic service. The same happened with waste collection, the largest contract paid by the municipality, which had been in a state of emergency for over a decade at the time of the crisis”. Although the crisis had a catalysing effect in such processes, it would have been difficult to achieve the same outcomes without the agility of local leaders to build on their local public-private relationships as well as their intergovernmental connections. For NEP, “the municipality could simply not function without a certain level of informality within its walls, whether we are in the middle of a crisis or regularly [...] in fact, informal dynamics allow local authorities to overcome some of the obstacles posed by rigid and contradictory administrative procedures”.

Finally, this does not mean that institutional informality always amounts to positive outcomes nor that it provides a sustainable and longterm solution to the limitations of decentralisation in Mar del Plata. Indeed, the municipality also faces wider systemic challenges that cannot be addressed with the ingenuity and agility of political leaders alone. As KIC points out, “the local public apparatus is *fat* and inefficient and, even though there are many well qualified professionals and committed politicians, more concerted efforts are required in order to bring about the necessary administrative changes and to improve its overall performance”. Furthermore, from an urban policy and/or planning perspective, PER believes that it is essential to establish municipal structures and procedures that secure a minimum of continuity in terms of priorities and longterm ambitions and, crucially, that help to counterbalance the wide variety of approaches and tactics that different local leaders might resort to while in power. Meanwhile, and until core issues of local autonomy are addressed, it seems that the institutional agility of municipal leaders and officials will continue to play an important role in the daily governmental dynamics of Mar del Plata.

7.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the relationship between crises and local institutional transformations. It considered the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata following recent episodes of crisis, the political crises of transition in the 1980s and the multiple

challenges of decentralisation from the early days of democracy to present. The comparative approach adopted allows us to account for and expand our understanding of some of the “institutional” aspects of crises. That is to say, how political and economic crises are translated into local government structures and dynamics according to the interests and abilities of different actors to mobilise resources and induce change.

Drawing on the experience of Valencia, we learned how the 2008 crisis triggered multiple processes of organisational reconfiguration, the fusion of municipal departments, the emergence of new municipal offices to deal with the local strategic agenda and, indeed, the articulation of a new citywide vision. From the experience of Mar del Plata, we learned how the 2001 crisis produced an important change in the attitude of local political, economic and social actors, which not only helped to improve the communication with one another, but also to build consensus through the adoption of the first strategic planning initiative as well as to move forward with a common vision and agenda. The experience of both cities in the first decade of the millennium also taught us that crises open up new spaces for wider debate and participation as well as many opportunities for social mobilisation and engagement in formal policymaking processes. Although powerful economic actors might have had relative advantage to shape and benefit from changes in planning regulation, as in the case of Mar del Plata, and the community efforts of some neighbourhood associations in Valencia might have not had the early support of the municipality, there is no question that the crises of 2001 and 2008 created exceptional conditions for significant institutional change and for the emergence of initiatives that continued to improve the prospects for participation and engagement of wider social groups after the critical juncture had passed.

Furthermore, an institutionally embedded and historical approach allowed us to trace and examine the implications of political crises. In the 1980s, we saw both Spain and Argentina undergo a deep political and institutional transformation after decades of authoritarian military regimes in power. At the local level, the enthusiasm and institutional agility of the first democratic leaders were both vital to deal with economic pressures and legislative contradictions in a context of widespread instability and uncertainty. The optimism of municipal actors made possible the articulation and improvisation of financial and administrative responses to the transition crises and the implementation of different mechanisms to mitigate unfavourable municipal dynamics,

ranging from absenteeism to corruption.

Although the state of urban infrastructure, services and facilities inherited by the first democratic leaders was precarious in both cities (as a result of chronic public disinvestment, rapid demographic growth and construction booms), earlier municipal efforts and urban planning regulation revealed important differences. In Valencia, four decades of *Franquismo* had left the city with nothing but an obsolete planning framework that facilitated and encouraged low quality urban development across central and peripheral areas. In contrast, a longstanding socialist tradition in the politics of Mar del Plata (that had survived the military dictatorships between the 1960s and 1980s) had not only influenced the rationale behind urban policies since the mid-twentieth century, but had fostered investment in basic urban services throughout the city. Furthermore, extant planning regulation was not completely unsuited to deal with the urban challenges inherited at the time of transition and, unlike the case of Valencia, more efforts were made to mitigate issues of over-construction in central areas and address precarious living conditions in peripheral areas. However, such a planning regulatory framework and “socialist” approach to urban development were rooted in the industrialisation and welfare models of earlier decades which were already under significant pressure by the 1980s; they proved impossible for the new democratic institutions to maintain in a context dominated by economic and political uncertainty. Such differences help us to challenge too easy assumptions about differences in urban development processes across the North-South divide. These experiences also demonstrate how unresolved issues of different episodes of crisis accumulated over time and, subsequently, put local institutions in a relatively weak position to confront ongoing and future crises.

In terms of decentralisation, it is evident that greater economic and political autonomy has enabled the municipalities of both cities to decide upon important institutional and urban policy matters and to shape their own development path over the last three decades. In Valencia, decentralisation has enabled local authorities to establish specialised departments to deal with urban strategic agendas. Following the first victory of Rita Barberá, the creation of *Pro-Valencia* (1993), the *Asociación Valencia 2015* (1998), the *Centro de Estrategias y Desarrollo* (2004) and the InnDEA (2012) all evidence successive institutional manoeuvres of the government to outsource municipal

functions concerning the formulation and coordination of ambitious urban strategies. However, greater local autonomy has also contributed to new institutional problems, particularly corruption. This involves dishonest and fraudulent practices amongst political and economic elites, which have made the local administration more vulnerable to crises and made the consolidation of a robust local institution difficult. Unfortunately, municipal authorities have been slow at implementing strict mechanisms to enforce transparency as well as accountability.

In Mar del Plata, decentralisation has been overall slow as a result of constitutional and jurisdictional contradictions that have undermined financial autonomy at the local level. Although limited control over local finances has somewhat compromised the ability of municipal officials and politicians to fulfil some of their functions and to meet the expectations of citizens with regards to democracy, the experience of decentralisation seems to have been overall positive. The municipality has not only gained more control over decisions concerning the institutional development and urban future of the city over the last three decades, but it has become the closest and most accessible door to democratic institutions for the inhabitants of Mar del Plata, particularly if compared with regional and national authorities based in La Plata and Buenos Aires. Indeed, this has helped to improve the relationship between state institutions and society at the local level, despite ongoing administrative challenges and shortcomings. After all, and from a long term perspective, we must remember that decentralisation in Argentina is a relatively recent and ongoing process in which many socioeconomic actors that had been ignored, neglected and even punished by a series of military regimes only a few decades ago now participate and engage freely in local institutional debates and urban policy affairs.

While decentralisation has been relatively slow to implement and remains somehow incomplete due to a number of constitutional contradictions and jurisdictional conflicts yet to be resolved in both Valencia and Mar del Plata, the experience of both cities demonstrates that institutional agility and cross-scalar relations have been essential for sustaining municipal operations. Certainly, inter-governmental tactics and informal arrangements have been key to overcome both limited financial autonomy and the additional pressures unleashed in time of crisis. The municipality of Valencia is not autonomous, but rather *heteronomous* and dependent on local economic actors, regional

and national governments as well as subsidies of the European Union. In Mar del Plata, the municipality could not function without nurturing public-private relations and/or provincial and national political networks through informal arrangements. Given the relatively recent experience of federalism in Spain and Argentina, the transformations and complexities that democratisation and decentralisation have brought about, and the multiple episodes of crisis seen since the 1980s, the consideration of intergovernmental dynamics is essential to better understand local institutional and urban policy developments as well as the ways in which regional, national and international actors might influence them. The next chapter draws on these insights, the various institutional changes enabled by crises, democracy and decentralisation since the 1980s, to examine the relationship between crises and urban policy outcomes.

CHAPTER 8: URBAN POLICIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

So far in this thesis I have established that crises unfold across cities in multiple different ways through time and space and their implications go far beyond the economic issues that have often shaped debates in urban studies – in relation to austerity or neoliberalism, for example. Indeed, crises have multiple dimensions and are characterised by different social and political conditions and historical processes that are specific to each city, region, and country. Furthermore, crises have the power to significantly change the local institutional environment in which urban policy responses are devised, formulated and implemented. In our two case studies, whether we consider more recent or distant crises, they have always challenged the position of municipal authorities and required the intervention and ingenuity of both public and private actors. Earlier chapters have dealt with these aspects and provided evidence from the rich experiences of the municipalities of Valencia and Mar del Plata since the 1980s.

This chapter now draws on these insights to examine the relationship between episodes of crisis and urban policy outcomes. It analyses a number of actual interventions and strategies articulated by the municipal governments in response to crises. It begins with the emergence and development of urban policy agendas that aimed to mitigate some of the issues inherited and/or exacerbated during the transition crises of the 1980s and navigates through a number of strategic responses introduced in Valencia and Mar del Plata over the last three decades. I will also consider how episodes of crisis and some of the multiple transformations experienced across local institutions as a result of crises shaped particular urban policy choices and decisions, and how some of these urban responses in turn become ambitious policy agendas that triggered and/or exacerbated episodes of urban crisis sometime after their implementation. Three broad periods of urban policymaking are devised and schematised in the urban policy evolution of the two cities since their transition to democracy to 2015, which will aid comparative reflection.

PLANNING PERIOD	OPPORTUNISTIC	STRATEGIC	POST-2008
VALENCIA	1979-1993	1993-2012	2012-2015
MAR DEL PLATA	1983-2001	2001-2013	2013-2015

Finally, I examine the urban consequences of crises from a longterm perspective. In contrast to the relatively direct and swift impact that crises are often assumed to have on the configuration of local institutions and the dynamics of municipal departments responsible for urban strategic and regulatory decisions, I argue that their consequences on the urban landscape of cities can hardly be reflected immediately. Instead, they only become visible after the critical juncture has passed and, crucially, after relevant municipal departments have assessed the situation and introduced the necessary measures. I discuss a number of changes in planning regulations implemented across the two cases in response to crisis and show how they, perhaps inadvertently, contributed to the emergence of more urban problems rather than solutions over the longterm. I suggest that the urban consequences of crises can have different time horizons and often appear to be *lagged* compared to the more immediate impact which crises can have on institutions. The conclusion draws together the comparative insights from the case studies concerning the urban policy consequences of crisis.

8.2 URBAN POLICY INTERVENTIONS AS OPPORTUNITIES IN THE MIDST OF TRANSITION CRISES

VALENCIA (1979-1993)	MAR DEL PLATA (1983-2001)
The DSU and GEUT in the 1980s	OSSE (1983) and Pan-american Games (1995)
<i>La Valencia de los 90: El Jardín de Turia</i>	<i>Plan de Obras Mar del Plata 2000</i>

Valencia and Mar del Plata both experienced widespread crisis at the time of democratic transition; there were indeed socioeconomic difficulties, but the crises were fundamentally political in origin. A number of constitutional and legislative contradictions concerning financial and/or political autonomy, for instance, limited the choices available to the new municipal authorities to fulfil their responsibilities and to finance necessary urban projects. However, in the case of Valencia, the crisis provided the conditions for a number of institutional and policy manoeuvres that allowed the newly elected government to act decisively to address pressing urban issues inherited

after decades of dictatorship. In the case of Mar del Plata, important improvements and innovations aimed at securing and sustaining the provision of basic infrastructure and services were able to be implemented despite the complex socioeconomic, political and institutional situation that followed transition (and the multiple monetary and fiscal reforms implemented well into the 1990s as a result of the debt crisis). Both administrations, then, made strong responses to this episode of political, institutional and economic crisis; both addressing fundamental issues of urban services and infrastructure. While Valencia pursued a number of parallel actions that radically shifted the focus of urban policy within a decade after transition, Mar del Plata initially focused on sustaining existing arrangements and later turned to a mixture of event-driven initiatives and other innovative mechanisms to secure sufficient resources to fulfil their urban responsibilities.

The urban policy agendas of this period were largely conditioned by the failure of earlier authoritarian regimes to provide basic infrastructure and services as well as greater social pressure after years of dictatorship. While the urban interventions and initiatives undertaken in each city are indeed different, they aimed to respond to or mitigate longstanding urban issues, to provide basic infrastructure and services, and to improve the quality of urban life, benefiting from the moment of rapid change and institutional disjuncture.

8.2.1 VALENCIA (1979-1993)

While it is evident that the municipality of Valencia experienced multiple socioeconomic, political and institutional challenges at the time of transition and through most of the 1980s (see section 7.3), this period was also characterised by a number of urban policy actions and interventions that sought to improve the quality of life across communities, to mitigate longstanding urban issues and to articulate ideas that could serve as foundation for future urban agendas and/or strategies. It was a period in which social and urban needs moved to the top of the local government agenda, breaking with decades of neglect by the military regime. For QUI and FIG, the 1980s was certainly a decade of economic uncertainty and political tension, but also a period of strong democratic will and optimism in which new local leaders made every effort to obtain the necessary resources to invest not only in basic infrastructure and services but

also health, social programmes, and urban facilities and equipments. It was also a period of intergovernmental alignment, in which local, regional and national leaders belonged to the same political party (the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* – PSOE) and the allocation and transfer of resources to the municipality was somehow easier than it would have been otherwise (FLA).

The creation and successive actions of the *Dirección de Servicios de Urbanismo* (DSU) illustrate one of the most important steps of the first democratic administration to respond to the critical state of urban infrastructure and services across the city. These actions materialised mainly through the *Programa de Urgencia de Actuación Municipal* (1979-1981) and the *Programa de Actuación Municipal* (1981-1983). Unlike state-led planning approaches that somehow favoured the rapid and disorderly urban growth observed throughout Valencia during the phase of industrialisation, the aim of the DSU and its programmes was to rescue the city from a state of decline and dereliction and to improve the quality of life of its inhabitants following years of disinvestment. Therefore, the urban interventions undertaken immediately after transition focused on the provision of infrastructure for potable water, sewers and water treatment, appropriate road networks, street lighting and signs, green public spaces, facilities for cultural and educational activities such as libraries, *ambulatorios* (community health centres) as well as basic services such as waste collection/management and public transportation. A detailed account of the formulation and execution of the programmes as well as a partial summary of their achievements across central and peripheral areas are well documented in a municipal publication under the title *Libro de la Ciudad 1979-1982* (Ayuntamiento de Valencia 1983).

These urban interventions reflected what some have called *urbanismo reparador* (RAJ; Blanco and Subirats 2012), which aimed to provide communities with the most basic infrastructure, services and facilities after decades of public disinvestment and accelerated growth. Although Valencia had become an important industrial city by the 1960s and therefore an attractive destination for migrant families from across the country, planning had never been a priority for the military regime and the city had grown disorderly and with severe urban deficits – particularly across peripheral areas. The housing programmes of the government, for instance, had rarely included roads, sidewalks, basic services or water infrastructure. The quality of the developments had

been very low too, with many sewers that would drain into agricultural land without adequate drainage or treatment systems (GIM and QUI).

In addition to the urban interventions executed through the DSU across central and peripheral areas with the aim of providing basic infrastructure and services, the first democratic leaders also created the *Gabinete de Estudios Urbanos y Territoriales* (GEUT) which main responsibility was to deal with a number of large-scale and complex urban planning issues. The interventions of the GEUT were important and strategic, as they not only sought to halt and/or reverse the negative effects of earlier planning initiatives but to articulate alternative solutions and new ideas that could inspire the future development of the city (*Libro de La Ciudad 1979-1982*, Ayuntamiento de Valencia 1983). For GIM, the actions of the GEUT were particularly crucial in three areas. Firstly, the reversal of the *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana* (1966). This was a plan which had been influenced by a mixture of events that unfolded between the 1950s and 1960s and which became somewhat at odds with the situation of the 1980s. Indeed, the plan had been conceived in a period of significant expansion during the dictatorship of Franco in which industrial cities like Valencia also experienced an unprecedented inflow of migrants and rapid urban growth. Unsurprisingly, the plan favoured large-scale projects, particularly housing, and was used as an instrument to increase the land available for urban development – i.e. the number of hectares susceptible for urban transformation. The GEUT not only had to come up with an alternative policy framework that could bring adverse planning regulation and low-quality projects still in progress to a halt, but with a new platform for the formulation of a plan that considered the priorities, needs and wider economic and political challenges of the 1980s.

The second endeavour of the GEUT involved the recovery and protection of the cultural heritage of the *Ciutat Vella* (city centre), which featured centuries-old monuments such as Roman, Islamic and Christian walls as well as architectural legacies from the 19th century *ensanches* (expansions) that were severely abandoned. At the time of transition, the *Ciutat Vella* had been subject to planning regulations that for decades had encouraged the opening of wider roads for increased ventilation and sanitation – but also the circulation of cars – while the housing stock had been continuously renovated and/or upgraded without restrictions. Indeed, this had catastrophic consequences for the

historical identity of the city centre. Therefore, a priority of the GEUT was to swiftly introduce a set of mandates that prohibited the construction of new projects and all regeneration works in central areas until new guidelines had been approved. Following the initiative of Italian cities to protect historic centres since the 1960s, the GEUT produced an exhaustive report that set the ground for the incorporation of thorough control mechanisms as well as new guidance into the planning regulatory framework, which not only guaranteed the protection of the *Ciutat Vella* but also the gradual transformation of a regeneration culture that had produced terrible consequences in the urban landscape of Valencia.

The third priority of the GEUT involved a series of efforts for the conception of the *Plan Especial del Viejo Cauce del Rio Turia* (1981). Following the redirection of the course of the river Turia two decades earlier (after a series of catastrophic floods of the city centre), Valencia had gained more than 15 hectares of public land distributed over a nine kilometres-long strip running through the city alongside *Ciutat Vella*. This land, however, had been the subject of controversial planning proposals that included transport infrastructure such as a metro system and the construction of a high-speed motorway – none of which had been actually executed at the time of transition but had undermined the prospects of a longstanding social demand to make the former riverbed green and accessible to everyone: “el llit del Turia es nostre I el volem verd” (or “the Turia is ours and we want it green”, in the *Valenciano* dialect). Therefore, the GEUT served as an institutional platform to confront the vested interests of economic elites and developers in favour of wider social demands as well as to set the technical foundations and broader objectives for the elaboration of a new plan for the Turia. The latter involved an important in-depth urban design analysis which advances were documented and consulted to the public between June and July 1982, with the presentation of the *Avance del Plan Especial de Reforma Interior* and the book *El Jardí del Turia*, in which design details and graphic models of the proposal of Ricardo Bofill were included (see Image 02).

While municipal offices such as the DSU and the GEUT were rather occupied dealing with urgent infrastructure and service demands and urban planning issues through the earlier days of democracy and up to the mid 1980s, their workload started to decrease toward the end of the 1980s when many of their initial goals had been met. At the time,

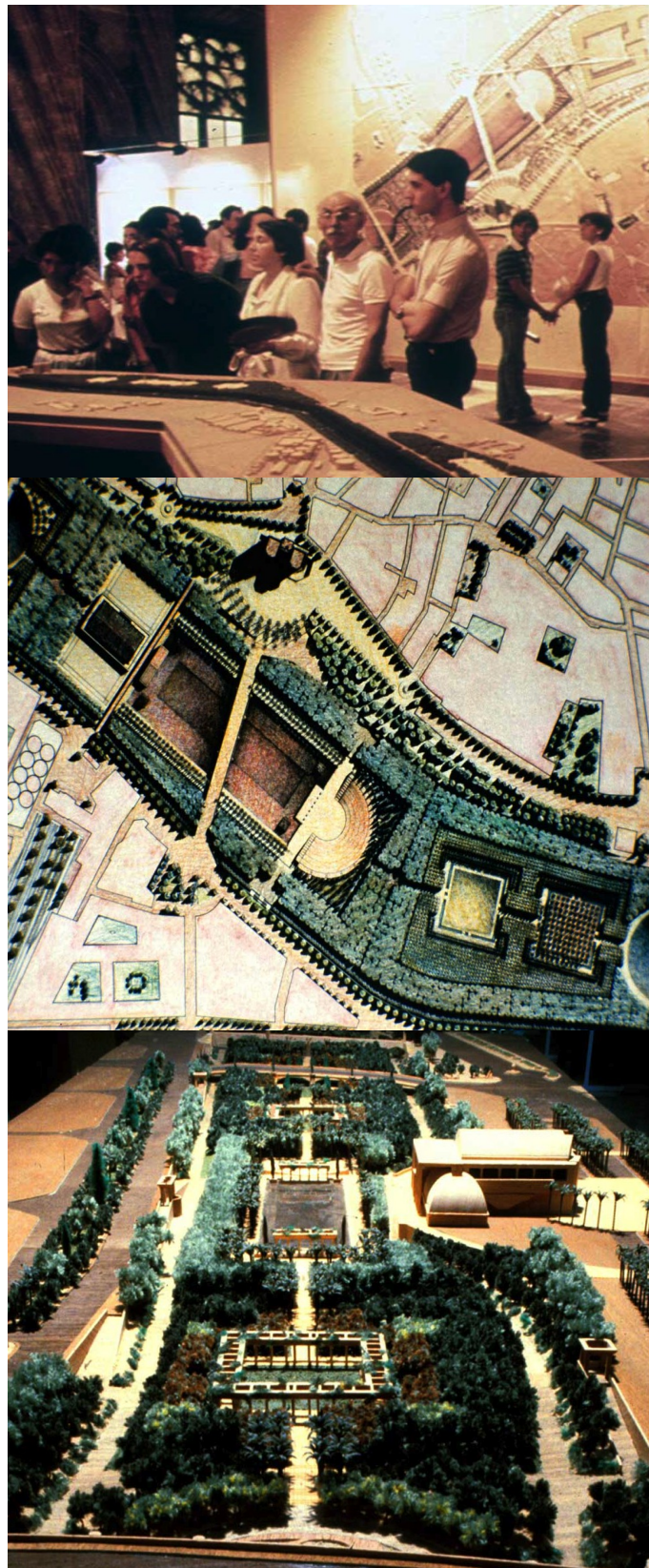


Image 02. Presentation of the *Avance del Plan Especial de Reforma Interior* and the book *El Jardí del Turia* (Photos by Taller de Arquitectura de Ricardo Bofill, June 1982)

the socialist government and the mayor Ricard Perez Casado personally, started to consider the need for a more comprehensive urban policy agenda. As RAJ points out, their aim had not been to improve basic infrastructure and/or services only, but to produce a more general plan through which specific urban projects and local economic ambitions could be strategically articulated and developed over the following years. The embryonic attempt of municipal leaders to create such a strategic vision for Valencia was mainly a local response to the accession of Spain into the European Community in 1986, to the challenges of competition that the membership entailed and to the opportunities opened up for socioeconomic progress.

The planning proposal and projects are best documented in a municipal publication with the title *La Valencia de los 90: una ciudad con futuro* (Ayuntamiento de Valencia 1987), which featured an assessment of the advantages that Valencia could draw on to position itself strategically, not only regionally and nationally but also in the Mediterranean and Europe, as well as a number of concrete interventions and projects that could help the city to become more modern and competitive. Although these early strategic aspirations have been often underplayed in the urban development history of Valencia, particularly in official publications of the municipality after the election of Rita Barbera in 1991, the consultants commissioned to formulate the first strategic plan for the city in 1993 recognised the technical value of these earlier municipal efforts as well as the usefulness of their proposals. As JEM recalls, “we did not need to look for new ideas, the city had enough material and there were enough proposals (unlike other cities that struggle on this). We followed *La Valencia de los 90*, in fact, as it was the result of a rigorous study that considered the city as a whole. It not only contained ideas and projects, but provided a citywide vision of how they were to be distributed across the territory in an orderly manner”. We will see later what galvanised this decisive shift to strategic planning.

8.2.2 MAR DEL PLATA (1983-2001)

The political tension of transition and the economic uncertainty of the debt crisis made the 1980s a particularly difficult decade for national, regional and local institutions in Argentina. In Mar del Plata, as we saw in Chapter 7, a number of constitutional and legislative contradictions undermined the political autonomy and financial capacity of

the newly elected leaders to respond to the local crisis. However, although a mixture of accumulated and emerging urban issues required the urgent attention of the municipal authorities, the state of basic infrastructure and services was not as precarious and the overall urban regulatory and planning framework was not as outdated and/or unfavourable as it was in Valencia at the time of transition. A longstanding socialist tradition in the local politics and the efforts of earlier administrations to mitigate the consequences of rapid and disorderly urban growth had made the magnitude of the urban challenges faced somewhat less severe (see section 7.3.2). In this context, and given the tension and uncertainty that characterised the municipal environment at the time of transition, the first democratic leaders sought to sustain and to build on existing arrangements to deal with urban affairs in the early days of democracy. According to Angel Roig, mayor of Mar del Plata between 1983-87 and 1987-91,

“after the first four years of a turbulent transition to democracy, we remained confident in the decisions made and the projects carried out. We saw the future with optimism and hoped to materialise more administrative transformations and ambitious plans over the years, despite the meagre budgets, the difficulties that repeatedly hampered our actions and a persistent crisis that hindered a faster local recovery and progress. We managed to complete a number of infrastructure and service projects over the past seven years, with the commitment of making Mar del Plata a prosperous, dynamic, cultured and healthy city, despite the serious situation that has taken place in the country”(MGP 1990).

The multiple urban interventions and achievements of the municipality through the 1980s are best recorded in the publication *Así Crecimos 1983-1990* (MGP 1990), in which a detailed account of hundreds of projects and initiatives carried out across different areas is provided. These were mostly articulated and implemented by existing municipal departments and offices, according to their expertise and responsibilities. The *Secretaria de Obras y Servicios* dealt with the provision of water systems (potable and pluvial networks as well as sewers) and electric infrastructure (street and traffic lights); the *Secretaria de Economía y Hacienda* was responsible for the implementation of more efficient tax collection and land registry systems and new mechanisms for the control of expenditure across municipal offices; the *Consejo Municipal de Planeamiento* and the

Departamento Ejecutivo were in charge of the new *Código de Ordenamiento Territorial* (COT), which established new regulation concerning land use and construction parameters; the *Secretaria de Gobierno* played an important role in the administrative reconfiguration of the municipality, in order to adapt to the principles of the new democratic and federal system and to create channels for wider participation. This involved the creation of new organisational structures such as the *Obras Sanitarias Mar del Plata Sociedad de Estado* (OSSE) and the COPAN 95 (see below). While some interventions involved the development of actual infrastructure and/or services, others involved the configuration of administrative structures and procedures and/or the amendment of urban policies and regulation. They were all carried out simultaneously throughout the 1980s and, unlike the case of Valencia, the creation of dedicated offices and/or programmes to formulate and implement the relevant projects and changes was not necessary – but rather new strategies for cooperation among existing municipal departments were important.

For RAF and DIM, the municipal responses to the crisis of the 1980s and the overall approach of the first democratic administration to deal with urban affairs were implicitly influenced by the wider welfare state model that had developed over decades of industrialisation in Argentina and, crucially, the socialist tradition of Mar del Plata (see section 7.3.2). The experience of the *Obras Sanitarias Mar del Plata Sociedad de Estado* (OSSE), for instance, is a reflection of a series of local efforts to retain the municipal control of the water company in the midst of the debt crisis and the wave of macroeconomic changes that favoured privatisation in the 1980s and which intensified in the 1990s under the government of Carlos Menem (see Nuñez 2012 for a detailed study of the multiple political agendas, social actions and institutional processes observed in the attempts of privatisation of the OSSE). While local water and sanitation services had been provided by the national and provincial administrations since the early twentieth century, a number of responsibilities in these areas had been assumed by the municipality following the creation of the IMCREVI in 1963 and the IMDUR in 1979 (*ibid*). In 1984, a year after transition, the new democratic administration sought to consolidate municipal control over water and sanitation with the creation of the OSSE, which was founded with 100% public capital and the *Honorable Concejo Deliberante* (HDC) as its only shareholder and representative of the local community. Given the political tension and economic uncertainty of the time, it was a bold intervention of the

municipal government to respond to the crisis and to avoid privatisation.

Although a series of macroeconomic measures introduced in the early 1990s might have helped to mitigate the consequences of the debt crisis to some extent and to regain control over key fiscal and monetary indicators such as inflation (see section 4.2.1), the crisis was far from over for municipal administrations. As Medina (2012) notes, the debt crisis and the economic reforms that followed put a definite end to the socioeconomic approach to urban development and the public policies that had characterised the welfare state period. This entailed the disregard and disappearance of some of the planning tools that had secured a more even distribution and equal access to infrastructure, services and facilities across the city through the preceding decades, such as the *Plan Regulador*, and which the first democratic leaders had tried to continue throughout the 1980s despite the crisis (see section 7.3.2). In this context, and given the pervasive and enduring consequences of the debt crisis, the municipality sought for alternatives not only to compensate for its financial limitations but to be able to respond to a number of accumulated and emerging urban issues. A combination of public-private investment schemes, flexible urban regulation, mega-events, innovative mechanisms for public consultation as well as the introduction of local taxes were all used by the municipality in the 1990s in response to the persistent urban crisis. While private capital was (and continues to be) an important component of the urban investments observed in Mar del Plata throughout the 1990s, it was limited to relatively small interventions and highly concentrated in areas of commercial value and/or along the coastline.

In terms of large-scale and citywide public investments, the PanAmerican Games celebrated in Mar del Plata in 1995 played a crucial role. It was not the first time that the city benefited from a mega-event, as its main stadium, sports infrastructure, road improvements and public spaces around the city were all legacies from the 1978 FIFA World Cup. The municipality had paved its way to becoming a host city since the late 1980s, recalls RAF who was himself involved in the preparation of the bid and co-represented Mar del Plata throughout the process. In August 1990, the municipality decreed the creation of the *Comité Organizador de los Juegos Panamericanos* (COPAN 95), which became the local administrative arm for the execution of the projects and the organisation responsible for the formulation, implementation, management and

supervision of the XII PanAmerican Games. It was an unprecedented opportunity for the city, emphasises RAF, “I was at the *Secretaria de Planeamiento* at the time and given the enormous amount of resources accompanying the event, we could afford to be ambitious. We were inspired by the approach adopted in Barcelona for the 1992 Olympic Games and travelled there even before the games started. We wanted to learn how to produce a similar transformation in our own city and hired Jordi Borjas (one of their consultants) to help us articulate a similar plan within our own possibilities”.

In addition to the infrastructure required for the actual games, the municipality delivered a number of urban infrastructure and service projects that involved the provision/improvement of sewers, road networks, street lighting and signs across the city as well as the airport extension. For AOZ and PER, the PanAmerican Games were one of the main drivers of public investment on infrastructure and services in Mar del Plata in the 1990s. This was also observed by Gennero and Ferraro (2002), in an assessment commissioned by the CEPAL. While the organisation of the games was tainted by a number of logistical shortcomings and corruption scandals (RAF), it is evident that they provided an opportunity for the municipality to navigate the difficult economic environment that followed the debt crisis and to respond to numerous urban needs in the midst of fiscal austerity. Furthermore, the resources that accompanied the event also served to develop infrastructure that would have been impossible to finance otherwise and which left Mar del Plata with a relatively advantageous position in relation to other cities in Argentina (PER). In a broader sense, the experience of the Pan-American Games also challenges the negative implications often associated with mega-events (see Alcala-Santaella *et al* 2012 and Sorribes 2012 for examples about Valencia) and evidences how municipal authorities might actually use them to confront episodes of crisis, to compensate for their ongoing financial limitations and/or to respond to urban infrastructure and service deficits.

After more than a decade of economic and political crisis, Argentina entered a period of relative recovery and stability in the mid-1990s (see Chudnovsky and Lopez 2007; Grugel and Riggirozzi 2007). Following the end of the PanAmerican Games and the ongoing transfer of responsibilities from the national to the municipal administration (as a result of macroeconomic reforms and the Constitution of 1994, which introduced greater levels of provincial and municipal autonomy), it was clear that the situation for

Mar del Plata was still difficult. In fact, the municipality did not have the financial capacity to assume the costs of a number of projects that had been part of the urban policy agenda since transition. These included mainly a series of water and road infrastructure projects that, due to a mixture of political controversies, social conflicts and economic crises, says AOZ, had been postponed administration after administration for decades and for that reason came to be known as the *Agenda Vieja*. In this context, following the local elections of 1995, the elected mayor Elio Aprile realised that it was impossible (although imperative) for the municipality alone to respond to such longstanding urban needs. As KIC recalls, “Aprile was a very pragmatic leader and saw himself as the “planner” of the city with the legitimacy of the people who voted for him and the technical support of municipal departments. For him there was no need to draw new plans, as there were dozens of projects in the “*Agenda Vieja*” that needed to be completed. The main obstacle was financial rather than the lack of ideas or projects, so the question for him was whether people were willing to contribute with money through an extra local tax to fund these longstanding projects”.

The mayor and his executive team, then, decided to compile a list of projects that had been part of the urban policy agenda for a long time (as well as the subject of public debates and earlier electoral campaigns), which served as the basis for the popular consultation held a year later. In May 1996, the municipality called for a plebiscite in which voters were asked to respond YES or NO to the following statement: *Estoy de acuerdo con el pago de \$3.- o \$4.- mensuales para el financiamiento del Plan de Obras Mar del Plata 2000* (HCD 595-1996). The majority of the electorate answered YES to the statement and agreed to contribute with 3-4 pesos (the equivalent to 3-4 US dollar at the time due to the Convertibility Plan) extra per month through local taxes in order to fund a list of 27 urban infrastructure and service projects across the city. In June 1996, the municipality decreed the creation of the *Fondo Solidario Plan de Obras Mar del Plata 2000*, which resources were to be exclusively dedicated to finance the administrative and construction costs of the projects consulted within a period of eight years (HCD 10570-1996). A detailed account of the projects, the early phases of implementation and achievements are best recorded in the municipal preliminary report *Balance Mar del Plata 2000* and later edition *Mar del Plata 2000*.

While the bold approach of Aprile in response to the financial limitations of the

municipality as well as the political pressure to finally deliver infrastructure and service projects that had been postponed for decades was somewhat controversial, it was largely successful. Indeed, as KIC notes, not many newly elected mayors would have risked their seat by asking voters to contribute with more money only a few months after taking office. For DIM, however, it was definitely an intelligent tactic of Aprile after his overwhelming victory as mayor in 1995. Another important achievement, in the view of KIC, was that the projects were actually executed and completed on time. This might seem obvious elsewhere, he emphasises, but not in the Southern Cone where resources often disappear in the implementation process and projects are either abandoned and/or only half-built. Furthermore, similar to the case of the PanAmerican Games, the many projects of the *Agenda Vieja* could have not been accomplished without the municipal initiative to call for a plebiscite, the financial support of citizens and their trust in their local leader and indeed the rigorous administration and follow up process that made every step possible.

8.3 THE RISE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVES IN RESPONSE TO EPISODES OF CRISIS

VALENCIA (1993-2012)	MAR DEL PLATA (2001-2013)
<i>Plan Estratégico Pro-Valencia</i> (1993)	<i>Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata</i> (2001)
<i>Asociación Valencia 2015</i> (1998)	<i>La Cumbre de las Américas</i> (2005)
<i>Centro Estrategias y Desarrollo</i> CEyD (2004)	

In a commitment to understand the diversity of local government responses to episodes of crisis across time and space and to put into perspective the consequences that the recent global financial crisis has had for cities around the world, this section compares municipal efforts to incorporate a citywide, multidimensional and longterm strategic approach into their urban policy agendas in response to a mixture of economic, political and institutional crises. It goes back to the early 1990s in Valencia and early 2000s in Mar del Plata to chart the rise and development of strategic planning initiatives as well as the socioeconomic and political processes that enabled and shaped these strategies. Unlike the urban policy developments observed across both cities more recently (which I discuss in the next section), strategic planning initiatives did not unfold over the same time frame in both cities. The earliest phase of the *Plan Estratégico Valencia 2015* was

executed by *Pro-Valencia* in 1993, while the first *Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata* only emerged at the onset of the new millennium. Therefore, when both cities adopted a new urban policy agenda in the early 2010s, Valencia had had almost one more decade of experience at formulating and implementing citywide strategies compared to Mar del Plata.

Furthermore, the wider economic and political circumstances at the time when the municipality of each city decided to adopt a strategic approach to urban policy were also quite different. In fact, the socioeconomic and political situation of Mar del Plata was significantly more critical than that of Valencia at the moment when strategic planning agendas were introduced. While Argentina was in the midst of the worst economic and political crisis it had ever confronted following default in 2001, Spain was more or less at the end of a longer period of economic difficulties and political volatility at the onset of the 1990s. These differences across time and space are important, not only because they help us to put into perspective the scope and severity of more recent episodes of crisis (and, possibly, the limitations of analyses inspired by them), but also because they bring into analytical view a wealth of experiences from geographical locations that despite having dealt with numerous crises in the past, have remained at the margins of more recent academic and/or policy debates about the urban dimension of crises.

Having said that, and recognising the contextual and qualitative differences between the economic and political situation confronted in each country (see section 4.2), there is no doubt that a narrative of local crisis played a determinant role in the urban policy shift in favour of strategic planning observed in each city. In the case of Valencia, the articulation of a powerful narrative of crisis (in which the socialist administration of Ricard Perez Casado was indeed blamed) by the then mayoral candidate Rita Barbera and the *Partido Popular* (who claimed to offer an alternative solution out of the crisis) not only paved their way into the municipality in the 1991 local elections, but also set the ground in which the need for an ambitious approach to urban policy and planning became the most suitable alternative to confront the difficulties inherited as well as the challenges of the 1990s (see section 5.3). This local narrative was reinforced by the onset of a national crisis in the spring of 1993 and the announcement of a number of fiscal and monetary measures that affected regional and municipal administrations alike in the autumn of the same year. While this crisis seems to have unfolded between 1990-

1992, and was somewhat connected to the rise of oil-energy prices due to the Gulf War and its negative impact on the GDP, it had been relatively camouflaged by the large public expenditure recorded in infrastructure and services investments across Spain in preparation for the Olympic Games and the World Expo in 1992 (SEP; see Subirats *et al* 2012). In this context, Rita Barbera consolidated her political leadership and the promise to transform Valencia in a modern and competitive city through an ambitious urban policy agenda.

After a decade of structural adjustment programmes and several years of recession that ended with the financial default of 2001, Argentina entered a period of severe crisis characterised by economic, political and institutional chaos across all levels of government (see section 4.2). In the case of Mar del Plata, although the crisis was severe and pervasive, it opened up opportunities for new political leaderships, wider social participation, and the emergence of a new urban policy agenda (see section 5.2). While the crisis certainly left the municipality exhausted and local political leaders without social support, such institutional conditions allowed local economic actors (who had insisted on implementing an urban strategic agenda since the mid-1990s) to assemble a crisis narrative based in their perception of the situation and eventually gained the support of the new mayor, Daniel Katz. In contrast to the crisis narrative tactically developed by Rita Barbera to persuade the electorate in her campaign for mayor, the narrative of the *Junta Promotora* (see section 6.2.2) in Mar del Plata emphasised the negative impact that the 2001 crisis had had in local socioeconomic and political relations and, indeed, how a strategic approach to urban planning could support the economic recovery, social consensus and institutional trust so much needed.

It is undeniable that these crises had objective economic consequences for cities across Spain and Argentina (although to significantly different extents), and both Valencia and Mar del Plata suffered the immediate effects of fiscal adjustment and austerity. However, the decision of their municipal authorities to embrace a strategic approach to urban policy cannot be explained by economic crisis alone, but rather by a combination of socioeconomic, political and institutional issues that had accumulated over time and the ability of different local actors to build on them in order to articulate as well as defend a narrative of crisis for which they were also in a position to justify and influence the best possible response – which, coincidentally, required a new urban

policy direction in both cases.

In this context, the urban interventions that characterised the preceding period and had dealt almost exclusively with the provision of basic infrastructure and services after transition, although essential at the time, were perceived to be insufficient to respond to the crisis faced in Valencia in the 1990s and Mar del Plata in the 2000s. They were also perceived to be too modest to contribute to a policy agenda that would make both cities more modern and competitive in the future. For these reasons, the need for an urban policy approach that articulated a strategic, multidimensional, citywide and longterm vision became the obvious alternative in both cities. While the *Plan Estratégico Valencia* and the *Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata* primarily aimed to articulate a comprehensive response to the crises experienced in each city, they became highly ambitious projects. In broad terms, and from earlier proposals, both plans featured a mixture of infrastructure and service interventions, large-scale projects, city marketing initiatives, the professionalisation of the public sector (see Appendix 07) as well as several other socioeconomic and environmental aspirations. These shared features are partly a reflection of the similar socioeconomic circumstances in which the plans were articulated as well as the similar urban challenges to which they aimed to respond to, but also an indication that both plans were somehow inspired by the experiences of other cities and, crucially, shaped by consultants who had first hand experience or were familiar with the technical approach and model of Barcelona.

Nevertheless, despite sharing several key features in their initial methodological approach and some of their early proposals, the timing of the strategic interventions in relation to the onset of crisis, and the experience of each city through the actual organisation and formulation process was different. In the case of Valencia, the initiative to adopt a strategic plan came from the municipality and from Rita Barbera herself. Indeed, the plan was not only a response to the ongoing crisis, but a political tactic of Rita in her pledge to make Valencia a more modern and competitive city (see section 6.2). However, the municipality did not deal with the organisation and formulation of the plan directly. Instead, it hired an external consultancy and created a new office exclusively dedicated to the development of the plan. In 1993, the firm *Estrategies de Qualitat Urbana* won the competition against multinationals such as Arthur Andersen LLP and the municipality established *Pro-Valencia S.A.* The latter was to become the administrative arm of the municipality to deal with the earlier phases of

the plan as well as the initial institutional platform for the operation of the team of consultants and experts working on the plan and the Executive Committee – constituted only by the most influential local socioeconomic actors. A detailed timeline and account of the organisation process, members of the Executive Committee, earlier methodological steps and proposals are well documented in the report *Plan Estratégico de Valencia: metodología, organización y elaboración* (Pro-Valencia 1994) and the publication *Plan Estratégico de Valencia* (Pro-Valencia 1997).

For MAL, organisational arrangements to develop the plan were highly problematic as they hindered participation and consensus which are two of the fundamental principles of strategic planning – particularly in the phase of formulation. This methodological shortcoming was corroborated by JEM, the director of the plan, who admitted their failure to achieve the minimum level of social participation expected in theory and practice. Furthermore, he recognised that the final plan ended up being more or less a reflection of the local economic and political elites rather than the product of wider consensus.

“We had severe difficulties at dealing with influential local actors who saw each other as enemies, so you can imagine the magnitude of the challenge if we had tried to reach wider consensus: we would have lost the opportunity altogether! We also faced real time pressures and a number of obstacles from the municipality. Local leaders were always terrified with the prospects of public consultation and were never confident that the outcome would be positive for them. The case of Valencia was quite particular in this respect” (*ibid*).

In the case of Mar del Plata, in fact the strategic planning initiative did not come from the municipality, but from a group of private sector actors who believed that the magnitude of the economic, social and political crisis of 2001 merited unprecedented public-private cooperation as well as the articulation of a multidimensional and long term strategic response (see section 6.2.2). In 2001, following the financial default, the self-appointed *Junta Promotora* organised a number of assemblies in which multiple public and private actors were invited to debate and brainstorm different alternatives to overcome the crisis as well as the possibility to formulate a common urban strategic

agenda. According to AOZ, this private initiative was not only an expression of the self-interest of the local business elite, but also a reflection of the critical situation in which municipal planning departments found themselves at the time. Even before the crisis, she says, *Planeamiento* had struggled to fulfil most of its functions and had become only an administrative office for the enforcement of planning regulations. In light of this situation, and the inability of the municipality to deal with the post-2001 crisis scenario, the private sector saw the opportunity to intervene. As KIC notes, “the main founders of the *Junta Promotora* had promoted the idea of a plan for years when Daniel Katz stepped in as acting-mayor in 2002, but had failed to gain the political support of Elio Aprile and earlier mayors”. The crisis, therefore, not only triggered economic difficulties, but provided the political and institutional conditions in which the strategic planning initiative was able to flourish (see section 5.2.2). In October 2002, the municipality officially recognised and endorsed the efforts of the *Junta Promotora* and established the *Comisión Mixta Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata*, of which the mayor became the *Presidente Honorario* (see HCD 14957-2002).

In July 2003, the *Comisión Mixta* launched an open competition in which teams of consultants from across Argentina were invited to present their methodological proposals on how to approach and address the strategic issues faced in Mar del Plata (see Bocker 2005 for a detailed compilation of the proposals of six different participants). The architect Roberto Monteverde won the *Jornadas de Exposición Pública* carried out in September 2003 and became the external consultant responsible for the formulation of the plan. While the *Comisión Mixta* had considered the creation of an agency or *Agencia de Desarrollo Local* to coordinate the administrative and technical functions of the plan more efficiently, the idea never materialised. Instead, Monteverde created a local technical team that worked closely together with municipal professionals according to three main thematic areas, which included socio-institutional affairs, economic production, and urban-natural environment. In 2004, after several months of incessant work, Monteverde announced the completion and outcomes of the diagnosis and formulation phases. A chronological account of the methodological steps and multiple participatory activities carried out since 2002, and an accurate summary of the main priorities, areas of intervention and actual strategies and projects are well documented in the official publication of the *Plan Estratégico de Mar del Plata* (MGP 2004).

Although the decision of the *Comisión Mixta* to open up a national competition in order to select an external consultant, rather than a local professional, was initially interpreted as a tactic of influential economic actors to obstruct wider social participation (AOZ), the selection of Monteverde's team did not have anything to do with the interests of private actors or the lack of local professional capacity (KIC). In fact, some fierce critics believe that the plan of Monteverde represents one of the most successful participatory experiences in the recent urban policymaking history of Mar del Plata (RAF and GOB) – particularly compared to more recent developments (I discuss this in the next section). This is not to say that participation was perfect or that there were no technical shortcomings (see Bocker 2005), but to emphasise that it was a relatively open and transparent process in which public and private actors from diverse socioeconomic and political backgrounds were able to engage and debate their concerns and aspirations with one another – in contrast to the experience of Valencia. The high level of participation and public-private consensus experienced in Mar del Plata was not only an expression of the magnitude of the crisis and its consequences (which was also reflected in the overall content and balance of the strategies proposed – i.e. the emphasis on social and political aspects such as employment, inclusion, transparency and accountability), but of the ability of Monteverde to inspire trust among local actors throughout the process. As KIC notes, “Monteverde came from Rosario and brought along fresh ideas, new ways of doing things as well as a white flag and a neutral attitude to foster socio-political reconciliation”.

Evidently, both cities adopted strategic planning initiatives, primarily in response to crisis and both hired external consultants in order to deal with the actual development of the plans, which were to have a citywide, multidimensional and longterm scope. In both cases, consultants and their teams were inspired or influenced by the experience of Barcelona and tried to replicate its methodological approach with the aim to reproduce a similar urban impact. While in Valencia the firm *Estrategies de Qualitat Urbana* was from Barcelona itself and his director had participated in some of the strategies developed toward the Olympic Games in 1992, Monteverde and his team in Mar del Plata had had first-hand experience in the strategic planning process of Rosario – in which well known Catalanian consultants such as Jordi Borja had also participated (RAF). As PER recalls, urban experts such as Toni Puig (also from Catalonia) helped to shape the city-marketing and branding elements of the plan in the late 2000s (see

Jajamovich 2012, 2013 for historical perspectives of the influence of Catalanian consultants across Argentinean cities). Therefore, although there is no direct connection between the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata, they share similar sources of methodological and technical inspiration through consultants who had either first-hand experience in Barcelona or learnt from it. However, the organisational arrangements and multiple processes of formulating the plans were different across the cases, particularly in terms of social participation – reflecting significant differences in the wider political landscapes of each city (see Chapter 6).

While wider socioeconomic and political circumstances were rather difficult in both countries/cities when the municipalities responded with strategic planning initiatives, it is generally agreed that they entered a cycle of relative political stability and economic recovery thereafter. Indeed, after years of recession and crises, Spain entered what some have labelled as a decade of “prodigious growth” (between 1997-2007, see Burriel 2008); after years of adjustment and financial default, Argentina entered a period of accelerated growth fuelled by high commodity prices worldwide and higher consumption from China (approximately, from the mid-2000s). These economic improvements were indeed welcomed in both cases. Following the early phases of organisation, diagnosis and formulation, it was evident that the new urban strategic agendas were more multidimensional and ambitious than ever before and, therefore, required significant direct public investment. Economic success, then, did not mean, that the municipalities were in a position to abandon ongoing efforts and/or tactics to secure additional finances, as public-private initiatives and national/international resources would be necessary to meet the costs of implementation given ongoing shortage of resources in both cities.

The urban policy implications of the economic recovery and political stability experienced in both cities after the crisis were initially positive, particularly for the strategic planning initiatives that had begun, but such favourable conditions did not seem to support the successful development of some of the projects envisioned over the long term and, in some cases, not even their implementation. Both cities did move beyond the initial organisation and formulation phases of the plans to their actual implementation and operationalisation. However, in the case of Valencia, the original version of the plan underwent a number of amendments in its overall direction and

content, which made it excessively ambitious and eventually unsustainable. In the case of Mar del Plata, the plan faced serious difficulties to move into the implementation phase due to the insufficient political and economic support for successive mayors (after the end of Daniel Katz's term in 2007), which made the strategic plans increasingly unfeasible. As a result, the plan was abandoned after only a few years.

In 1998, after completing the organisation and formulation phases and the early implementation and execution stages, *Pro-Valencia S.A* was replaced by the *Asociación Valencia 2015* – which became the second municipal organisation responsible for the plan. Its main functions were to assess the actual development of 47 projects that had been prioritised in earlier phases and to reconfigure the direction of the overall plan according with the new (and more favourable) social, economic and political circumstances. The first evaluation of the overall plan was carried out by ten different teams, each designated with a specific area of intervention, including *Nuevos Proyectos Urbanos* (new large-scale projects), *Ciudad de la Cultura, Ferias y Congresos* (city of culture, fairs and congresses), *Ciudad Verde Europea* (european green city) as well as communications, logistics, transportation and competition. The result of the evaluation was overall positive and helped them to identify a number of weaknesses as well as the need to reprogramme the content/direction of some of the projects. A detail account of the process of evaluation, its methodological approach and the criteria used by the different teams was published under the title *Valencia en Marcha* in 1999 (see report by Asociación Valencia 2015, 1999), which was followed by an assessment of the impact of the multiple interventions orchestrated by the plan in relation to local socioeconomic indicators for the period 1995-2000 and in relation to other large cities – particularly Barcelona, Madrid and Seville (see report *Valencia Modelo de Ciudad*, by Asociación Valencia 2015, 2000).

At the onset of the new millennium, 90 percent of the projects of the original plan had advanced in a positive direction, with 70 percent of them meeting the minimum expectations and even exceeding them. The plan had successfully achieved the articulation of a citywide strategic development vision that was shared by most local actors, but an assessment carried out between 2000-2002 revealed the need to move toward a model in which more social projects were prioritised (see *La Evaluación del Desarrollo Estratégico de Valencia*, by Asociación Valencia 2015, 2002). At the time,

large-scale projects such as the *Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias* had started to materialise after numerous economic and political difficulties that had obstructed their construction were finally overcome (Tarazona-Vento 2013 develops a very detailed and chronological sequence of the events). The planetarium, the science museum, the museum of oceanography and the opera palace were all completed within the first half of the 2000s and quickly became the new architectural landmarks of Valencia (see Image 03). According to MAL, “the *Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias* materialised at a time when mega-projects became core elements of the urban strategic agenda across many cities”. These large-scale constructions, she says, were seen in Valencia as symbols of modernity (beyond medieval architecture and monuments) and were expected to give the city a renewed national image and international status.

In 2004, the *Centro de Estrategias y Desarrollo de Valencia* (CEyD) became the new municipal arm to deal with the strategic development matters of the city. While it continued to build on projects articulated by *Pro-Valencia* and the strategic framework consolidated by the *Asociación Valencia 2015* in the late 1990s, the CEyD brought in new ideas and priorities to the local strategic agenda. The “internationalisation” of the city through economic promotion as well as a series of marketing and “branding” strategies (for the attraction of businesses and events), for instance, became a visible priority (CEyD 2004a). In fact, following the successful bid of Valencia to host the the Americas Cup in 2007, the overall direction, content and priorities of the agenda were substantially reconfigured. This mega-event, then, became the main driver of (and justification for) the strategic interventions pursued between 2004-2007. Although the CEyD did not explicitly abandon earlier efforts, it stated that the Cup represented a unique opportunity to strengthen the already favourable socioeconomic conditions observed across Valencia at the time and, therefore, other strategies and projects could be postponed and reintroduced after the event (see *Valencia en los primeros años del siglo XXI*, by CEyD 2004b). As JEM recalls, “Valencia was doing very well at the time. It was a period of economic growth, political and social stability. The municipality experienced financial issues every now and then, which often caused delays, but its longterm commitment to the plan was very strong”.

Following her fourth consecutive victory as mayor in 2007, the relationship of Rita Barbera with the director and consultants of the CEyD, who had been responsible for



Image 03. *La Ciudad de las Artes y de las Ciencias*, Valencia (Photos by the author).

the strategic agenda of the city since the 1990s, deteriorated relatively fast (see section 6.2). Her insistence on placing large-scale projects and mega-events at the core of the local strategic agenda entailed significant changes in the overall direction and content of the plan, which completely relegated earlier social goals to the benefit of more economic growth. For JEM, this situation unleashed “a crisis of ill-conceived success, political overconfidence and institutional disarticulation” with severe and unpredictable consequences in the urban policy arena. Furthermore, as GIM notes, the municipality under the *Partido Popular* and Rita in particular were dazzled by the Olympic Games in Barcelona, the World Expo in Seville and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and made every effort to reproduce something similar as soon as the economic and political conditions allowed them. For GIM, the mega-projects and mega-events developed in Valencia between the late 1990s and the early 2000s were the result of local political agendas, economic growth, flexible urban regulation, the nature of the relationship between municipal actors and developers, and certainly a renewed strategic vision that produced a “dangerous and explosive” combination. The *Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias*, the Americas Cup and the Formula One, all required significant public investment as well as high indebtedness. As PAU points out, “when the economic recession hits Valencia in the late 2000s, the local strategic agenda was already in crisis, filled with contradictions and problems. The benefits of the “internationalisation” of Valencia, for instance, never materialised because the mega-projects had no permanent use and the mega-events moved elsewhere”.

The main problem of the mega-projects and mega-events, according to MAL, is that municipal leaders did not know when or how to stop them. After the completion of the *L’Hemispheric* – which quickly became an important architectural icon of the city due to its unique design and movement, recalls MAL, the strategy of “internationalisation” gained traction in the urban agenda and mega-projects were thought to be essential for its success. The *L’Hemispheric* (1998), then, was followed by the *Museu de les Ciencies* (2000), the *L’Umbracle* (2001), the *L’Oceanografic* (2003), the *Palau de les Arts* (2005), and the *L’Agora* (2009), which not only required millions for their construction but also for their daily maintenance. In hindsight, MAL notes that “local politicians did not seem to foresee the importance of adding content and value to the projects and/or to direct efforts to make them highly dynamic cultural venues, but rather concentrated on building and building”. Moreover, the fortune of the mega-events (i.e.

Americas Cup and the Formula One) was not better, as they also became unsustainable over time. As JEM points out, the strategic agenda changed significantly in order to prioritise these events and to postpone more modest (and cost-effective) initiatives that his team of consultants had developed for the city in the early 2000s and which were at the core of the CEyD. The local political elite and Rita did not want a modest urban strategy such as *Valencia Ciudad del Conocimiento*, in which a more diversified local economy and a strong commitment to social development were the main priorities. “It is hard to imagine how this strategy would have unfolded over time, but it seems to me that it offered a more solid proposal and would have helped us to improve a poor record of participation. If the strategic agenda had been more open to society, I believe that people would have assimilated the plan and, most probably, would have defended its content when the threat of the mega-events emerged” (JEM).

While it is impossible to know how such an alternative strategic agenda would have developed over time, in hindsight, it is evident that mega-events compromised the municipal finances and did not fulfil the interests of society at large. As MAL notes, “the list of demands of the Americas Cup and Formula One was endless and required heavy investments. The changes to the port, the docks and the construction of the race circuit cost millions of euros and such infrastructure has remained idle after the events”. From a social perspective, she says, “it is difficult to justify such large investments beyond the public euphoria of the events themselves, especially when we have popular sectors affected by under-resourced schools and health services [...] so spending on education, health and cultural facilities would have made more sense”. In this respect, mega-events seem to have been used to promote and justify opportunities that have little to do with wider socioeconomic gains, but rather the political and economic interests of local elites. The Americas Cup, says JEM, “produced some sort of seductive-captivating effect across the local economic and political elite when they saw themselves part of such large scale and highly recognised international event”. Unsurprisingly, many of them lost interest in the idea of *Valencia Ciudad del Conocimiento* and turned to events. In the words of JEM, “we literally moved from a strategy in which events were considered a platform for international marketing and economic promotion, in addition to other initiatives, to a strategy in which mega-events became the main driver and virtually only priority”. Furthermore, they not only created incentives that distorted the overall strategic vision of the city but opened up opportunities for corruption (as

discussed in section 7.3.1; see also El Pais 2005b; El Pais 2014; The Economist 2012).

In the case of Mar del Plata, following the completion of the formulation phase in which four main lines of strategic intervention were identified and the 324 initiatives gathered from different local socioeconomic actors were classified and prioritised, the plan faced multiple difficulties to move to the implementation phase. This does not mean that the *Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata* ended in 2004, but developments were certainly slow and the initiatives gradually lost momentum. The team responsible for the area of *Equilibrio Urbano-Ambiental*, for instance, needed two more years to complete basic planning documents such as the *Plan de Gestión Territorial* (MGP 2006) as well as a number of technical, financial and logistical assessments required for the actual construction of key strategic projects. Political support also diminished over time, particularly after socioeconomic and political conditions started to improve, the mandate of Daniel Katz came to an end and Gustavo Pulti was elected mayor in 2007. That Pulti abandoned the strategic plan was perhaps an unexpected development, as local political leaders with the intention to run as candidates in the 2003 municipal elections signed an *Acta de Compromiso de Apoyo al Plan Estratégico de Mar del Plata*, in which they promised to support and follow the strategic agenda set by the plan in the future. As PER recalls, “after Monteverde left in 2008, we reconfigured the team with local professionals and continued working on the plan, but Pulti did not provide the necessary municipal support. He saw the plan as a political achievement of Katz and put it in a drawer”. While the national and local economic conditions certainly started to improve from the mid-2000s onward, municipal revenues from local taxes continued to be limited and *coparticipación* somehow unreliable; insufficient to finance the interventions proposed by the plan. Therefore, the municipality was not in a position to abandon parallel efforts to secure additional resources, particularly through the organisation of international events and new schemes for public-private partnership, that would help it to fulfil some of its strategic planning ambitions.

The *IV Cumbre de las Américas*, for instance, was the first major international event hosted in Mar del Plata after the financial default of 2001 and the associated crisis episode that had prompted the adoption and formulation of a local strategic agenda. As in the case of the PanAmerican Games in 1995, the summit that gathered the heads of 34 sovereign states of the Americas (with the exception of Cuba) in 2005 provided a

unique opportunity for the municipality to secure special funds from the national government in order to meet the infrastructure requirements for the organisation of such an event as well as to finance several urban interventions in strategic areas that had been prioritised in the plan of Monteverde. As KIC recalls, “the announcement of Mar del Plata as the host city was indeed good news for the mayor. He, then, sent to the national government a long list of infrastructure and service projects that needed to be completed in order to make the city presentable for heads of state and international press”. After years of crisis and disinvestment, it is unsurprising that public spaces across the city were in a state of dereliction. While the budget designated by the national administration barely exceeded three million US dollars, de Paz and Rescia (2007) believe that the resources were well allocated and helped to materialise substantial improvements along the *Frente Marítimo* (or waterfront) – including the provision of new functional and high quality spaces (see Image 04).

According to AOZ “international events are often controversial and politicians tend to exaggerate the socioeconomic benefits they bring. It must be recognised, however, that events such as the *IV Cumbre de las Américas* have contributed to the improvement of the urban landscape of the city and the renovation of the waterfront would have simply not happened otherwise”. Indeed, and in sharp contrast to the experience of Valencia, mega-events such as the FIFA World Cup in 1978 and the PanAmerican Games in 1995 seem to have served the urban development of Mar del Plata more positively. They have not been used by local politicians as justification to change the existing urban strategic agendas, but as opportunities to finance diverse urban interventions seen as important to the city over the last four decades.

Although the *Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata* did not receive the necessary political and economic support to actually implement and develop the urban strategies and projects it proposed, the city has seen a number of important urban interventions over the last decade and the municipality has found alternative ways to make them happen. As DIM notes, “the plan has never had any significant implications in the organisational or technical planning decisions of the municipality. In fact, the various urban interventions materialised since the mid-2000s have been the result of the own initiative and/or institutional agility of municipal leaders rather than the plan itself”. However, it is difficult to imagine that the similarity between some of the urban interventions



Image 04. Different views of the *Frente Marítimo*, Mar del Plata (Photos by the author).

materialised over the last decade and some of the ideas contained in the plan is merely coincidental. Instead, it appears as if the *Plan Estratégico* has been embedded in state/society constituencies, therefore ideas have been implemented over time anyway, although for different reasons or causes (i.e. routine administrative and institutional manoeuvres to promote international events and/or new schemes for public-private partnership). I elaborate on this logic below, in relation to the redevelopment of the *Ex-Terminal de Omnibus*.

In addition to the public investment and urban interventions enabled by the organisation of several international events over the last few decades, the municipality has repeatedly engaged in a number of public-private initiatives and schemes of *compensación urbanística* in order to finance important infrastructure projects. The *Peatonal San Martín*, the *Rambla del Casino-Gran Hotel Provincial*, the *Paseo Hermitage* and the *Acuario* are all examples of interventions that involved some form of direct public-private participation (including local, provincial and/or national actors), while private-only developments such as the *Hotel Costa Galana*, the *Paseo Diagonal*, and the *Maral Explanada* have all contributed to the reconstruction and revitalisation of their surrounding public spaces (see Medina 2014). Following the crisis of 2001, the *Régimen de Iniciativas Privadas* has increasingly become an important municipal instrument for the actual development of a number of longstanding and strategic urban projects that would have not materialised otherwise. As MUD points out, “this mechanism has allowed the use of private capital and expertise for the regeneration of urban areas in a state of dereliction and, ultimately, for the benefit of the wider population through the creation of new centralities and new functional and/or recreational spaces”. This is different from Valencia in the sense that these interventions are mostly financed by private capital rather than public resources. While there is no question that investors in Mar del Plata have an economic interest in the initiatives and/or urban projects they propose through the *Régimen de Iniciativas Privadas*, for example, their relationship with the municipality seems to be different to that of developers in Valencia – where, as Sorribes (2015) notes, developers and the economic elite in general are always seeking to “extract” money and benefit from the state budget through concessions and/or contracts without committing to match any investment.

These forms of public-private intervention have not been free from controversies and

criticisms, as economic and business actors have often undermined urban regulations and/or influenced municipal planning authorities to grant them exceptions (see section 6.3). The regeneration of the *Ex-Terminal de Omnibus*, for instance, was the subject of numerous scandals since the local businessman Aldrey Iglesias (see section 6.2) and the internationally known architect Cesar Pelli expressed their interest in the redevelopment of the site through the *Régimen de Iniciativas Privadas* in the late 2000s. The representatives of Iglesias were the local studio *Mariani-Perez-Maraviglia Arquitectos*, while Pelli was represented by the local politician Emiliano Giri and the spanish-born footballer Jesus Martinez Rivadeneira (DIM). According to JAM, “it is rather unusual that different investors demonstrate interest in the same site and at the same time. For that reason, the case of the *Ex-Terminal* became highly controversial. The *Régimen de Iniciativas Privadas* has its own rules and does not stipulate the possibility to hold an open “competition” when there is more than one applicant. The concession should simply be granted to whoever meets the planning requirements and submits a full proposal first”. Following a number of complaints from the defeated team of Pelli, the *Procuración General de la Provincia de Buenos Aires* (the highest judicial authority) opened an inquiry and, after a year of investigations, it determined that the municipality followed the relevant procedures duly and the concession granted to Iglesias was legally binding. In November 2015, despite an early start tainted by scandals of bribery, public-private alliances, lack of transparency and even corruption (GOB, NEP, AOA), a new commercial and cultural complex named *Paseo Aldrey* opened its doors to the public in the site of the *Ex-Terminal* – which, coincidentally, is located at the heart of one of the urban areas of strategic value and great commercial potential identified in the *Plan Estratégico* formulated a decade earlier (see Appendix 07: the *Guemes* corridor as a new urban centrality).

It is evident that even after the formulation of a citywide, multidimensional and longterm strategic response to the 2001 crisis and the sustained improvement of local and national socioeconomic and political conditions since the mid-2000s, the municipality has never been able to secure sufficient resources to implement an urban strategic agenda that moves beyond its basic planning regulation functions. Indeed, this has also been the result of political discontinuities or, as AOA points out, the development of a “perverse political practice in Argentina” whereby longterm planning processes have become purely a utopian fantasy, given the disruptions experienced

every time a new local leader, who wants to leave his/her own footprint in the urban landscape of the city, decides to leave unfinished what the previous administration had started. Nevertheless, it is also evident that such shortcomings have not necessarily caused paralysis in the actual urban development of Mar del Plata, but rather a haphazard combination of urban interventions and political tactics of municipal leaders which range from the use of events as vehicles to draw investment from higher levels of government to the use of their own agility to reach compromises with private developers who might be able to contribute to the revitalisation of the areas where they intend to invest. Interestingly, the interventions discussed above have often “coincided” either entirely or partially with some of the proposals and/or areas of strategic intervention contained in the plan directed by Monteverde. So, it seems that the plan’s effectiveness has been in shaping private-public actions and subsequently the urban development trajectory of Mar del Plata. As Healey (2010) reminds us, the planning field is not merely an enterprise of a technocratic elite for the making of spatial development plans and/or for the regulation of land-use and private property rights, but a practice to help communities and wider urban actors to imagine their futures and to bring such imagined futures into actual being.

8.4 URBAN POLICY STRATEGIES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 2008 GLOBAL CRISIS

VALENCIA (2012-2015)	MAR DEL PLATA (2013-2015)
InnDEA and the <i>Estrategia Valencia 2020</i>	<i>Estrategia Mar del Plata 2030</i> (PESCI)
<i>Pacto Local por la Innovación</i>	ICES-IDB (sustainable cities) and PMTT

This section focuses on new citywide strategies formulated and implemented in the aftermath of the global financial crisis. While the wider economic and political circumstances have been quite different across the two cases over the last decade, both cities virtually abandoned strategies that had prioritised interventions in the built-environment (i.e. large-scale and event-driven projects) in the preceding period and have rather embarked on revised strategic agendas inspired by ideas such as smart-intelligent and sustainable cities, some of which have been partially funded (and somehow influenced) by supranational organisations and/or regional blocs. How were these local government decisions to shift the strategic focus of their urban policy

agendas related to the aftermath of the global economic crisis that unleashed in 2008? The two cities have fared rather differently in this regard: the economic and political situation of Valencia over the last eight years has been complex and chaotic compared with the relative stability observed in Mar del Plata. The obvious explanation is that Spain became one of the most affected Eurozone countries at the onset of the sovereign debt crisis that followed the so-called global credit crunch in the late 2000s, while Argentina had actually benefited from a cycle of relative economic recovery and political stability since the mid-2000s. Certainly, Argentina and Mar del Plata have continued to face economic difficulties and significant urban challenges over the last decade, but their recent experience and definitely the latest urban strategic developments cannot be understood through the perspective of a “global” financial crisis. Rather ongoing challenges of long duration remain important in shaping urban policy responses (as noted in sections 5.4 and 7.3).

In Valencia, it is clear that the economic situation of the municipality deteriorated after 2008 and worsened in the following years when the effects of the banking crisis started to be felt in the public finances and the sovereign debt crisis was unleashed. At this time, the mega-events and large-scale projects that had been at the core of the urban strategic agenda for almost two decades became unsustainable and their collapse was imminent. However, the urban response of the municipality was neither immediate nor uncomplicated. In fact, it took them several years, first, to execute a number of necessary organisational transformations to change direction and, second, to articulate an alternative urban policy agenda (section 7.2). The crisis, therefore, not only disrupted the preceding cycle of strategic planning but also provided the conditions for new ideas to emerge (as sections 5.2 and 5.3 noted).

While the recent shift in the urban policy direction of Mar del Plata evidences that major episodes of crisis are not always a prerequisite for such changes to occur, the changes adopted are a reflection of the ongoing difficulties associated with municipal financial needs, crucially, entailing the economic and political tactics of local leaders to secure both additional funds (from higher levels of government or international organisations) and electoral support. It is also a reflection that, even under relatively stable economic and political conditions, Mar del Plata finds it difficult to fulfil its functions and budgetary commitments without having to resort to other sources of

revenue beyond the monies received from *coparticipacion* and local taxes. More than two decades after the important constitutional amendments that introduced federal principles and the legislative basis for the decentralisation of municipalities, there remain important structural issues to be addressed in terms of financial attributions and responsibilities. In the meantime, municipal actors observe that if it were not for the institutional agility of local political leaders to negotiate and secure extra funding from higher levels of government, the public finances would be as precarious and critical as if the municipality were in a permanent crisis.

Interestingly, both cities have sought to secure additional resources from regional blocs such as the European Union and international organisations such as the InterAmerican Development Bank by tailoring urban policy agendas that would meet the demands and conditions of these supranational agencies. Furthermore, although these cities have clearly experienced very different socioeconomic and political situations over the last decade, the notion of being in a crisis has been interpreted and used by both sets of municipal authorities to make their cases to the relevant awarding committees. As a result, in broad terms, each city has established new strategic priorities and ambitions over the last few years through the *Estrategia Valencia 2020* (2012) and the *Estrategia Mar del Plata 2030* (2013).

In the case of Valencia, the recent crisis prompted a number of institutional transformations within municipal departments and offices dealing with urban strategic affairs (see section 7.2). In 2012, the InnDEA was created with the political support of the mayor Rita Barbera and the technical input of a number of consultants and experts that had worked in earlier initiatives of strategic planning. The InnDEA has not only become the institutional face of the new local strategic agenda, but also the main advocate and promoter of initiatives in the fields of research+development, entrepreneurship, innovation, city-marketing, sustainability and smart-intelligent cities. In fact, these fields are at the core of the *Pacto Local por la Innovación* and the *Estrategia Valencia 2020*, which are expected to support the recovery of the socioeconomic fabric of the city following the most recent crisis and to foster local development and progress in the coming years. The InnDEA has produced a number of e-documents in which details of initiatives developed with many local and european partners, such as *Estudia VLC*, *Cátedra Ciudad*, *Valencia Business*, *Redes de*

Innovación y Tecnología (VIT) and *Valencia Smart City*, can be found (see <http://inndeavalencia.com/>).

In addition to its strategic functions, the InnDEA performs a number of logistical tasks within and outside the municipality. It has become the main communication platform of municipal departments responsible for the provision of urban services and facilitated their coordination with contractors and actual providers. As MAL points out, “the smart city initiative has provided us with the necessary technologies to improve coordination between those responsible for the management of water, traffic, green spaces, street lighting, waste collection and those who actually do the job. The aim is that they are all informed about the activities of one another in order to minimise overall operational costs, to avoid parallel or duplicate efforts and to allocate resources more efficiently”. In terms of external relations, the InnDEA represents the municipality in everything related to city strategies at the national and international level. Its role is particularly key at the European level, where the application and bidding processes for financing take place. As EUR notes, “the InnDEA acts as partner of the municipality in every process related to European finances. We are responsible for the articulation of proposals that help the municipality to secure European funding. We are constantly looking for new opportunities to develop our international connections, networks and partnerships”. In an economic environment where municipal resources have been limited for almost a decade, this function is indeed vital. However, it must be noted that European funding is rarely free of conditions. The focus on innovation, entrepreneurship and smart-intelligent cities that has been prioritised in the *Estrategia Valencia 2020* stems from generic European guidelines aimed at the creation of employment and the diversification of local economic activities – which must be met in order to secure their financial support – rather than a genuine process of diagnosis and wider local consultation concerning Valencia’s needs and potential.

The latest urban strategic agenda of Mar del Plata has not been shaped by a major episode of crisis and the forces behind its genesis, change of direction and content are more haphazard and difficult to trace. It is clear, however, that the *Estrategia Mar del Plata 2030* emerged in 2013 as a response to a combination of practical, political and economic issues. As RAF notes, there were practical limitations such as the absence of a municipal office dedicated to urban strategic matters that is able to monitor and

coordinate the developments of the plan over the long term. Furthermore, he says, “the unwillingness of political leaders to continue the initiatives of earlier administrations and to recognise the efforts and achievements of previous mayors has been rather damaging”. Indeed, the new strategic agenda also emerged as a response to ongoing economic-institutional difficulties. As discussed in section 7.3, both insufficient economic resources and limited financial autonomy are chronic problems for the municipality. It is therefore unsurprising that municipal leaders are in a constant search for funding opportunities and make every effort to secure resources from elsewhere. As RAF points out, the current strategic agenda unfolded in parallel with two other initiatives that brought in financial and human resources to the municipality – the *Plan Maestro de Transporte y Transito* (PMTT) and the *Iniciativa de Ciudades Emergentes y Sustentables* (ICES).

Almost a decade after the completion of the *Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata*, which gradually lost momentum, and with the possibility to secure more finances from the InterAmerican Development Bank (IDB) through the initiative ICES-IDB, the prospects of a new local strategic agenda became feasible. Politically, Gustavo Pulti (city mayor between 2007-2015) did not hesitate to support the initiative. As AOZ notes, “Pulti sought the opportunity to use the new plan in his favour and to gain wider support for the municipal elections of 2015”. In fact, she says, “the preliminary results of the earlier phases were published incomplete and with errors due to the pressure of the mayor to celebrate the anniversary of Mar del Plata in 2014”. For KIC, however, “Pulti, like many politicians, simply sought to leave his own footprint in the city with the launching of a new plan in one of his tactical moves”. This strategic initiative also involved the selection of a new team of consultants in 2012, when the studio *Centro de Estudios y Proyectos del Ambiente* (CEPA) based in La Plata and directed by the architect and urbanist Ruben Pesci won the national competition organised by the municipality.

In general terms, the *Estrategia Mar del Plata 2030* retained the multidimensional approach and citywide scope observed in the plan of Monteverde. However, given the fact that it builds on both the methodology and findings of the PMTT and the ICES-IDB, its focus is significantly different and its formulation required neither the completion of a new diagnosis nor the participation and/or consultation of wider social actors (KIC). The PMTT, carried out by the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias*

Sociales (FLACSO), provided the new team with an insightful and current analysis of the state of urban mobility in Mar del Plata – which featured some of the main issues faced as well as the infrastructure and institutional obstacles to confront them (see PMTT 2013 for more specific details). Meanwhile, the diagnosis completed by the ICES-IDB was also of significant instrumental value for Pesci and the new team. It provided them with extensive data on environmental, urban and institutional aspects of the city (see report by ICES-IDB 2013). In 2014, the first draft of the new plan was finalised. It proposed four *frentes* (areas) of strategic intervention for the development and growth of Mar del Plata. The *Frente Verde* and *Frente Azul*, with emphasis on the natural environment and its potential for the responsible development of productive activities such as fishing and farming as well as tourism; the *Frente Social, Urbano y Comunitario*, with a strong emphasis on greater social cohesion, equality and justice; and the *Frente Productivo*, with a focus on economic development activities that involve research and development, new technologies, innovation and the revitalisation of traditional local industries (see the report *Plan Estratégico de Mar del Plata 2013-2030*, MGP 2014 for details about the rationale behind the proposal).

Following the municipal elections of 2015 and the defeat of Gustavo Pulti, the future of the urban strategic agenda of Mar del Plata seems rather uncertain. It is unclear whether it would secure the political support of the new mayor and/or sufficient resources to finance the implementation of the different programmes and interventions it proposes. While the municipality produced a number of e-publications reflecting corrections, amendments and developments of the plan in 2015 (see <http://www.mardelplata.gob.ar>), official updates and media coverage have been limited since 2016. At present, it remains unclear what is the position of the municipal executive, Carlos Arroyo, and his administration with regards to the future of the plan. According to PER, “the main challenge is neither to produce a new plan, nor to hire external consultants, to secure national and international financial support, nor to work with wider socioeconomic actors; the main challenge has been institutional and the failure to create administrative structures and mechanisms that allow us to maintain a coherent urban strategic vision and direction over the time, regardless of economic crises and/or political changes”.

Although the *Estrategia Valencia 2020* (2012) and the *Estrategia Mar del Plata 2030* (2013) have been both equally influenced by international organisations, their overall

approach and emphasis on innovation and sustainability have been different. They have established new strategic priorities and ambitions in each city over the last few years. Furthermore, they not only replaced earlier agendas but, to a great extent, changed the focus and direction from interventions that required significant public investment and coordination (which involved mega-projects and mega-events, in Valencia) to interventions that capitalise on the existing socioeconomic strengths, the productive capacities and the natural advantages of each city and thus do not compromise municipal resources – particularly scarce due to a mixture of crises and insufficient financial local autonomy. Nevertheless, this is not to say that these initiatives are completely disconnected from earlier strategic efforts. After all, and despite economic and political changes, they are the product of the same institutional environment in which earlier strategies have been also formulated and/or implemented and, crucially, the same institutions in which recent and earlier episodes of crisis have left their imprint and through which local actors have collectively learnt. Lastly, these strategic agendas have retained the citywide scope and multidimensional approach of earlier initiatives with the aim to articulate a social, economic and urban agenda that is – at least discursively – more inclusive, sustainable and just than ever before.

8.5 THE URBAN CONSEQUENCES OF CRISIS

The previous chapter argued that crises permeate through local institutions. They are absorbed and reproduced within municipal departments and reflected in the decisions of urban policymakers in a relatively swift and direct manner. The urban consequences of crises, however, have a different time horizon. They are often reflected on the landscape of cities only long after the critical juncture has passed and, crucially, after municipalities have assessed the crisis and introduced the measures they deem necessary. Therefore, they are the product of slower and indirect processes. This section argues that the urban consequences of crises can be better/only understood with hindsight and by considering a long term perspective. Unlike the multidimensional and long term ambitions of the strategic agendas discussed earlier though, changes in urban planning regulations were introduced in Valencia and Mar del Plata as short-term tactics to stimulate their local economies via private investment in the construction sector. I discuss some of these regulatory changes to show their impact on the urban landscape of each city, their unexpected outcomes after implementation and, ultimately, to suggest

that the urban consequences of crises have different time horizons and tend to be *lagged* compared to their *immediate* impact on institutions.

8.5.1 VALENCIA

Episodes of crisis seem to cause *lagged* effects on the urban landscape of cities and, for that reason, such connections are not only considerably difficult to trace and explain but require of a longer time frame for analysis. The rapid economic growth observed in Valencia for over a decade, particularly in the early 2000s, was mainly fuelled by construction activities across both the public and private sectors. While some have described such period as a decade of “prodigious” growth (Burriel 2008), there seems to be a relatively unexplored connection between such developments and the local economic difficulties faced in the early 1990s due to recession and the crisis of 1993 (which had a negative impact on the GDP and regional and municipal finances). The relationship between such crisis and actual changes in the urban landscape of Valencia in successive years is not straight forward, but complex and difficult to trace given the social, economic and political nature of multiple events unfolded and intertwined over time – including demographic changes, episodes of crisis and diverse municipal responses, shifts in urban strategic agendas, intergovernmental interventions and so forth.

However, I would like to introduce some broad connections drawing on the case of Valencia and to discuss how crises might indeed have *lagged* consequences on the urban landscape of cities. The *Ley Reguladora Actividades Urbanísticas* (LRAU) was a legislation approved by the *Comunidad Valenciana* (regional government) in 1994 in order to ensure that large urban development projects provided sufficient public services and facilities such as sanitation, green spaces, roads, and street-lights. In this respect, there is no question that LRAU was well intentioned, but it did not take long before it gained public, political and research attention for quite the opposite reasons (see El Pais 2005a; Agranoff 2010; Boira 2012). According to GIM, “This law completely changed the rules of the game. It had a significant impact on the terms of private property: it separated the ownership of the land from the power to decide what to do with it. If a developer needed the land for a road, the actual owner of the land could not argue it. In principle, the intentions of the law might have been good, but its implementation was

very problematic and controversial”. For SEP, LRAU marked the start of a new era in urban policymaking as its clauses were discussed mainly amongst private actors with significant lobbying capacity across regional and local government offices rather than affected local sectors.

Ironically, the LRAU had been discussed and approved relatively fast as a response to the downturn of the local economy and the high unemployment rates registered in the early 1990s. For GIM, the LRAU was introduced in an attempt to reactivate local economic activities by encouraging the property market and the construction sector, following the “mini-crisis” episode of 1993, but it had devastating effects in the long run, as it had a catalysing effect in the construction industry and fuelled the property boom that started in the mid-1990s and collapsed at the onset of the 2008 crisis. The approval of LRAU, which also permitted the change of the use and classification of the land in favour of urban developers who requested permission for large-scale projects, coincided with the start of a long period of cheap credit that enabled developers to finance over-construction (and indeed a property bubble) and to produce an unprecedented change in the physical urban landscape of Valencia. While the municipality might have reaped some of the benefits of such rapid growth (through license fees and property taxes), it did not have the capacity (or will?) to regulate the unmeasured construction activities that contributed to the urban crisis that unleashed after 2008. This experience demonstrates how municipal responses that aim to mitigate a crisis might produce unforeseen consequences in the urban landscape of cities; particularly when, as GID reminds us, urban policy agendas and strategies such as the *Plan Estratégico de Valencia* become aligned with and dependent on the very principles of legislations such as the LRAU – encouraging both public and private actors to engage in ambitious and costly large-scale infrastructure projects. This is not to say that the 1993 “mini-crisis” was the only factor responsible for the aforementioned processes and wider urban change, but that the local policy responses to overcome such episode of crisis had a *lagged* and somewhat unpredictable effect on the urban form of Valencia.

It is clear that such connections might only become visible over time. In the case of Valencia, with hindsight, it is quite obvious that this legislative response to the crisis of 1993 fuelled a period of rapid growth in the construction sector that, in turn, contributed to a property bubble and exacerbated the urban dimension of the 2008 crisis. This

connection shows the longterm interaction between crisis and urban responses, and supports the idea that the urban consequences of crisis are not only *lagged* and indirect but can often overlap with and/or lead to other crises. In the post-2008 scenario, it might be too early to conclude what the longterm implications of the crisis for the urban development prospects and future landscape of Valencia will be. This is partly due to the fact that municipal offices have undergone numerous processes of administrative reconfiguration since 2008, which have substantially affected the remits and functions of departments dealing with urban policy and strategic agendas (see section 7.2.1), as well as ongoing debates concerning land-use regulation. Following the 2015 elections and important political changes in the local and regional governments, intergovernmental discussions regarding the future of LRAU and the broader regulatory framework have certainly intensified, but the outcomes remain to be seen (see El Mundo 2016; Las Provincias 2016; El Confidencial 2016).

Finally, and as a consequence of ongoing changes across the municipality following the election of a new municipal leader in May 2015 (after 24 years of Rita Barbera), it is still unclear what sort of direction and content emerging urban policies and longterm strategies would take in Valencia in the short/medium term. For RAJ, however, it is clear that the 2008 crisis has had a negative effect on the local economic/urban model that the municipality tried to achieve for over two decades and the phase of strategic planning that supported mega-projects and mega-events has certainly ended. This does not mean that there is a shortage of ideas, initiatives and/or proposals deriving from different local actors and sectors, which might be relevant for future urban policies and strategies in one way or another, but to point out that other challenges are also significant. In light of the unfavourable, and perhaps somewhat stubborn, institutional culture consolidated in the municipality over two decades of conservative administration and Rita's leadership (GIM), the failure of recent strategic planning initiatives (PAU), and the limited availability of public resources (EUR), it would be too speculative to forecast any possible scenario at the time of writing.

8.5.2 MAR DEL PLATA

The relationship between episodes of crisis and the actions of the construction sector, the decisions of real estate investors, and/or the urban planning regulations that favour

them is both diverse and difficult to trace. The conditions in which a given crisis might be interpreted as an opportunity for private developers to build residential property (as noted in section 5.3.2), for instance, are different to the conditions in which a crisis might be perceived as a reason for the state to invest in developing public infrastructure or to favour the construction of business and commercial spaces. For JAM they are completely different situations “while the impact of a crisis in the construction of apartment buildings is generally straight forward as it exposes investment advantages for the sector and for those seeking refuge from economic fluctuations, a crisis is not enough of a reason for developers to invest (directly or indirectly) in the construction of hotels, shopping malls, office projects and the like”. Although the incentives for the construction of these might indeed be related to crises in one way or another, in JAM’s view, the prospects of the local economy, the conditions of public infrastructure and services, the existence of municipal support and/or good relations between the real estate developers and local authorities are also essential for such developments to actually happen.

The observation of JAM is indeed very important for our understanding of the causal relationship between crisis and the development of non-residential infrastructure from a longterm perspective. In the case of hotels in Mar del Plata, he recalls, the main opportunity for construction was given by a national programme in the late 1980s (during the government of president Alfonsín) whereby holders of government debt bonds were offered important tax advantages and benefits if they were to invest the exchange value of their bonds in infrastructure for tourism. Indeed, the bonds in question had been issued in the 1980s when Argentina (as most Latin American countries) was affected by the debt crisis. This swap programme came about at a time when the municipality of Mar del Plata was implementing a strong marketing strategy whereby the tourism sector was a priority for economic recovery and potential growth, recalls JAM.

“It is important to consider the bigger picture, [the city marketing strategy] had more to do with the local government discourse than anything else, which I do not criticise but it was not as coherent and purposeful as it appeared. In reality, the bonds were key and helped business people to make their investment decisions. They asked would hotels in Mar del Plata qualify

for the bond swap programme? Yes? Then lets built hotels in Mar del Plata. The story of the marketing is also real though, both things did count. However, I cannot imagine that many would have decided to invest in hotels in Mar del Plata if the financial incentives of the bond swaps had not been there” (*ibid*)

While the swap programme of sovereign debt bonds issued during the crisis of the 1980s (together with municipal efforts to promote tourism and other important infrastructure developments such as the completion of the Ruta 2 between Buenos Aires and Mar del Plata) influenced the decisions of investors to build new hotels in Mar del Plata in the late 1990s and early 2000s, changes in planning regulation also created incentives for real estate developments following the 2001 default. Although some local experts believe that it might be too early to assess the extent to which modifications in construction parameters introduced by decree in Mar del Plata following the 2001 crisis (which increased the value of maximum density and height by 30 percent) have left a visible imprint in the urban landscape of the city, others believe that actual changes have been so visible that even the municipality has had to take actions over the last decade in an attempt to mitigate the effects of the legislation in some urban areas (DIM and AOZ). For JAM, there has been a significant increase in construction activities across Mar del Plata and its surroundings since the 2001 crisis, which had not been seen since the 1960s and 1970s (when there was small boom in high rise developments) and cannot be explained by the incentives of having a weaker peso alone.

“Having 30 percent extra for development is almost an exaggeration. It means you are allowed to build 1300 square meters where you were meant to build only 1000. It is almost too much of an incentive for constructors and property investors to resist. The other problem is that, like many things, it started as a transitory measure to reactivate the local economy in 2002 but it now has over a decade in “transition”. Property developers have gradually got used to it and some have even gone beyond the already generous parameters by resorting to different sorts of dodgy exceptions. The municipality has had to intervene in repeated occasions to mitigate issues of over-construction in the coastal area and to impose new height restrictions. In turn, such interventions have produced new problems in low density

neighbourhoods in which 4-6 storeys residential buildings have popped up everywhere over the last years. The result is a very chaotic urban landscape with severe pressures in basic services and facilities” (*ibid*)

While the 2001 crisis gave municipal leaders a legitimate justification to introduce urban planning regulatory changes and more flexible construction parameters in a transitory manoeuvre that sought to stimulate the local economy, it has been their inability to manage such flexibility or to reinstate the original building controls what has unleashed an unmeasured and disorderly process of change in the urban landscape of Mar del Plata over the last decade. Similar to the experience of Valencia following the approval of LRAU, this case shows that urban policies and/or regulations originally devised to tackle economic difficulties can have longterm and unpredictable consequences in the urban landscape of a city. In the case of Mar del Plata, such changes in planning regulation have had a detrimental effect on the architectural heritage of the city. A situation that has been worsened due to the inability of the municipality to support its protection and preservation. As a result, the owners of historical buildings have often found better monetary rewards in the proposals of private investors and developers willing to take advantage of the maximum density and height authorised by the municipality since the mid-2000s (DIM and RAF).

Finally, and similar to the case of Valencia, evidence from Mar del Plata supports the idea that the impact of episodes of crisis (and the diverse urban interventions implemented in response) on the landscape of cities is not immediate but *lagged* and shows us that only a long term approach and hindsight can help us to visualise and really understand the sequence of events and the connections between different episodes of crisis.

8.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the relationship between episodes of crisis and urban policy outcomes across Valencia and Mar del Plata. It analysed a number of urban interventions and strategies articulated by municipal governments in each city in response to different crises since the 1980s. In a broad sense, both cities moved from urban agendas aimed at providing basic infrastructure and services after decades of

authoritarianism and disinvestment to more ambitious, multidimensional and longterm citywide strategies. This shift was mainly influenced by local political and economic actors who used various situations and narratives of crisis to justify the need to introduce strategic elements into the urban policy agendas of their cities, and to change their direction and content over time. Transnational urban policy trends were also important in both cities.

At the time of transition and throughout the 1980s, each municipality dealt very differently with the infrastructure and service deficits inherited, the ongoing political, economic and institutional crisis, and the social pressure of communities. New democratic leaders in Valencia pursued a number of parallel interventions, including the creation of new administrative departments, to deal with the provision of basic services and urban planning issues. Within a decade, however, they started to shift the focus of urban policy and contemplated the need for a more comprehensive local agenda that included urban strategic projects and new economic ambitions. Municipal leaders in Mar del Plata initially focused on sustaining existing arrangements in the 1980s, but then turned to a mixture of event-driven initiatives and other innovative mechanisms to secure sufficient resources to fulfil their urban responsibilities in the 1990s. Mega-events had become an important source of finance for the city since the 1970s and had contributed to the development of significant sports facilities and the provision and improvement of basic infrastructure and services in many areas.

The first strategic planning initiatives, introduced in Valencia in the 1990s and Mar del Plata in the 2000s, were shaped by both local ambitions and international trends. The experience of Barcelona in the early 1990s, from which external consultants had adopted several methodological and technical elements, was particularly influential in both cities. Nevertheless, actual processes of organisation, formulation and implementation were different in each city. In terms of participation, for instance, the experience of Mar del Plata was more successful compared to Valencia where the municipal government obstructed all forms of popular consultation. While both countries and cities benefited from a period of sustained growth following the episodes of crisis in which strategic plans emerged and were formulated, different implementation processes not only confirm the diversity and complexity of policymaking experiences across time and space, but challenge commonly held

assumptions concerning differences in urban development across the North-South divide.

Ironically, in the case of Valencia, the strategic agenda that emerged in response to crisis, changed over time in terms of both priorities and direction. It became increasingly unsustainable after a mixture of large-scale projects and mega-events gained the appeal and support of local politicians such as Rita Barbera and economic elites, distorting the original vision of the plan. In fact, the strategic agenda of Valencia became itself an agent of crisis over time, which not only exacerbated the difficult socioeconomic, political and institutional situation unleashed in 2008 but triggered some of the institutional and urban policy transformations that followed. The urban policy and development experience of Mar del Plata, on the other hand, suggests that a combination of financial issues, insufficient autonomy, political business cycles and ambitions have not contributed to a sustained, coherent and citywide urban agenda. Rather, a haphazard combination of urban interventions emerged, the product of a diverse range of municipal initiatives and mayoral manoeuvres to secure extra funds from higher levels of government and/or to negotiate the revitalisation of urban areas with private developers. Nonetheless, these did coincide with some of the projects and interventions identified in the urban strategic agenda and so to some extent it was able to be realised.

These differences in processes of implementation are important from a political perspective as well. Evidently, political continuity in Valencia did not guarantee a long term commitment to the vision and focus of the urban strategic agenda that emerged in the 1990s. In Mar del Plata, despite several changes in political leadership and the “formal” abandonment of the 2004 strategic agenda, the plan has contributed to a shared understanding of the development direction of the city. It has become a collective resource (as Healey 2010 would put it) and implicit reference that has somehow shaped some of the actual projects and urban interventions observed in Mar del Plata over the last decade, even though their origin and/or causes have been rather diverse.

The wider economic and political circumstances have been significantly different across the two case studies since the onset of the “global” financial crisis. While the situation in Valencia has been chaotic and complex, Mar del Plata has enjoyed gradual economic

recovery and growth, as well as political stability since the mid-2000s. Interestingly, and again as a result of transnational influences, both cities have embarked on revised strategic agendas inspired by ideas such as smart-intelligent cities and sustainability. Furthermore, the two cities have increasingly sought to secure additional funds from international organisations, from the EU or the IDB, by adopting guidelines and/or implementing strategies that are not always aligned with local priorities, needs and potential. Ultimately, these recent policy moves are evidence of the changing nature of transnational urban policy trends, which are not only more international in the sense that municipalities can now establish direct connections with supranational organisations and access larger pools of finance, but also depart from earlier phases of strategic planning in which ideas travelled through consultancy firms and were not necessarily linked to financial incentives.

In addition to assessing strategic policy agendas, this chapter also analysed the urban consequences of crises through a number of changes in more routine urban planning regulations introduced by municipalities. Here, both Valencia in the mid 1990s and Mar del Plata in the mid 2000s introduced measures to encourage construction activities in an attempt to reactivate their local economies and, indirectly, to enlarge their local property tax base. The intentions of these changes might have been good in principle, granting power to developers to decide what to do with urban land, the swap of government debt bonds to encourage investment in infrastructure for tourism and more flexibility in construction parameters reconfigured the structure of incentives for real estate developers as well as investors. However, for politicians, these planning regulatory changes have not only created new incentives to increase the income for their municipalities, but loopholes for corruption. For the urban landscape of both cities, such changes have not only led to (speculative) over-construction over time, but have had a detrimental effect on their architectural heritage. These urban consequences are all *lagged* and only become visible with the benefit of hindsight, after decades of implementation and help us to establish links between past and recent episodes of crisis.

The comparison of Valencia and Mar del Plata has broadened our understanding of the complexity and multiplicity of causal relationships between crises, urban policy agendas and planning regulation. Most importantly, it has reminded us that crises are not only about austerity measures and/or policy failures, but moments in which alternative

responses, tactics and opportunities to reconfigure local institutional arrangements, drive urban policy changes, achieve wider social participation and deal with ongoing challenges might also emerge.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to examine the long term impact of episodes of crisis in cities across the North-South divide and their effects on local institutional transformations and urban policy agendas. More specifically, it sought to bring into analytical conversation the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata in dealing with a combination of economic and political crises since the 1980s, and to provide a comparative assessment of both the institutional innovations that emerged and the urban policy responses introduced by their municipal authorities over the last three and a half decades. Spain's ongoing debt issues and Argentina's long history of financial instability placed current debates concerning local government responses to economic crises into context. The thesis engaged with urban research that cuts across cities from the global North and South and sought to stretch conventional approaches, methods and concepts from urban theory. An institutionally embedded and long term approach brought into analytical view a mixture of contextual specificities and local narratives that not only contribute to wider understandings of the urban dimension of crises, but help us to place more recent crises into longer term perspective. It also challenges ideas such as the "global" financial crisis and austerity urbanism, which have gained prominence in urban studies literature since the onset of the US subprime crisis in late 2007 and the subsequent sovereign debt crisis across European states, by confronting this particular set of crises with a range of different crisis experiences.

9.1 URBAN CRISES ACROSS THE NORTH-SOUTH DIVIDE

As we have learnt in this thesis, urban crises are much more than moments of economic turmoil, recession, austerity, and fiscal and monetary reform. They are moments of decision, opportunities, and changes shaped by the interests and narratives of different local actors. They create exceptional conditions for a number of transformations across the political, institutional and urban landscape of cities. The most recent episodes of major crisis across Valencia in 2008 and Mar del Plata in 2001 encourage us to consider carefully the analytical implications of contextual specificities through which numerous complexities, challenges and opportunities can be traced. Although the impact of these crises had significant institutional and urban policy consequences in both cities, the outcomes were very different. In Valencia, the 2008 crisis brought an end to an

ambitious urban strategic agenda that prioritised large-scale projects and mega-events, but did not cause any immediate political upheaval (in fact, Rita Barbera secured her sixth consecutive victory in the 2011 local elections). In Mar del Plata, however, the 2001 crisis unleashed widespread institutional chaos and the resignation of political leaders at all levels of government (as well as opportunities for new local leaders) and provided the conditions in which local business actors pressed the municipality for the adoption of a more strategic agenda.

In order to understand the implications of crises and their consequences in the local institutional and urban policymaking environment, it was helpful to consider multiple narratives from local political, economic and social actors. While the experience of Valencia evidenced how municipal officials and political leaders have used their positions to shape institutional and urban policy responses for decades (as well as for their own electoral benefit), the case of Mar del Plata showed us how middle classes and local industries have sought to pursue their own agendas and how they have actively engaged in institutional and urban development processes over the last decades. In fact, episodes of crises were narrated somewhat positively by the construction sector in Mar del Plata, where bricks and mortar constitute the classical havens for investment and an option to shelter from currency depreciation. The narratives and input of a wider range of social actors have also been important in times of wider economic and political uncertainty in both cities.

Although the 2008 and 2001 events seem to have diminished the magnitude of earlier crises, both cities have extensive experience of dealing with a mixture of inherited, recurrent and permanent crises. At the time of democratic transition in the 1980s, both cities faced a mixture of institutional, urban and political issues in addition to economic decline, consequence of authoritarian regimes, public disinvestment, rapid demographic growth and ongoing processes of deindustrialisation. In both cities, a long term approach revealed that crises often overlap with one another, and that their consequences accumulate over time: unresolved issues tend to become more complex due to multiple different reasons and eventually contribute to more permanent social and urban fragmentation. In addition, crises are not only temporary but can become a normalised feature in cities like Mar del Plata where institutional issues and urban challenges have always been present albeit at different intensities over the last few

decades. It would be difficult therefore to explain the city's recent urban development history, and the forces shaping policy choices, without considering the long term implications of crisis. Such a wide variety of experiences helps us to put in perspective aspects of the recent "global" crisis and to reconsider its wider implications for cities across the North-South divide.

The actions and interactions of local actors are fundamental to understanding crises and the processes unleashed and/or enabled by them, particularly in terms of institutional transformation and urban policy innovation. They do not only articulate different yet simultaneous narratives based on their interests and interpretations (or those of whom they represent), but actually influence and shape "prescriptions" to crises, including both immediate responses and strategies to confront future challenges. The analysis of the two case study cities not only highlighted a wide range of political, economic and social actors, but different forms of interaction, intervention, organisation and participation. In terms of individual powerful figures, the comparison of the two cities allowed us to bring into analytical conversation a charismatic politician like Rita Barbera in Valencia and a business tycoon like Aldrey Iglesias in Mar del Plata, who have used their personalistic approach and wider connections and networks across different levels of government to shape and benefit from a number of urban policy decisions over time.

The analysis also considered a wide variety of local economic actors, including powerful sectors such as developers, traditional industries as well as professional and/or business organisations. In Valencia, the *promotores* (developers) constitute the most influential local economic sector, with a longstanding tradition of power and controlled by prominent families even during decades of *Franquismo*. In Mar del Plata, the most powerful economic actors are the professional organisations related to construction activities (the *Colegio de Martilleros* and the *Centro de Constructores y Anexos*). They have influenced important urban policy decisions, such as the adoption of a strategic planning initiative following the crisis of 2001. External consultants and expert teams have been key to exploring the transnational origin of the urban strategic agendas adopted in each city and how ideas and models have (in)directly influenced their methodological approaches. In the case of Valencia, consultants were able to shape organisational structures and urban strategies with the direct support of Rita Barbera for

over a decade since the mid-1990s. In Mar del Plata, they have come and gone over the last few decades, mainly invited by local professional organisations and with the support of municipal offices in some cases.

A wide range of social actors have engaged in multiple institutional and urban policy processes in both cities since the 1980s, resorting to different forms of organisation and intervention over time. In Valencia, movements organised around basic infrastructure and service demands have declined since the 1980s, but new forms of mobilisation and community action have emerged since the 2008 crisis – in which many neighbourhoods have strengthened their organisational capacity and developed their own projects. In Mar del Plata, although mechanisms for wider participation and engagement between communities and municipal authorities have been in place for decades, they have been insufficient to channel the multiple demands of different groups. As a result, there has been a steady increase of aggressive and violent forms of demonstration since the 1980s. All these actors have contributed to the consolidation of distinctive political landscapes and local institutional cultures in each city which are characterised by a mixture of uneven power relations, bureaucratic weaknesses, public-private alignments and social pressures in both cases.

Lastly, urban crises are not simply economic in origin but are both politically constituted and politically mediated. The experience of Valencia in 2008 and Mar del Plata in 2001 showed us that crises bring about numerous opportunities for local transformation, including the reconfiguration of municipal departments, the articulation of new visions and agendas to deal with urban matters, and the emergence of new and multiple forms of social participation, mobilisation and engagement in policymaking processes. Although powerful economic actors might have had relative advantage to shape and benefit from changes in planning regulation, there is no question that the crises of 2008 and 2001 created exceptional conditions for significant institutional change and the emergence of initiatives that benefited wider social groups.

An institutionally embedded and historical approach allowed us to trace and examine the implications of political crises. In the 1980s, we saw both Spain and Argentina undergo a process of deep political and institutional transformation after decades of authoritarian military regimes. The enthusiasm and institutional agility of the first

democratic leaders at the local level were both vital to deal with multiple economic pressures and legislative contradictions in a context of widespread instability and uncertainty. The optimism of municipal actors made possible the articulation and improvisation of financial and administrative responses to the transition crises and the implementation of different mechanisms to mitigate unfavourable municipal dynamics, ranging from absenteeism to corruption. Although the state of urban infrastructure, services and facilities inherited by the first democratic leaders was precarious in both cities, a longstanding socialist tradition in local politics (which had survived the military dictatorships in the 1960s and 1980s) and earlier efforts to mitigate issues of over-construction and precarious living conditions in many areas put Mar del Plata in a relatively advantageous position in contrast to Valencia after decades of *Franquismo*. Such differences help us to challenge too easy assumptions about differences in urban development processes across the North-South divide.

Processes of decentralisation have been overall slow to implement and remain somehow incomplete due to a number of constitutional contradictions and jurisdictional conflicts yet to be resolved in both Valencia and Mar del Plata. However, greater economic and political autonomy has enabled the municipalities of both cities to decide upon important institutional and urban policy matters and to shape their own development path over the last three decades. While a number of administrative challenges and contradictions have emerged over the years, which have made the consolidation of a robust local institution difficult, the experience of both cities demonstrates that institutional agility and cross-scalar relations have helped to sustain municipal operations. Certainly, intergovernmental tactics and informal arrangements have been key to overcome both limited financial autonomy and the additional pressures unleashed in time of widespread crisis. The municipality of Valencia is not autonomous, but rather *heteronomous* and dependent on a mixture of local economic actors, regional and national governments and subsidies of the European Union. In Mar del Plata, the municipality could not function without nurturing public-private relations, or provincial and national political networks through informal arrangements. The consideration of intergovernmental dynamics is thus essential to better understand local institutional and urban policy developments as well as the ways in which regional, national and international actors might influence them.

9.2 URBAN POLICIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

It is precisely in these convoluted institutional environments that urban policymaking processes take place, and where both routine interventions and longterm strategic agendas are debated, formulated and implemented. As we have seen, local institutions in both Valencia and Mar del Plata have been very sensitive to crises. Urban policies have served as “platforms” for local actors to communicate with one another, to negotiate their multiple interests and to devise solutions. Unsurprisingly, urban policy responses and changes in the content and direction of local strategic agendas have been shaped by a mixture of narratives and interests that emerge in times of crisis as well as international urban policy trends. It is evident that the focus of urban policies in both cities has moved from an emphasis on basic infrastructure and services in the 1980s to more ambitious and multidimensional strategic agendas over the last two decades. The municipality of Valencia, however, was the first one to consider the need for a more comprehensive, citywide and long term urban strategic vision in the late 1980s. The first democratic leaders of Mar del Plata focused on sustaining existing administrative arrangements and turned to a mixture of event-driven initiatives and other innovative mechanisms, including a plebiscite to consult on the introduction of a new local tax, to secure sufficient resources to fulfil their urban responsibilities throughout the 1990s.

The first strategic planning initiatives introduced in Valencia (1993) and Mar del Plata (2001) were the result of local ambitions, international trends and shaped by the crisis narratives of different local actors. Ironically, the urban strategic agenda implemented in Valencia in response to ongoing economic difficulties, and the onset of the 1993 crisis in Spain, became increasingly unsustainable over time, particularly after a mixture of large-scale projects and mega-events gained the support of political leaders such as Rita Barbera and the original vision was distorted. In fact, the strategic plan became itself an agent of crisis, which not only exacerbated the difficult economic and political situation unleashed in 2008 but triggered some of the institutional and urban policy transformations that followed thereafter. The strategic development experience of Mar del Plata, on the other hand, suggests that a haphazard combination of urban interventions emerged as a result of a wide range of municipal initiatives and mayoral manoeuvres to secure extra funds from provincial and national governments and to negotiate the revitalisation of urban areas with private developers. Although the

implementation phase was not accompanied by sufficient economic resources and the support of successive mayors faded after 2004, some of the urban interventions that materialised over the years coincided with the projects and/or priority areas identified in the original urban strategic agenda.

Finally, the municipalities of both cities have pursued a number of changes in more routine urban planning regulations in times of crisis. Both Valencia in the mid 1990s and Mar del Plata in the mid 2000s introduced measures to encourage construction activities in an attempt to reactivate their local economies, which included granting power to developers to decide what to do with urban land and more flexibility in construction parameters. While the intentions of these changes in planning regulation might have been good in principle, as they helped to create new incentives for real estate developers and investors as well as new sources of municipal revenue, they also created a number of loopholes for corruption over time. The consequences of this type of responses for the urban landscape of both cities have been *lagged*. The new regulations have also led to speculative over-construction and have had a detrimental effect on the historical and architectural heritage of both cities. In hindsight, after decades of implementation and visible changes in the urban landscape of both Valencia and Mar del Plata, it is possible to establish connections between past and recent episodes of crisis, urban policy responses and actual outcomes.

Tracing and examining different aspects of planning ideas, strategic models, sources of finance, methodologies, levels of participation and involvement of political and economic elites, degrees of implementation, links between local authorities and supranational organisations across the two case study cities have helped us to identify several points in which their urban strategic experiences have converged or diverged. The comparison of their policymaking experiences have broadened our understanding of the complexity and multiple causal relationships between crises and urban policy outcomes. Most importantly, it has reminded us that crises are not only about urban austerity, but moments in which alternative ideas, responses, tactics and opportunities for local institutional transformation and urban policy change also emerge. As Images 03 and 04 in the previous chapter evidence, some of the most iconic urban development projects observed in Valencia and Mar del Plata at present are the (in)direct outcome of urban policy responses to earlier episodes of crisis.

9.3 THEORISING URBAN GOVERNANCE FOR TIMES OF CRISIS

This thesis has critiqued and extended analytical insights on urban governance by drawing and building on the wealth of experiences of both Valencia and Mar del Plata in dealing with episodes of crisis, examining shared features and differences across local actors, institutional transformations and urban policy initiatives in order to contribute to urban governance literature and knowledge about crises more generally. As Robinson (2006) reminds us through her postcolonial critique of urban studies and her contributions to comparative urbanism (2011b, 2014), comparisons not only allow us to review influential urban research by revisiting, interrogating, and building on some of the theoretical claims presented in the last century, but to explore new ways of understanding cities without the influence of predetermined methods and concepts. The experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata at dealing with multiple crises over the last decades have certainly provided us with a rich empirical base for the exploration and analysis of different aspects of urban governance and, indeed, the opportunity to fill some of the gaps in the literature discussed in Chapter 2.

The notion of crisis has certainly served as a explanatory variable to interrogate urban governance literature. Urban crises are multidimensional, with multiple temporalities that are place-specific and therefore cannot be fully explained by universal conceptualisations framed within the broad categories of political economy or Marxism. This is not to say that insights of regulation theory and the globalisation of capitalism and neoliberalism have not offered useful frameworks to study and explain aspects of crisis in many places, but to highlight that nuances from the experience of many cities (particularly from the South) have remained largely unexplored and under-theorised in urban studies literature.

While the original insights of regulation theory have continued to inspire the study of crises around the world and explained the institutional responses to recurrent crises of capitalist development in many different locations, it can be concluded that such analyses have not been sensitive to a number of historical and institutional aspects that are key to understanding urban crises. The experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata (and, perhaps, of many other ordinary cities across the North and South) have shown us that municipalities are more than agents to resist capitalism or to simply implement

variations of the austerity measures and neoliberal policies introduced at the national level in times of crisis. In fact, both cities have been dealing with a wide variety of issues derived from authoritarian regimes, demographic growth, migration, chronic poverty, social and urban fragmentation, and corruption for more than three decades.

Moreover, they have succeeded in formulating and implementing institutional changes and urban policy initiatives that have helped them to mitigate some of these issues over time. These local efforts, however, rarely feature in urban studies literature dealing with crisis, which has mainly focused on extreme cases of recession and fiscal austerity (see Peck 2012, for example), and social mobilisation and resistance (see Ponticelli and Voth 2011, for a comparative study), and thus offered pessimistic analyses with limited or no reference to local institutional aspects that could be useful to consider for the resolution of future crises. Meanwhile, conceptual innovation has been somewhat “trapped” in existing generalisations and assumptions about the catastrophic implications of crises and a series of short-term economic, political and social conflicts thought to be irreconcilable and even apocalyptic.

New Institutional Economics’ (NIE) concern with reality and commitment to the empirical analysis and comparative assessment of actual institutional settings has certainly helped us to move away from orthodox and econometric approaches in the study of crises. It has provided us with an alternative approach for the study of actors and processes shaping institutional and urban policy responses to crisis in Valencia and Mar del Plata. As Douglas North (1990) and Oliver Williamson (2000) have insisted for decades, NIE allows us to formulate new questions and answers that advance our understanding of the institutions governing economic, social and political relations. Following Panizza and Philip’s (2014) suggestion to learn from processes through which alternative narratives and solutions to crises are crafted, we have been able to discover a wide range of shared features and differences across the institutions of the two case studies, which have remained largely unexamined in urban literature dealing with crises and governance. As we have seen, informal arrangements amongst public-private actors at the local level as well as public-public actors across different levels of government have been essential for municipal institutions to perform their functions. Formal institutional structures and functions cannot completely explain the complexity and diversity of processes enabling urban governance, institutional change and/or urban

policy innovations either in Valencia or in Mar del Plata.

Nevertheless, NIE has mainly focused on how political and social structures might distort, obstruct or hinder economic activities and/or the “hazards” associated with particular weaknesses of public-sector institutions. This form of analysis had shed light on a number of issues that seem to disrupt or undermine economic activities and tended to portray state institutions as inefficient actors in need of reform. While the institutions of local governments in Valencia and Mar del Plata display a number of bureaucratic weaknesses, such as the limited administrative and technical autonomy of municipal officials dealing with urban matters, it is evident that they have been able to provide feasible solutions in practice – both routinely or in times of crisis. Informal institutions and bureaucratic weaknesses do not always accrue to operational obstacles. In fact, many public-private transactions and/or intergovernmental agreements might actually depend on them. This thesis opens up an opportunity to start thinking more carefully about alternative organisational frameworks, practices and policy arrangements that, despite presenting flaws, seem to contribute to the urban development of cities and therefore should feature more prominently and positively in current theoretical analyses.

A comparative and long term approach to urban governance has therefore helped us to revise and shed light on processes of economic transformation and crisis events over the last three decades, but which have been mostly inspired by experiences from the US and Europe. The wide range of narratives and actors examined in Chapters 5-6, for instance, helps us to bring out the diversity of local economic, political and social interests at play in times of crisis and the ability of different individuals and groups to engage in and shape processes of local institutional transformation and/or urban policy-making. Certainly, the experiences of Valencia and Mar del Plata not only bring into analytical view new nuances about local actors and their actions, which are fundamental to understand processes of institutional and urban change in both cities, but challenge existing conceptualisations of normative models of governance based on the emergence of business coalitions and their tactics to harness the power of local governments (as in Cox and Mair’s 1988 analysis of the politics of economic restructuring across US cities). Similarly, as we learned in Chapters 7-8, intergovernmental relations and the institutional agility of municipal leaders and officials to navigate federal political systems in both Valencia and Mar del Plata have much to offer to urban governance

literature and, particularly, to analyses drawing on regime theory. Evidence from the two case studies provides us with new nuances about the complex environment in which urban policy agendas are negotiated and decided upon. Rather than being ‘cleansed’ of ethnocentric assumptions, Stoker and Mossberger’s consolidated “urban regime” theory is largely unsuitable for cross-national comparisons and retains key tenets and components inspired by the experience and conditions of North American cities.

This thesis offered an open and exploratory analytical approach to urban comparative research that challenges both the methodological orthodoxies which have consolidated in the field and the parochial nature of concepts and ideas associated with them. It allowed us to revisit events and interrogate theories that have shaped our understanding of them, particularly in relation to episodes of crisis and urban governance, across Valencia and Mar del Plata – two ordinary cities that according to the tenets of traditional comparative urbanism would be separated by the North-South analytical divide or deemed incommensurable at worst. Beginning with local processes, from specific phenomena within and across cities, as we have seen in relation to crises and urban governance, while being mindful of contextual specificities and path dependencies, constitutes a challenging but rewarding exercise for conceptual innovation. It allows us to address some of the limitations of the new and old theoretical and normative perspectives that have dominated urban governance literature. Indeed, crises and urban governance both constitute empirical objects of study, economic as well as political phenomena, that result from the interactions of particular actors, institutional arrangements, and historical specificities. Therefore, they must be compared with other experiences, other crises, and other models of urban governance over and over again in order to understand the multiple and changing forces shaping them. For this we proposed alternative ways to think through crisis narratives and temporalities as well as the formal and informal institutions of governance.

All in all, it is evident that crises create exceptional conditions that allow multiple transformations across the municipal structures and dynamics of cities like Valencia and Mar del Plata to emerge. In this respect, crises might need to be seen more positively and even a “desirable condition” to disrupt institutional inertias, complacent arrangements of governance and urban policy agendas that might not longer work as they had intended upon implementation, as well as to produce necessary changes in the

political landscape of cities. There is no need to fear crises: they can come from anywhere at any time. As the Greek word *krisis* reminds us, crises are moments of stress where a decision must be made. They are also moments of necessity, chance and opportunity to make decisions; they bring about the possibility for a new beginning, to implement new ideas, visions and to shape our future. As we have seen, there is life after crises, even after default in the case of cities across Argentina. This is not to say that everything is the same after default, but to highlight that different alternatives emerged across the economic, political and social domain of many cities like Mar del Plata. Indeed, a long term view shows us that both Valencia and Mar del Plata have become more complex in several ways, administratively and institutionally, but they have also improved the quality of life of people in many ways and have not returned to the precariousness of several decades ago. There is evidence to be optimistic, then: both cities have overcome multiple episodes of crisis, provided solutions and continued to innovate, to find alternatives and to deal with emerging challenges and struggles over decades. In light of the ongoing crises across the western world, views from the South have important implications for the understanding of cities in the twenty first century and the future direction of urban theory more generally. The difficult socioeconomic and political situation of many cities across North America and Europe since 2008 does not seem to be so different from many recurrent episodes of crisis in the South; therefore there are perhaps many situations, responses, and strategies from which cities in the North and the scholars studying them could learn from.

9.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

In addition to comparisons and more attention to ordinary cities across the North-South divide, this thesis has advocated for an urban research agenda that is more sensitive and open to the historical specificity and institutional diversity of cities in the study of urban crises and governance. Inspired by the notion of the *longue durée* (Guldi and Armitage 2014), a long term approach has allowed us to trace a mixture of local experiences, groups of actors, interpretations of crises and processes of institutional change, democracy, decentralisation as well as urban policy shifts over the last three decades. The idea of multiple temporalities of crises not only helps us to think about the cumulative effect of unresolved economic, institutional and urban issues over time but to place in perspective more recent episodes such as the “global” crisis. Furthermore, a

long term analysis reveals a number of processes behind institutional change and urban policy shifts that evidence the dynamic nature and constant evolution of local development processes, as well as the multiple efforts of municipal institutions, leaders and officials to respond to ongoing challenges, pressures from economic and social actors, and recurrent episodes of crises.

The comparison of these two cities demonstrated that although informal institutions might be seen as obstacles by some, they actually bring about opportunities. Informal institutions have been often associated with unfavourable, obscure, and dishonest practices amongst public-private actors in both Valencia and Mar del Plata, but evidence tells us that a certain level of informal arrangements has contributed positively to their decentralisation experiences and has been key to overcoming both limited financial autonomy and the additional pressures unleashed in time of crisis. In this respect, informal institutions are not necessarily unfavourable, neither do they constitute an obstacle that needs to be corrected nor practices that must be “formalised”. Instead, they pose several advantages, facilitating and enabling processes of change that “formal” structures and procedures alone would actually make more difficult. While it is true that corruption, for instance, has become a stronger obstacle over time, and made both municipalities more vulnerable and/or prone to crises (particularly in Valencia), it is unclear and perhaps “unmeasurable” whether this has anything to do with a higher degree of institutional informality or with other structures of incentives enabled by actual planning regulations.

While I have initiated an analytical conversation between two ordinary cities, Valencia and Mar del Plata, this thesis is an invitation to the reader to grapple with the rich experience of these and other cities dealing with multiple kinds of crises, institutional and urban challenges. It is also an invitation to think together through the experiences of their own cities and continue creating new insights and analytical connections whether through the intensities or permanence of crises, the absence and/or presence of different institutional features, the local and/or international nature of urban policies and so forth.

I would like to insist on the need for and potential of a more comparative, multi-dimensional and long term approach to understand 1) the urban consequences of crisis and 2) urban governance. Having established that episodes of crisis are fundamental to

understanding the institutional and urban development path of cities, and recognising that crises are here to stay, it is imperative to change the focus of empirical analysis; moving away from a focus on their immediate and mostly catastrophic macroeconomic consequences, the fiscal and monetary policies that follow, and the austerity and neoliberal measures that are often “prescribed”, and focusing more on the opportunities to induce local institutional change and to experiment with urban policies. Here, more research on formal/informal institutions (particularly on relationships and/or networks amongst public and private actors) is clearly overdue; more analyses with a view to the opportunities that informal institutions bring about for local politicians, officials and bureaucracies not only to deal with everyday responsibilities, functions and routine tasks, and mitigate longstanding urban issues, but to respond to different types of crises. More research is also needed on the boundaries between corruption, public-private relationships and corporate “schmoozing”. While the former has certainly become a stronger obstacle over time in both Valencia and Mar del Plata, the latter seems to have contributed to their ability to mobilise private capital and larger investments in urban development projects.

My intuition is that many cities around the world might be in the process of expanding their sources of income, not only through property taxes or other local rates, but through many different tactics and arrangements that are not necessarily written or “formalised”. As much as the municipalities of Valencia and Mar del Plata, many cities need to raise more resources in order to finance both routine functions and urban development strategies in the coming years. It would be empirically and analytically useful, therefore, to explore and learn from their “unwritten” and informal practices and experiences. The case studies in this thesis already identified that more work is needed in, at least, two areas. Firstly, on the tactics used by middle classes and local industries to intervene and benefit from the opportunities opened up by crises. The implications of ignoring their narratives and actions or deeming them inappropriate evidence for our understanding of urban crises and urban governance would not help us to advance our knowledge about the contradictory nature of urban development processes across the North and South. Secondly, on the contradictions embedded in ambitious urban strategic agendas due to a mixture of local interests and transnational trends. Evidence from the most recent shifts in the urban strategic agendas of both Valencia and Mar del Plata, toward policy models inspired by smart and/or sustainable cities, suggests that local socioeconomic strengths,

needs and potential have been rarely or insufficiently considered. However, they have become increasingly appealing due to the financial incentives offered by supranational organisations such as the EU and the IDB.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Acemoglu, D., Johnson, S. and Robinson J.A. (2005) 'Institutions as a fundamental cause of long- run growth', in Aghion, P. and Durlauf, S.N. (eds) *Handbook of Economic Growth*, Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J.A. (2012) *Why Nations Fail – The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty*, London: Profile Books Ltd.
- Aglietta, M. (1979) *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, London: New Left Books.
- Agranoff, R. (2010) *Local Governments and Their Intergovernmental Networks in Federalising Spain*, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press
- Alcala-Santaella, F., Diaz Orueta, F., Gines, X. and Loures, M.L (2012) 'Valencia', in Subirats Humet, J., Marti-Costa, M., Iglesias, M. and Tomas, M. (eds) *Políticas Urbanas en España: Grandes Ciudades, Actores y Gobiernos Locales*, Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 130-148.
- Alcala-Santaella, F. (2013) – Personal conversation, Valencia 10th October 2013.
- Alesina, A., Ardagna, S. and Gali, J. (1998) 'Tales of Fiscal Adjustment', *Economic Policy*, 13, 27, 487-545.
- Alesina, A., Perotti, R., Tavares, J., Obstfeld, M. and Eichengreen, B. (1998) 'The political economy of fiscal adjustment', *Brooking Papers on Economic Activity*, 1, 197-266.
- Allen, A. (2011) 'Neoliberal restructuring at work in the South: The production and re-production of scarcity and vulnerability in the Argentine fisheries sector', Unpublished doctoral thesis, London: University College London.

- Allen, A. (2001) 'Urban sustainability under threat: the restructuring of the fishing industry in Mar del Plata, Argentina', *Development in Practice*, 11, 2-3, 152-173.
- Alvarez, C., Manes, M., Paredes, P. and Ivani, G. (2011) 'El acceso al crédito de los gobiernos subnacionales: el caso de las provincias y municipios de la República Argentina', Paper presented at the Jornadas Internacionales de Finanzas Publicas, Cordoba: Universidad de Cordoba.
- Arrow, K.J. (1987) 'Reflections on the Essays', in Feiwel, G. (ed) *Arrow and the Foundations of the Theory of Economic Policy*, New York: NYU Press, 727-34.
- Asociación Valencia 2015 (1999) Valencia en Marcha, Valencia: Asociación Plan Estratégico de Valencia 2015.
- Asociación Valencia 2015 (2000) Valencia: Modelo de Ciudad. La Evaluación del desarrollo de la ciudad de Valencia entre 1994 y 2000, Valencia: Asociación Plan Estratégico de Valencia 2015.
- Asociación Valencia 2015 (2002) La Evaluación del Desarrollo Estratégico de Valencia, Valencia: Asociación Plan Estratégico de Valencia 2015.
- Ayuntamiento de Valencia (1983) Libro de la Ciudad 1979-1982: cuatro años de gestión municipal democrática, Valencia: Ayuntamiento de Valencia.
- Ayuntamiento de Valencia (1987) La Valencia de los 90: una ciudad con futuro, Valencia: Ayuntamiento de Valencia.
- Ayuntamiento de Valencia (2014) Acta de la sesión ordinaria del Ayuntamiento Pleno celebrada el día 30 de Mayo de 2014, Valencia: Ayuntamiento de Valencia.
- Barnes, L. and Hall, P.A. (2013) 'Neoliberalism and Social Resilience in the Developed Democracies', in Hall, P.A. and Lamont, M. (eds) *Social Resilience in the Neoliberal Era*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 209-238.

- Baxter, J. and J. Eyles (1997) 'Evaluating qualitative research in social geography: establishing 'rigour' in interview analysis', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS, 22, 4, 505-525.
- BBC News (2014) 'Argentine President Cristina Fernandez breaks six-week silence', BBC News – Latin America and Caribbean, 23th January 2014.
- Becker, J. and Raza, W. (1999) 'Great Crisis or Permanent Crisis? Some Reflections on a Comparative Periodisation of Austria and Uruguay', Unpublished paper sponsored by the Austrian Science Fund (P12378-OEK), Wien: Wirtschafts Universitat.
- Becker, J. (2002) 'Integración y regulación: la Union Europea y el Mercosur Comparados', in Gudynas, E. (comp.) *Sustentabilidad y Regionalismo en el Cono Sur*, Montevideo: Editorial Coscoroba, 9-35.
- Bernard, R.H. (2005) *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Lanham: Altamira Press.
- Bertola, L. and Ocampo, J.A. (2012) Conference: *Learning from Latin America: Debt Crises, Debt Rescues and When and Why They Work*, Institute for the Study of the Americas and CAF, London: February 2012.
- Blanco, I. and Subirats, J. (2012) 'Políticas urbanas en España: dinámicas de transformación y retos ante la crisis', *Geopolítica(s)*, 3, 1, 15-33.
- Bocker, R. (2005) 'Desarrollo, planificación estratégica y corporativismo local: el caso de Mar del Plata, Argentina', Unpublished doctoral thesis, Tarragona: Universidad Rovira i Virgili.
- Boira, J.V. (2012) 'Dinámica inmobiliaria, suelo y población en la ciudad de Valencia, 1960-2009', *Scripta Nova*, 16, 406, 387-424.

- Boyer, R. (1992) *La teoría de la regulación*, Valencia: Alfons el Magnanim.
- Brenner, N., Peck., J. and Theodore, N. (2010) 'After Neoliberalisation', *Globalisations*, 7, 3, 327- 345.
- Brenner, N. (2013) 'Theses on Urbanisation', *Public Culture*, 25, 1, 85-114.
- Burriel, E. L. (2008) 'La "Década Prodigiosa" del Urbanismo Español 1997-2006', *Scripta Nova*, 12, 270, 1-30.
- Camagni, R. (2002) 'Papel económico y contradicciones espaciales de las ciudades globales: el contexto funcional, cognitivo y evolutivo', in Becattini, G., Costa, M.T. and Trullen i Thomas, J. (coord.) *Desarrollo Local: Teorias y Estrategias*, Madrid: S.L. Civitas Ediciones, 215-244.
- Campanella, T.J. (2008) *The Concrete Dragon: China's Urban Revolution and What it Means for the World*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Cantanero Sanz, S., Sanchis Palacio, J.R. and Comenche Matinez, J.M. (2011) 'El papel del agente de desarrollo local en la creación de empresas en el contexto del desarrollo local – el caso valenciano', *Scripta Nova*, XV, 358, 1-28.
- Castañeda, E. (2012) 'The *Indignados* of Spain: a precedent to Occupy Wall Street', *Social Movement Studies*, 11, 3/4, 309-319.
- Castree, N. (2013) 'Crisis, continuity and change: neoliberalism, the left and the future of capitalism', *Antipode*, 41, 185-213.
- Ceceña, A. E. (2001) 'La territorialidad de la dominación. Estados Unidos y América Latina', *Revista Chiapas*, 12, 7-30.
- CEPAL (2002) *Mar del Plata productiva: diagnostico y elementos para una propuesta de desarrollo local*, Buenos Aires: Naciones Unidas.

CEPAL (2003a) Planificación estratégica territorial y políticas públicas para el desarrollo local, Santiago de Chile: Naciones Unidas.

CEPAL (2003b) La cuestión regional y local en América Latina, Santiago de Chile: Naciones Unidas.

CEyD (2004a) Documento de Trabajo Nro. 1: Un instrumento pionero para la gestión estratégica de las ciudades. Valencia: Centro de Estrategias y Desarrollo.

CEyD (2004b) Valencia en los primeros años del siglo XXI: Análisis de situación para la Estrategia 2004-2005. Valencia: Centro de Estrategias y Desarrollo.

Chattopadhyay, S. (2013) 'Decentralised provision of public services in developing countries: a review of theoretical discourses and empirical evidence', *Social Change*, 43, 3, 421-441.

Chudnovsky, D. and Lopez, A. (2007) *The Elusive Quest for Growth in Argentina*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan .

Ciccolella, P. and Magnaqui, I. (1999) 'Prólogo', in Sassen, S., *La ciudad global: Nueva York, Londres, Tokio*, Buenos Aires: Eudeba

Cignoli, A., Nuñez, A.E., Villadeamigo, J.D., Rotolo, M., and Alvarez, D. (1997) *La cuestión urbana en el pos-Fordismo: La dinámica reciente del desarrollo urbano de Mar del Plata*, Rosario: Homo Sapiens Ediciones.

Cities Alliance (2006) Guide to City Development Strategies: Improving Urban Performance, Washington: The Cities Alliance.

Clarke, S.E. (1995) 'Institutional logics and local economic development: a comparative analysis of eight American cities', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 19, 4, 513-533.

Clarke, S.E., Stevens Redburn, F. and Buss, T. (1985) 'Symposium: the local impacts of

economic change', *Urban Affairs Review*, 21, 2, 139-141.

Compromis (2015) 'Molla: el cambio de modelo pasa necesariamente por garantizar un urbanismo responsable', Compromis – Noticias, 13th Abril 2015.

Coraggio, J.L. (2001) 'La promoción del desarrollo en las ciudades: el rol de los gobiernos municipales', Paper presented at the Reunion Anual de Trabajo Red Numero 5 "Políticas Sociales Urbanas", Montevideo: URB-AL

Coase, R. (1998) 'The New Institutional Economics', *The American Economic Review*, 88, 2, 72-74.

Cox, K.R. and Mair, A. (1988) 'Locality and community in the politics of local economic development', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 78, 2, 307-325.

Crot, L. (2006) 'Scenographic and cosmetic planning: globalisation and territorial restructuring in Buenos Aires', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 28, 3, 227-251.

Cubel, A. (2004) 'Historia económica de España (Siglo XX)', Curso de Posgrado Analisis Economico: Esquemas 2003-2004, Facultad de Economía, Universidad de Valencia.

Cuco Giner, J. (2009) *Metamorfosis Urbanas – Ciudades Españolas en la Dinámica Global*, Barcelona: Icaria Editorial.

Davies, J.S. and Trounstein, J.L. (2009>12) 'Urban Politics and the New Institutionalism', in Mossberger, K., Clarke, S.E., and John, P. (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Urban Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 130-148.

De Paz, G. and Rescia P. (2007) 'Renovación Cumbre: Costanera de Mar del Plata', Facultad de Arquitectura, Urbanismo y Diseño, Mar del Plata: UNMdP, 24-29.

- Delamont, S. (2004) 'Ethnography and participant observation', in C. Seale, G. Giampietro, J. F. Gubrium and D. Silverman (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice*, London: Sage, 375-390.
- Denters, B. and Mossberger, K. (2006) 'Building blocks for a methodology for comparative urban political research', *Urban Affairs*, 41, 4, 550-571.
- Deutsche Bank (2006) *China's Commodity Hunger: Implications for Africa and Latin America*, Deutsche Bank Research: Frankfurt am Main, June 13th 2006.
- Diaz Orueta, F. (2010) 'Regímenes urbanos y movimiento ciudadano en Valencia', *Cuaderno Urbano: Espacio, Cultura y Sociedad*, 9, 9, 275-294.
- Diaz Orueta, F. and Fainstein, S. (2008) 'The new mega-projects: genesis and impacts', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 32, 759-767.
- DiGaetano, A. and Lawless, P. (1999) 'Urban governance and industrial decline: governing structures and policy agendas in Birmingham and Sheffield, England and Detroit, Michigan', *Urban Affairs Review*, 34, 546-577.
- Dunford, M. (1990) 'Theories of Regulation', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 8, 297-321
- Dunford, M. (2000) 'Globalisation and theories of regulation', in Palan, R. (ed.) *Global Political Economy: Contemporary Theories*, London/New York: Routledge, 146-173.
- Eaton, K. (2001) 'Decentralisation, democratisation and liberalisation: the history of revenue sharing in Argentina, 1934 and 1999', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 33, 1-28.
- ECLAC (2008) *Economic and Trade Relations between Latin America and Asia-Pacific: The Link with China*, Santiago de Chile: United Nations.

ECLAC (2011) People's Republic of China and Latin America and the Caribbean: Ushering in a new era in the economic and trade relationship, Santiago de Chile: United Nations.

Eguizabal, C. (2010) 'The United States and Central America since 2000: free trade and diaspora diplomacy', in Dominguez, J.I. and R. Fernandez de Castro (eds.), *Contemporary US-Latin American Relations: Cooperation or Conflict in the 21st Century*, New York: Routledge, 64- 82.

El Confidencial (2016) 'Ley anti-Bañuelos: la Comunidad Valenciana dejara de ser un gran solar urbanizable', El Confidencial – Valencia, 14th Noviembre 2016.

El Diario (2015a) 'La integración de Podemos hace "mas fuertes y plurales" a Guanyem Valencia', El Diario – Comunidad Valenciana, 16th Marzo 2015.

El Diario (2015b) 'La confesión que me entrego Francisco Correa', El Diario – Opinión, 21st Octubre 2015.

El Mundo (2016) 'Salvador perdira que promotoras impulsen la clasificación de suelo', El Mundo – Economía, 15th Noviembre 2016.

El Pais (2005a) 'El Consell aprueba la ley de urbanismo que sustituirá a la LRAU 10 años después', El Pais – Archivo, 21st Mayo 2005.

El Pais (2005b) 'Capitalismo de casino', El Pais – Archivo, 22nd Diciembre 2005.

El Pais (2010) 'Barbera pago al grupo Laterne por trabajos que no se realizaron', El Pais – Comunidad Valenciana, 23rd July 2010.

El Pais (2014) 'La estrategia de la provechosa apatía: El Parlamento Europeo informo en contra del Gobierno valenciano del que formo parte el candidato Gonzalez Pons', El Pais – Opinión, 13th Abril 2014.

- El Pais (2015) 'Valencia: Compromis arrebató el gobierno a Barbera', El Pais – Elecciones Municipales, 24th Mayo 2015.
- El Pais (2017) 'Correa, Crespo, El Bigotes, condenados a 13 años de prisión por la trama Gürtel de Valencia', El Pais – Comunidad Valenciana, 10th Febrero 2017.
- Ezcurra, R. and Rodriguez-Pose, A. (2009) 'Decentralisation of social protection expenditure and economic growth in the OECD', *Publius*, 41, 1, 146-157.
- Fernandez Jilberto, A.E. and B. Hogenboom (2010) 'Latin America and China: South-South relations in a new era', in Fernandez Jilberto, A.E. and B. Hogenboom (eds), *Latin America Facing China: South-South Relations beyond the Washington Consensus*, New York: Berghahn Books, 1-32.
- Ferreyra, S. (2013) 'La descentralización en el proyecto municipal del Partido Socialista Democrático: del imaginario tocquevilliano a las recetas eficientistas (1958-1966', Programa Inter-universitario de Historia Política, Buenos Aires: CONICET.
- Fourcade-Gourinchas, M. and Babb S.L. (2002) 'The rebirth of the liberal creed: Paths to neoliberalism in four countries', *American Journal of Sociology*, 108, 3, 533-579.
- French, S. and Leyshon, A. (2010) 'These f@#king guys: the terrible waste of a good crisis', *Environment and Planning A*, 42, 2549-2559.
- Gaja, F. (1996) 'La transformacion de Valencia (I): grandes proyectos urbanísticos', *Urbanismo*, 28, 78-85.
- Gaja, F. (2002) *Pensar Valencia*, Valencia: Universidad Politecnica de Valencia
- Geddes, M. (2014) 'Neoliberalism and local governance: radical developments in Latin America', *Urban Studies*, forthcoming.

- Gennero, A. and Ferraro, C. (2002) *Mar del Plata productiva: diagnostico y elementos para una propuesta de desarrollo local*, Buenos Aires: CEPAL Naciones Unidas.
- Gilbert, A.G. and Ward P.M. (1985) *Housing, the State and the Poor: Policy and Practice in Three Latin American Cities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goldfrank, B. and Schrank, A. (2009) 'Municipal neoliberalism and municipal socialism: urban political economy in Latin America', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, 2, 443-462.
- Gonzalez, S. (2005) 'The politics of the economic crisis and restructuring in the Basque Country and Spain during the 1980s', *Space and Polity*, 9, 2, 93-112.
- Gonzalez, S. (2010) 'Bilbao and Barcelona 'in motion'. How urban regeneration 'models' travel and mutate in the global flows of policy tourism', *Urban Studies*, 48, 7, 1397-1418.
- Gonzalez-Orus, R. (1986) 'La economia vasca durante los gobiernos del PNV', *Cuadernos de Alzate*, 4, 65-79.
- Gonzalez Portilla, M. (1997) 'Crisis industrial y nacionalismo a finales de siglo', *Cuadernos de Alzate*, 17, 21-36.
- Gottdiener, M. (1985) 'Symposium: whatever happened to the urban crisis', *Urban Affairs Review*, 20, 4, 421-427.
- Greenwood, R., Magan Diaz, A., Li, S.X. and Cespedes Lorente, J. (2010) 'The multiplicity of institutional logics and the heterogeneity of organisational responses', *Organisation Science*, 21, 2, 521-539.
- Grugel, J. and Riggirozzi, M.P. (2007) 'The return of the state in Argentina', *International Affairs*, 83, 1, 87-107.

- Guarneros-Meza, V. and Geddes, M. (2010) 'Local governance and participation under neoliberalism: comparative perspectives', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 34, 1, 115-129.
- Guldi, J. and Armitage, D. (2014) *The History Manifesto*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hebe Balbo, E. (2008) 'La coparticipacion de impuestos en el ámbito municipal ¿cuestión de especialistas?', *IR04 La Revista del Instituto*, Junio 2008, 170-182.
- Habibi, N., Huang, C., Miranda, D., Murillo, D., Ranis, G., Sarkar, M., and Stewart, F. (2001) 'Decentralisation in Argentina', Center discussion paper Number 825, New Haven: Yale University.
- Healey, P. (2007) *Urban Complexity and Spatial Strategies: Towards a relational planning for our times*, London: Routledge.
- Healey, P. (2010) *Making Better Places: The Planning Project in the Twenty-First Century*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hall, P.A., Perez-Diaz, V. and Vale M. (1990) 'Introduction', *International Journal of Political Economy*, 20, 2, 3-7.
- Hamilton, F.E.I. and Rodriguez-Pose, A. (2001) 'European integration and local capacities for manufacturing adjustment and change: the case of Spain', *Urban Studies*, 38, 7, 1103-1120.
- Harvey, D. (2011) 'The urban roots of financial crises: reclaiming the city for anti-capitalist struggle', *Socialist Register: Crisis and the Left*, 48, 1, 1-35.
- Harvey, D. (2012) *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, London: Verso.

Herce, J.A. and Alonso, J. (2000) 'La reforma de las pensiones ante la revision del Pacto de Toledo', Coleccion Estudios Economicos, 19, Barcelona: La Caixa.

Helmke, G. and Levitsky, S. (2004) 'Informal institutions and comparative politics: a research agenda', *Perspectives on Politics*, 2, 4, 725-740.

Hopkin, J. (2014) 'The trouble with economic reform: understanding the debt crisis in Spain and Italy' in Panizza, F. and Philip, G (eds), *Moments of Truth: The Politics of Financial Crises in Comparative Perspective*, London: Routledge, 140-157.

HCD 595-1996 (1996) Honorable Concejo Deliberante. Decreto: Convocatoria Plan de Obras Mar del Plata 2000, Mar del Plata: Municipalidad de General Pueyrredon, 09th Abril 1996.

HCD 10570-1996 (1996) Honorable Concejo Deliberante. Ordenanza: Fondo Plan de Obras Mar del Plata 2000, Mar del Plata: Municipalidad de General Pueyrredon, 13th Junio 1996.

HCD 14957-2002 (2002) Honorable Concejo Deliberante. Ordenanza: Asamblea de Instituciones Representativa de la Ciudad de Mar del Plata y por la Junta Promotora Plan Estratégico, Mar del Plata: Municipalidad de General Pueyrredon, 10th Octubre 2002.

ICES-IDB (2013) Iniciativa Ciudades Emergentes y Sostenibles. Washington/Buenos Aires: Banco Inter-Americano de Desarrollo.

Jacobs, J.M. (2012) 'Commentary – comparing comparative urbanisms', *Urban Geography*, 33, 6, 904-914.

Jäger, J. (2003) 'Urban land rent theory: A regulationist perspective', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27, 2, 233-249.

- Jajamovich, G. (2012) 'Del Parque España a Puerto Madero: circulación del "urbanismo de los arquitectos" y la planificación estratégica entre Argentina y España 1979-1993', *Cuaderno Urbano. Espacio, Cultura y Sociedad*, 12, 12, 7-25.
- Jajamovich, G. (2013) 'Miradas sobre intercambios internacionales y circulación internacional de ideas y modelos urbanos', *Andamios*, 10, 22, 91-111.
- Jessop, B. (2002) *The Future of the Capitalist State*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Jimeno, J.F. (2009) *Spain and the Euro – the First Ten Years*, Madrid: Banco de España.
- Kaika, M. (2012) 'The economic crisis seen from the everyday', *City*, 16, 4, 422-430.
- Kanai, M. and Ortega-Alcazar, I. (2009) 'The prospects for progressive culture-led urban regeneration in Latin America: cases from Mexico City and Buenos Aires', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33, 2, 483-501.
- Kanai, M. (2010) 'The politics of inequality in globalising cities: how the middle classes matter in the governing of Buenos Aires', *Environment and Planning A*, 42, 1887-1901.
- Kantor, P., Savitch, H., and Vicari, S. (1997) 'The Political Economy of Urban Regimes: A Comparative Perspective', in *Urban Affairs Review*, 32, 3, 348-377.
- Kantor, P. and Savitch, H. (2005) 'How to study comparative urban development politics: a research note', in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 29, 1, 135-151.
- Keil, R. (2000) 'Governance restructuring in Los Angeles and Toronto: amalgamation or secession', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24, 4, 758-781.
- Kilburn, H.W. (2004) 'Explaining U.S. urban regimes. A qualitative comparative

- analysis', *Urban Affairs Review*, 39, 5, 663-651.
- Klein, P.G. (2000) 'New institutional economics', in Bouckaert, B. and De Geest, G. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Law and Economics*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- La Nación (2014) 'Glosario básico de la crisis argentina', La Nación – Economía, 26th Enero 2014.
- La Vanguardia (2017) 'Compromis celebra 2 años de “políticas valientes” y se marca el reto de “echar a Rajoy y a su parentela del Gobierno”', La Vanguardia – Locales, 27th Mayo 2017.
- Lang, T. (2008) 'Institutional perspectives of local development in Germany and England: a comparative study about regeneration in old industrial towns experiencing decline', Doctoral thesis, Potsdam: Institutional Repository of the University of Potsdam.
- Las Provincias (2016) 'Los promotores no podrán recalificar suelo tras un nuevo cambio en la ley urbanística', Las Provincias – Comunitat, 15th Noviembre 2016.
- Lauth, H.J. (2000) 'Informal institutions and democracy', *Democratisation*, 7, 4, 21-50.
- Lember, V., Kalvet, T. and Kattel, R (2011) 'Urban competitiveness and public procurement for innovation', *Urban Studies*, 48, 7, 1373-1395.
- Levy, B. and Spiller, P.T. (1994) 'The institutional foundations of regulatory commitment: a comparative analysis of telecommunications regulation', *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organisation*, 10, 2, 201-46.
- Lewis, C. and Torrents, N. (1993) *Argentina in the Crisis Years, 1983-1990: From Alfonsín to Menem*, London: Institute of Latin American Studies.
- Limb, M. and Dwyer, C. (2001) 'Introduction: doing qualitative research in geography', in Limb, M. and Dwyer, C. (eds), *Qualitative Methodologies for Geographers: Issues and Debates*, London: Arnold, 1-22.

- Llopis, A. and Perdigón, L. (2010) *Cartografía Histórica de la Ciudad de Valencia 1608-1944*, Valencia: Editorial Universitat Politècnica de Valencia.
- Lopez, I. and Rodriguez, E. (2011) 'The Spanish model', *New Left Review*, 69, 1-15.
- Love Valencia (2015) 'Resultados de las elecciones 2015 en Valencia por barrios', Love Valencia – Ciudad, 25th Mayo 2015.
- Lowndes, V. (1996) 'Varieties of new institutionalism: a critical appraisal', *Public Administration*, 74, 181-197.
- McCann, E. (2001) 'Collaborative visioning or urban planning as therapy: the politics of public-private urban policymaking', *Professional Geographer*, 53, 2, 207-218.
- McCann, E. and Ward, K. (2012) 'Assembling urbanism: following policies and studying through the sites and situations of policymaking', *Environment and Planning*, 44, 42-51.
- McFarlane, C. (2010) 'The comparative city: knowledge, learning, urbanism', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 34, 4, 725-742.
- McFarlane, C. and Robinson, J. (2012) 'Introduction – experiments in comparative urbanism', *Urban Geography*, 33, 6, 765-773.
- Medina, D. (2012) 'Caracterización de las políticas urbano-territoriales en Mar del Plata, en el actual periodo de gestión democrática', Grupo de Investigación Imaginarios Urbanos, Mar del Plata: Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata.
- Medina, D. (2014) 'Evolución de las normativas urbanísticas en el Partido de General Pueyrredon', Texto de Cátedra Urbanismo II, Mar del Plata: Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata.

- MGP (1990) *Así Crecimos 1983-1990*, Mar del Plata: Municipalidad de General Pueyrredon.
- MGP (2004) *Plan Estratégico de Mar del Plata*, Mar del Plata: Municipalidad de General Pueyrredon.
- MGP (2006) *Plan de Gestión Territorial*, Mar del Plata: Municipalidad de General Pueyrredon.
- MGP (2014) *Plan Estratégico de Mar del Plata 2013-2030: del diagnóstico hacia la acción (anticipo de conclusiones)*, Mar del Plata: Municipalidad de General Pueyrredon
- Maiz, R., Caamaño, F. and Azpitarte, Miguel. (2010) 'The hidden counterpoint of Spanish federalism: recentralization and resymmetrization in Spain (1978-2008)', *Regional and Federal Studies*, 20, 1, 63-82.
- Miramontes, A., Roye, D. and Villa, J.I. (2012) *Las ciudades y el sistema urbano: reflexiones en tiempos de crisis*, Santiago de Compostela: Meubook.
- Mora, J. and Moscoso, L. (1991) 'Los conflictos sociales en fase depresiva ante la adopción de políticas de ajuste: el caso Español', *Zona Abierta*, 56, 121-173.
- Moreno, L. (2002) 'Decentralisation in Spain', *Regional Studies*, 36, 4, 399-408.
- Muller, B. (2010) *Urban Regional Resilience: How do Cities and Regions Deal with Change*, Heidelberg: Springer.
- Mullings, B. (1999) 'Insider or outsider, both or neither: some dilemmas of interviewing in a cross-cultural setting', *Geoforum*, 30, 337-350.
- Navarro, C. (2011) 'Local governments and their intergovernmental networks in federalising Spain', *Local Government Studies*, 37, 6, 694-695.

- Nijman, J. (2007) 'Introduction: Comparative Urbanism', *Urban Geography*, 28, 1-6.
- North, D. (1990) *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- North, D. and Weingast, B. (1989) 'Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutions Governing Public Choice in 17th Century England', *Journal of Economic History*, 49, 4, 803-32.
- Nuñez, A. (2012) *Lo que el agua (no) se llevo. Política urbana: poder, violencia e identidades sociales*, Buenos Aires: El Colectivo.
- Oosterlynck, S. and Gonzalez, S. (2013) 'Don't Waste a Crisis: Opening up the City Yet Again for Neoliberal Experimentation', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37, 3, 1075-82.
- Panizza, F. (2014) 'Everybody out, we are fantastic: the politics of financial crises in Argentina and Uruguay 2001-2003' in Panizza, F. and Philip, G (eds), *Moments of Truth: The Politics of Financial Crises in Comparative Perspective*, London: Routledge, 27-46.
- Panizza, F. and Philip, G. (2014) *Moments of Truth: The Politics of Financial Crises in Comparative Perspective*, London: Routledge.
- Parnell, S. and Robinson, J. (2006) 'Development and urban policy: Johannesburg's City Development Strategy', *Urban Studies*, 43, 2, 337-355.
- Pascual i Esteve, J.M. (1999) *La Estrategia de las Ciudades*, Barcelona: Centro Iberoamericano de Desarrollo Estrategico Urbano (CIDEU).
- Pastoriza, E. (2009) *Un Mar de Memoria*, Buenos Aires: Edhasa.
- Peck, J., Theodore, N., and Brenner, N. (2009) 'Postneoliberalism and its Malcontents', *Antipode*, 41, 1, 94-116.

- Peck, J. (2011) 'Creative moments: working culture, through municipal socialism and neoliberal urbanism', in McCann, E. and Ward, K. (eds) *Mobile Urbanism – Cities and Policymaking in the Global Age*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Peck, J. (2012) 'Austerity urbanism: American cities under extreme economy', *City*, 16, 6, 626-655.
- Peck, J. (2013) 'Pushing austerity: state failure, municipal bankruptcy and the crisis of fiscal federalism in the United States', *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 6, 2, 1-28.
- Pejovich, S. (1999) 'The effects of interaction of formal and informal institutions on social stability and economic development', *Journal of Markets and Morality*, 2, 2, 164-181.
- Perez, M. (2004) Transparencia presupuestaria en la gestión municipal del partido de General Pueyrredon, Mar del Plata (1998-2003), Mar del Plata: Asociación Transparencia y Desarrollo Ciudadano.
- Pierre, J. (2005) 'Comparative urban governance: uncovering complex causalities', *Urban Affairs*, 40, 4, 446-462.
- PMTT (2013) Plan Maestro de Transporte y Transito, Buenos Aires: FLACSO.
- Ponticelli, J. and Voth, H.J. (2011) 'Austerity and anarchy: budget cuts and social unrest in Europe, 1919-2009', *Centre for Economic Policy Research*, Discussion Paper No 8513, 25, 1-30.
- Pro-Valencia (1994) Plan Estratégico de Valencia: metodología, organización y elaboración, Valencia: Pro-Valencia S.A.
- Pro-Valencia (1997) Plan Estratégico de Valencia, Valencia: Pro-Valencia S.A.

- Rapley, T. (2004) 'Interviews', in C. Seale, G. Giampietro, J. F. Gubrium and D. Silverman (eds) *Qualitative Research Practice*, London: Sage, 15-33.
- Rausell, P. (2004) 'La Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias de Valencia y el turismo cultural', in Font, J. (coord) *Casos de Turismo Cultural*, Barcelona: Ariel.
- Remmer, K.L. (1978) 'Evaluating the policy impact of military regimes in Latin America', *Latin America Research Review*, 13, 2, 39-54.
- Remmer, K. and Wibbels, E. (2000) 'The subnational politics of economic adjustment: provincial politics and fiscal performance in Argentina', *Comparative Political Studies*, 33, 419-451.
- Reverte, J.M. (1976) 'La crisis economica en Espana', *Zona Abierta*, 6, 3-13.
- Richardson, J. and Copus, C. (2010) 'Introduction: the scope and challenges of the financial crisis', in Richardson, J. (ed) *From Recession to renewal: The Impact of the Financial Crisis on Public Services and Local Government*, Bristol: Policy Press.
- Robinson, J. (2006) *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*, London: Routledge.
- Robinson, J. (2011a) 'The spaces of circulating knowledge: city strategies and global urban governmentality', in McCann, E. and Ward, K. (eds) *Mobile Urbanism – Cities and Policymaking in the Global Age*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Robinson, J. (2011b) 'Cities in a world of cities: the comparative gesture', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35, 1, 1-23.
- Robinson, J. (2014) 'New geographies of theorising the urban: putting comparison to work for global urban studies', in Parnell, S. and Oldfield, S. (eds) *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South*, London: Routledge.

- Robinson, J. (2016) 'Thinking cities through elsewhere: Comparative tactics for a more global urban studies', *Progress in Human Geography*, 40, 1, 3-29.
- Rodriguez-Pose, A. (2000) 'Economic convergence and regional development strategies in Spain: the case of Galicia and Navarre', *European Investment Bank Papers*, 5, 1, 89-115.
- Rodriguez-Pose, A. and Gill, N. (2003) 'The global trend towards devolution and its implications', *Environment and Planning*, 21, 333-351.
- Rodriguez-Pose, A. and Kroijer, A. (2009) 'Fiscal decentralisation and economic growth in Central and Eastern Europe', *Growth and Change*, 40, 3, 387-417.
- Romero Renau, L. and Trudelle, C. (2011) 'Mega events and urban conflicts in Valencia, Spain: contesting the new urban modernity', *Urban Studies Research*, 2011, 1-12.
- Romero Renau, L. (2014) 'Análisis comparativo de conflictos territoriales: el caso de Poblets Maritims (Valencia, España) y el distrito Sud-Ouest (Montreal, Canada)', *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles*, 66, 83-104.
- Romero Renau, L. and Valera Lozano, A. (2015) 'From NIMBYsm to the 15M: a decade of urban conflicts in Barcelona and Valencia', *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 2015, 1-21.
- Sachs, J.D. and Warner, A. (2000) 'Economic reform and the process of global integration', *Brooking Papers on Economic Activity*, 1, 1-118.
- Saiegh, S. and Tommasi, M. (1999) 'Why is Argentina's fiscal federalism so inefficient? Entering the labyrinth', *Journal of Applied Economics*, 2, 1, 169-209.
- Salskov-Iversen, D., Hansen, H.K. and Bislev, S. (2000) 'Governmentality, globalisation, and local practice: transformations of a hegemonic discourse', *Alternatives*, 25, 183-222.

- Santigosa, A. (1992) 'The finance of Spanish local governments and its recent reform', *Local Government Studies*, 18, 4, 136-157.
- Savitch, H.V. and Kantor, P. (2002) *Cities in the International Marketplace: The Political Economy of Urban Development in North America and Western Europe*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Segura, J. (1983) 'La crisis economica como crisis industrial: la necesidad de una estrategia activa', *Papeles de Economia Espanola*, 15, 212-227.
- Soderstrom, O. and Geertman, S. (2012) 'Loose threads', Working Paper by the Asia Research Institute (No. 176), Singapore: National University of Singapore.
- Sorribes, J. (2001) 'El malestar urbano en Valencia: a propósito de los *salvem*', *Metode*, 31, Otoño, 125-130.
- Sorribes, J. (2007) *Rita Barbera. El Pensamiento Vacío*, Valencia: Els llibres del temps.
- Sorribes, J. (2012) *Valencia 1940-2011 – Mis Queridos Promotores: Construcción and Destrucción de la Ciudad*, Valencia: Edicions Digitals (e-book).
- Sorribes, J. (2015) *Valencia 1940-2014: Construcción y destrucción de la ciudad*, Valencia: PUV.
- Spiller, P.T. and Tommasi, M. (2007) *The Institutional Foundations of Public Policy in Argentina*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stoker, G. and Mossberger, K. (1994) 'Urban regime theory in comparative perspective', *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 12, 195-212.
- Subirats, J., Marti-Costa, M., Iglesias, M. and Tomas, M. (2012) *Políticas Urbanas en España: Grandes Ciudades, Actores y Gobiernos Locales*, Barcelona: Icaria Editorial

- Subirats, J. and Marti-Costa, M. (2014) *Ciudades, vulnerabilidades y crisis en España*, Sevilla: Fundación Centro de Estudios Andaluces.
- Subirats, J. and Marti-Costa, M. (2015) *Ciudades y cambio de época: discursos sobre políticas urbanas y crisis en España*, Bilbao: Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco.
- Svampa, M. (2001) *Los que ganaron. La vida en los countries y barrios privados*, Buenos Aires: Biblos.
- Tarazona-Vento, A.A. (2013) 'Global architecture and the politics of competitiveness', Unpublished doctoral thesis, London: University College London.
- Taylor, Z. (2013) 'Rethinking planning culture: a new institutionalist approach', *Town Planning Review*, 84, 6, 683-702.
- The Economist (2012) 'Happy New Year; Austerity in Spain', London: The Economist Intelligent Unit, 402, 8766, 7th January 2012.
- Thomas, J.J. (1995) *Surviving in the City: the urban informal sector in Latin America*, London: Pluto Press
- Theodore, N. and Peck, J. (2011) 'Framing neoliberal urbanism: translating commonsense urban policy across the OECD zone', *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 19, 1, 20-41.
- Toboso, F. and Scorsone, E (2010) 'How much power to tax do regional governments enjoy in Spain since the 1996 and 2001 reforms?', *Regional and Federal Studies*, 20, 2, 157-174.
- Tomaney, J., Pike, A. and Rodriguez-Pose, A. (2010) 'Local and regional development in times of crisis – neoliberalism and its legacies', *Environment and Planning A*, 42, 771-779.

- Torgler, B. (2003) 'Tax morale in Latin America', Unpublished paper presented in the Third International Research Conference on Responsive Regulation (H260), Basel: University of Basel.
- Valencia en Comu (2015a) 'Valencia en Comu arranca su campaña para el cambio', Valencia en Comu – Noticias, 9th Mayo 2015.
- Valencia en Comu (2015b) 'Valencia en Comu finaliza la campaña tomando Valencia para la ciudadanía, Valencia en Comu – Noticias, 22nd Mayo 2015.
- Varela Parache, M. (2006) *Hitos en el Proceso de Modernización de la Economía Española*, Madrid: CEU Ediciones.
- Vasquez Gonzalez, L. (2013) 'Citizen participation, political context and associations in Bogota and Madrid', Unpublished doctoral thesis, Alcala de Henares: Universidad de Alcala.
- Veigel, K.F. (2009) *Dictatorship, Democracy and Globalisation – Argentina and the Cost of Paralysis 1973-2001*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press.
- Velarde Fuertes, J. (2009) 'Retos de la economía española: ante un momento decisivo de nuestra historia económica', *Cuadernos de Pensamiento Político*, 22, 67-97.
- Velasco, R. and Plaza, B. (2003) 'La economía española en democracia, 1978-2003', *Economía Industrial*, 349/350, 155-180.
- Vellacott, C. (2007) *Economic Policy Reform in Late Industrialisers: Argentina and Spain since 1950*, London: PhD Thesis LSE (unpublished).
- Veltmeyer, H. (2010) 'The global crisis and Latin America', *Globalizations*, 7, 1-2, 217- 233.

- Veron, R. (2010) 'Small cities, neoliberal governance and sustainable development in the global South: a conceptual framework and research agenda', *Sustainability*, 2, 2833-2848.
- Vulliamy, G (1990) 'How can qualitative research contribute to educational policy-making in developing countries?', *International Journal of Educational Development*, 10, 2/3, 151- 156.
- Wainwright, T. and Rodgers, P. (2013) 'Which crisis? The need to understand spaces of (non)tax in the economic recovery', *Environment and Planning A*, 45, 1008-1012.
- Ward, K. (2010) 'Towards a relational comparative approach to the study of cities', *Progress in Human Geography*, 1-17.
- Wetherell, M., Taylor, S. and Yates, S. (2001) *Discourse as Data: A Guide for Analysis*, London: Sage.
- Whitehead, L. (1986) 'Debt, Diversification, and Dependency: Latin America's International Political Relations', in Middlebrook, K.J. and Rico, C. (eds), *The United States and LatinAmerica in the 1980s: Contending Perspectives in a Decade of Crisis*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 87-130.
- Whitson, R. (2007) 'Beyond the crisis: economic globalisation and informal work in urban Argentina', *Journal of Latin American Geography*, 6, 2, 121-136.
- Williamson, O.E. (1975) *Markets and Hierarchies: Analysis and Antitrust Implications*, New York: Free Press
- Williamson, O.E. (1998) 'The institutions of governance', *The American Economic Review*, 88, 2, 75-79.
- Williamson, O.E. (2000) 'The new institutional economics: taking stock, looking ahead', *Journal of Economic Literature*, 38, 595-613.

Williamson, C.R. (2009) 'Informal institutions rule: institutional arrangements and economic performance', *Public Choice*, 139, 3-4, 371-387.

Xambo Olmos, R. and Gines Sanchez, X. (2012) 'From the Save Movements to the live ones: an analytical approach to the evolution of social movements in Valencia in the last two decades', in Tejerina, B. and Perugorria, I. (eds) *From Social to Political: New Forms of Mobilisation and Democratisation*, Bilbao: Argitalpen Zerbitzua.

Zhang, T. (2002) 'Urban development and socialist pro-growth coalition in Shanghai', *Urban Affairs Review*, 37, 475-499.

APPENDIX 01: SAMPLES OF THEMATIC INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

1. MOMENTOS DE CRISIS (VALENCIA)

6. Cuando se habla de crisis en España, de que se habla: crisis económica, crisis social, crisis política/institucional o de cierto tipo de incertidumbre económica generalizada? Que tan nueva es la noción de crisis en el imaginario de los valencianos?
7. Cual se podría considerar el episodio de crisis, el momento de coyuntura, más reciente en la historia de España (2008)? Que particularidades ha presentado este ciclo de crisis en relación con episodios anteriores (1980s)?
8. A nivel local, en Valencia, cual ha sido la narrativa de crisis más dominante? Cuales son las peculiaridades? Quien(es) tiende(n) a dominar dichas narrativas locales?
9. En Valencia, en términos de urbanismo, que caracteriza ha caracterizado la crisis reciente: el abandono de infraestructuras, de proyectos de regeneración y mejoras urbanas, la falta de mantenimiento de espacios públicos, la disminución/colapso de servicios básicos como la recolección de residuos sólidos, alcantarillado, alumbrado publico? Que?
10. Muchas ciudades Norteamericanas y Europeas han experimentado uno de los periodos de estancamiento económico y crisis mas importantes de los últimos tiempos: cual es la relación entre la crisis “global” del 2008 y la crisis en Valencia?

Hemos escuchado y hablado de una profunda crisis económica a partir del 2008, con consecuencias sociales y políticas importantes pero, a primera vista y a manera personal, Valencia no parece estar sufriendo una crisis económica aguda:

4. Que es particularmente urbano de la actual crisis en la ciudad de Valencia?
5. Existen diferencias importantes en el tipo de intervenciones urbanas locales durante un estado normal y uno de crisis, en términos de desarrollo de infraestructura y/o servicios?
6. Hay un cambio en el modelo y las prioridades de desarrollo urbano o se mantiene lo igual independientemente de la situación económica?

7. Como se explica el actual mantenimiento de infraestructuras y servicios públicos locales, así como de proyectos de regeneración urbana [calles de Ruzafa, por ejemplo]?
8. Que tipo de intervenciones administrativas locales han hecho posible mantener ese estado de normalidad o de *anti-crisis*? Por lo menos en áreas de urbanismo?
9. Mas allá de lo económico, que otros desafíos confronta el gobierno local en términos de capacidad institucional, estructura organizacional, mecanismos de participación/consenso?
10. Existe una Valencia invisible? A que obedece la provisión y mantenimiento desequilibrado de infraestructuras y servicios urbanos en Valencia?
11. Modelos urbanos como los de Barcelona han sido profundamente afectados por la crisis 2008. En Valencia, aun considerando sus especificidades en comparación con el modelo Barcelona, pareciera que el ciclo de planificación estratégica y de grandes proyectos ha terminado ó llegado a un estado de parálisis: a donde puede mirar Valencia para aprender sobre desarrollo urbano en tiempos de crisis?
12. Cual es el estatus de la planificación estratégica en la ciudad de Valencia actualmente?
13. Cuales son las alternativas de desarrollo urbano y de *modelo* de ciudad a largo plazo, considerando el contexto actual y la tendencia a experimentar crisis e inestabilidad?

Los años 80s se caracterizaron por algunas dificultades económicas, las cuales harían más difícil los primeros años de democratización y descentralización en España, y en turno la reivindicación de deudas y el cumplimiento de nuevas tareas municipales. Por ejemplo, la formulación e implementación de estrategias y proyectos de urbanismo

5. Como describiría y distinguiría las dificultades económicas, y subsecuentemente políticas y sociales, de los años 80s con respecto al episodio de crisis mas reciente (2008)?
6. Cual es la diferencia entre las narrativas de crisis mas dominantes de entonces y de ahora? Fue la crisis de los 80s resultado de una crisis estructural y la de los 00s una crisis cíclica?
7. Cuales son las consecuencias mas visibles en la trayectoria del desarrollo urbano

de ciudades como Valencia en el largo plazo?

En los últimos años hemos hablamos de crisis en España, pero han pasado casi siete años desde su inicio en el 2008 y pareciera que no acaba:

7. Cuando se convirtió la crisis global en una crisis Española y en una crisis local/Valenciana?
8. Piensa que hay un final cercano a la crisis del 2008 en Valencia, después de casi siete años?
9. Aunque la coyuntura haya pasado, que tipo de consecuencias ha tenido la crisis en el largo plazo [i.e. en la calidad de vida de los valencianos, por ejemplo]?
10. Es necesario adaptarse a un nuevo ritmo de crecimiento económico, de modelo de ciudad y a un estado de crisis/austeridad mas permanente, y normalizar las consecuencias de la crisis?

El crecimiento económico de España, y de ciudades como Valencia, antes de la llegada del nuevo milenio tuvo un ritmo moderado/modesto [especialmente si lo comparamos con el crecimiento económico extraordinario observado entre finales de los 90s y mediados de los 00s, caracterizado por el boom de la construcción urbana entre otros]:

8. Piensa que Valencia puede [o debe] regresar a ese estado de crecimiento moderado, o piensa que es posible [o necesaria] una nueva etapa de crecimiento acelerado como la de los 00s? En que actividades se basaría esa nueva etapa de crecimiento económico?
11. Cual es el role de la planificación estratégica en este sentido? Hasta que punto fue el Plan Estratégico de Valencia (1993/2004) una herramienta para responder a los retos del 2008?
12. Haciendo memoria, y recordando el proceso de formulación del Plan Estratégico de 1993 y los cambios de dirección del 2004 (y alguna otra alternativa), podría haber sido un plan mas flexible a los cambios económicos y las presiones socio-políticas emergidas en el 2008?
13. Hasta que punto se podría afirmar que Valencia se ha desarrollado en un contexto de *crisis* o de abundancia de recursos en el largo plazo? Cuales son las implicaciones futuras?

2. ACTORES LOCALES E INSTITUCIONES (MAR DEL PLATA)

- ✧ Cuales son los actores locales mas influyentes en la formulación de políticas y estrategias urbanas en la ciudad de Mar del Plata?
- ✧ Mas allá de los actores locales, que otros grupos influyen en la producción de políticas y estrategias urbanas? Como intervienen? Actores provinciales, federales, supranacionales?
- ✧ Hasta que punto se pueden separar la esfera administrativa/burocrática y la política en el gobierno de MGP? Interfiere la política en la burocracia/administración o la burocracia en la política?
- ✧ Hasta que punto están comprometidos los oficiales y agentes encargados del desarrollo urbano de Mar del Plata con su labor profesional y administrativa publica ó con su papel político local y otros intereses particulares?
- ✧ Que lugar tienen variables institucionales informales en las múltiples relaciones [personales y profesionales] que tienen lugar entre diferentes actores dentro y fuera de la Municipalidad? Por ejemplo, en términos de clientelismo: electoral, burocrático o partidista?
- ✧ De que manera y hasta que punto puede una crisis económica, política y social afectar la estabilidad del entorno institucional local [HCD, Ejecutivo, Secretarías, y Entes Municipales] en donde se elaboran y deciden las políticas urbanas? Cual ha sido la experiencia local?
- ✧ Como han respondido ejecutivos, concejales y entes de gobierno local, encargados de las políticas de urbanismo de la ciudad, a situaciones de crisis recientes en la ciudad de Mar del Plata? Innovación, cambio o continuidad?

ENTORNO INSTITUCIONAL LOCAL

14. Como describiría el entorno institucional municipal en donde se formulan las políticas urbanas de Mar del Plata? Eficiente, accesible, y comprometido con los ciudadanos o [...]?
15. Como calificaría las estructuras y los procesos administrativos municipales asociados con las políticas y estrategias urbanas de la ciudad, en términos de funcionamiento?

11. Que estructuras de **incentivos** confrontan actores locales [oficiales de gobierno, agentes de desarrollo, concejales] encargados de coordinar la formulación e implementación de políticas y estrategias urbanas?
12. Existe un requerimiento legal o sistema de regulación que influencie, determine o penalice el desenvolvimiento poco/no profesional de oficiales y agentes encargados de urbanismo?
13. Piensa que dichas estructuras de incentivos y/o regulación pueden cambiar rápidamente en tiempos de inestabilidad económica? Como puede una crisis afectar el trabajo de oficiales y agentes locales de urbanismo?
14. Que papel juegan variables institucionales **formales** e **informales*** en las estructuras y el funcionamiento del gobierno de Mar del Plata, particularmente en la formulación e implementación de políticas urbanas?
15. En que medida pueden elementos **formales** e **informales*** dentro de las instituciones de gobiernos locales explicar la producción de políticas urbanas de calidad – creíbles, coherentes, estables, efectivas y equitativas – o de políticas deficientes que atienden a las necesidades e intereses de grupos en particular?

***informales:** amiguismo, clientelismo, enchufe, lealtad partidaria/política, conexiones personales regionales, nacionales, o internacionales [...]

Si tuviera que considerar las estructuras institucionales locales, la burocracia municipal y los partidos políticos, la diversidad de proyectos urbanísticos, la multiplicidad de tareas administrativas y responsabilidades entre diferentes secretarías y entes municipales, y otros temas de coordinación, cooperación y confianza dentro del gobierno local:

9. Que área o problema identificaría como un desafío importante en el entorno donde se debaten, formulan y se deciden las políticas urbanas de Valencia?
10. En que área identificaría los retos mas grandes: en las estructuras/organizaciones formales o en los procedimientos/relaciones informales? Por que?

RELACIONES INTERGUBERNAMENTALES

14. Que papel juegan los múltiples niveles y divisiones administrativas de gobierno,

- producto de democratización y descentralización, en las dinámicas de formulación de políticas urbanas a nivel local?
15. Piensa que dichas divisiones facilitan o dificultan los procesos de convocatoria, debate y toma de decisiones sobre políticas y estrategias urbanas a nivel local?
 16. Como describiría las relaciones entre la municipalidad MGP, la Gobernación de BAs y la Nación? De que manera intervienen la gobernación y/o la Nación en la provisión de infraestructura, servicios, grandes proyectos y marketing de ciudad a nivel local?
 17. Plan Estratégico Territorial Nacional (La Nacion): has it been important for city administrations to have a nation-wide initiative and guidance concerning strategic planning? The role of MdP in the development of the Province of Buenos Aires or viceversa?
 18. Que papel e importancia tienen las instituciones informales [e.g. practicas y conexiones personales; cultura política local: parroquial (Canales!)] en el funcionamiento del gobierno de Mar del Plata, y en la calidad de sus relaciones con otros niveles de gobierno y otros actores de influencia local?
 19. Que tipo de relaciones tienen mayor importancia en el desarrollo de políticas y estrategias urbanas: el alineamiento político partidista entre múltiples niveles de gobierno o relaciones personales directas: *enchufe*?

PARTICIPACION LOCAL

- ⤴ Que importancia tiene la participación en el contexto político-social de Mar del Plata?
- ⤴ Que opinión merecen los procesos participativos mediante los cuales el gobierno de Mar del Plata ha normalmente propuesto, decidido e implementado intervenciones urbanas?
- ⤴ De que manera ha cambiado la participación local durante las últimas décadas, mas democracia y mas descentralización: igual a mas participación?
- ⤴ Piensa que el contexto de crisis generalizada del 2001 propició mayor participación social en torno a decisiones del futuro de Mar del Plata, al menos en algunas áreas de urbanismo?
- ⤴ Cual fue el impacto del PEM 2001 en los niveles de participación local?
- ⤴ Como describiría la relación entre sociedad y municipio actualmente? Existen

mecanismos de acceso ciudadano en asuntos de políticas de infraestructura y servicios?

- △ Que lugar han tenido los movimientos sociales locales y conflictos urbanos en los procesos de formulación de políticas y estrategias de urbanismo en Mar del Plata?

3. POLITICAS URBANAS EN CRISIS (VALENCIA)

16. Pensando un poco en las dificultades económicas a partir del 2008 y en la experiencia de Valencia: ¿como se refleja una crisis en las aspiraciones, formulación e implementación de políticas urbanas de acción inmediata y de proyectos estratégicos a largo plazo? ¿Cuáles son las implicaciones de no considerar una visión estratégica?
17. La década de los 1980s también fue económicamente difícil en España – una década de transición y de grandes cambios: en que manera condicionó dicha incertidumbre económica las **intervenciones urbanas aisladas** [proyectos de infraestructura y servicios] del momento? Cuales fueron las implicaciones futuras, sobretodo la década de los 90s?
18. Antes de entrar en el ciclo de planificación estratégica, propuso el Ayuntamiento de Valencia alguna intervención o mecanismo para financiar y materializar proyectos de infraestructura y equipamientos urbanos necesarios? Algún plan producto del primer gobierno democrático local (Socialista)? Cuales fueron los resultados y que clase de expectativa creó?
19. Existió algún proyecto de infraestructura importante en los 80s, el cual sirviera de base o haya sido esencial para el desarrollo de algún(os) de los proyectos plan estratégico: explícita o implícitamente?
20. De que manera ha afectado la coyuntura económica, social, política e institucional de la crisis de 2008 el contenido y la selección de los proyectos estratégicos propuestos en el plan de 1993/2004, particularmente en términos de infraestructura, servicios, grandes proyectos, marketing, reforma administrativa? Cambios en el criterio de priorización de acuerdo a las nuevas circunstancias económicas o continuidad: énfasis inmediato o en el largo plazo?
21. Ha representado la planificación estratégica de Valencia – de **intervenciones coordinadas**, articuladas y ambiciosas, en lugar de intervenciones aisladas – una

ventaja o una desventaja para el desarrollo urbano de la ciudad?

22. Que papel ha tenido la crisis del 2008 en los procesos relacionados con la formulación de políticas urbanas: i.e. en el nivel de consenso político-social, en la variedad y alcance de propuestas, en la capacidad de negociación de diferentes grupos, u otros procesos relacionados con la planificación estratégica? Ha presentado la crisis 2008 una oportunidad para promover consenso o continua siendo un proceso simbólico (de legitimación)?

Las crisis no solo tienen efecto en las estructuras formales y regulaciones que constituyen las instituciones de los gobiernos locales (o de cualquier nivel), pero también en el entorno, los procesos y las relaciones informales que sustentan las funciones y acciones diarias de dichos entes gubernamentales

23. De que manera han sido afectadas las estructuras del gobierno local [en términos de normativas, leyes, códigos e instituciones **formales**] y los procesos de convocatoria, participación, priorización e incorporación de demandas civiles [basados en encuentros *ad hoc*, de acuerdo a costumbres, valores e instituciones **informales**] en tiempos de crisis? Cuales han sido las implicaciones para el desarrollo urbano de Valencia?
24. Piensa que después de casi dos décadas de democracia y descentralización, la capacidad económica e institucional del gobierno local le ha permitido maniobrar la crisis del 2008 mas fácilmente que en la década de los 80s – tiempos de transición/dificultades económicas?
25. En el caso de Valencia, en que tipo de intervenciones urbanas se ha sentido el impacto de la crisis más profundamente? En infraestructura/equipamientos, servicios, grandes proyectos, marketing de ciudad, o en la organización de la administración local? Cuales han sido las prioridades?

ORGANIZACIONES MUNICIPALES

20. Cual fue la motivación del Ayuntamiento (y de la Alcaldesa) para convocar y promover la planificación estratégica de Valencia [otros modelos o experiencias, persuasión externa, ambición local, necesidad, competencia, cuestión de alternativas o parte de un proceso de aprendizaje histórico y específico]?

21. En términos de urbanismo (prácticas, intervenciones y estrategias): ¿que tipo de ideas o tendencias han influenciado el desarrollo urbano de Valencia en las últimas décadas? ¿Cual ha sido la influencia local e internacional (políticas EU)? ¿Que y como se ha aprendido?
22. Cuales fueron las principales fuentes de inspiración de ProVALENCIA en 1993?
23. ¿Que importancia han tenido la estética, el diseño y la practica en las intervenciones urbanas de Valencia sobre espacios públicos, proyectos de infraestructura, y equipamiento urbano?
24. Que tipo de relaciones existían entre los proponentes del Plan Estratégico 1993 y los actores (consultores) postulando para realizar las obras previo/durante el proceso de selección: enfoque compartido de desarrollo urbano, visión estratégica común, conexiones formales profesionales, conexiones informales: *enchufe* entre empresas consultoras y gobierno?
25. Hasta que punto y en que medida fueron formulados los proyectos propuestos en el Plan Estratégico como respuestas a problemas urbanos heredados y de deuda histórica? Fue la constitución del InnDEA – y reemplazo del CEyD – una respuesta a la crisis del 2008?

INTERVENCIONES URBANAS

16. Hasta que punto contribuyó la combinación de problemas de desarrollo urbano heredados de la dictadura militar, las alternativas socialistas propuestas y las dificultades económicas planteadas durante los años 80s, un escenario en el cual el Ayuntamiento convocó y promovió un plan exhaustivo de planificación estratégica en los 90s? Necesidad, ambición, respuesta a una demanda colectiva o intereses específicos, estrategia política?
17. Cuales fueron las alternativas y los desafíos mas importantes en ese periodo de búsqueda y de decisión: económicos, políticos, institucionales?
18. Ha traído la crisis del 2008 [y sus implicaciones] el final del ciclo de planificación estratégica a la 1993 y de grandes proyectos en la ciudad de Valencia?
19. Que ha traído la planificación estratégica a la ciudad de Valencia en las ultimas décadas? Mayor claridad en cuanto a las necesidades y prioridades de

- infraestructura, servicios y/o visión de *modelo* de ciudad? Mayor profesionalización en la administración/gestión local?
20. Cual ha sido el logro y la lección mas importantes de este ciclo de planificación 1993-2008?
 11. La planificación estratégica se ha desarrollado en Valencia junto a otros programas de políticas e iniciativas urbanas – algunas de origen Comunitario, otras nacionales, otras internacionales: hasta que punto es beneficiosa o problemática la convivencia de múltiples intervenciones operando en la ciudad ? Paralelismo o colaboración?
 12. Considera que algunas de estas intervenciones urbanas presentan agendas superpuestas y/o redundantes? Como se complementan o contradicen?
 13. Continúa siendo útil separar intervenciones dirigidas a tratar problemas convencionales de infraestructura y servicios, y asuntos estratégicos urbanos a largo plazo?
 14. Cuales son las tendencias estratégicas urbanas actuales, las alternativas y los desafíos mas sobresalientes en el caso de Valencia, particularmente en el contexto de crisis post-2008?

ESTRATEGIAS: MEGA-EVENTOS

- ⤴ Como podría explicar la conexión entre proyectos de infraestructura y equipamientos urbanos y la organización de mega-eventos en la ciudad de Valencia?
- ⤴ Como influyó la postulación y organización de la Copa Américas 2007/2010 en términos de infraestructura y equipamiento para la ciudad: beneficios o deudas?
- ⤴ Existió alguna relación entre los objetivos de infraestructura y equipamiento urbano del Plan Estratégico y las acciones/intervenciones que generó la Copa? Cual influenció a cual?
- ⤴ En Valencia, piensa que se han utilizado los mega-eventos como medios 1) para promover oportunidades inusuales con beneficios irresistibles, 2) para dar respuestas a necesidades y problemas urbanos que de otra manera no se corregirían, 3) o para justificar propuestas elitistas que benefician sectores específicos?

PLANIFICACION ESTRATEGICA

Una mirada rápida a las estrategias urbanas de Valencia sugiere que algunas propuestas han sido orientadas hacia el marketing de la ciudad [ideas como la ciudad de la cultura, inteligente, del conocimiento, y de negocios]: que opinión merecen estas estrategias y como han influido en el desarrollo urbano de Valencia?

- ⤴ Piensa que hay contradicciones entre las estrategias de marketing y los modelos de ciudad diseñados e implementados para Valencia durante las últimas dos décadas y la verdadera composición histórica económica, social y cultural de la ciudad?
- ⤴ Hasta que punto se han considerado u olvidado otras fortalezas de Valencia y su área de influencia en la formulación de planes estratégicos: particularmente marketing y *modelo* de ciudad? Cuales son dichas fortalezas? Que ha hecho falta para hacerlas relevantes?
- ⤴ Las Fallas, La Feria Muestrario Internacional, La Ciudad de las Artes y Ciencias aparecen como símbolos culturales de Valencia, de que manera influyen estos iconos en el desarrollo y mantenimiento de la infraestructura y equipamiento urbano de la ciudad?
- ⤴ Que opinión merece el nuevo ciclo de planificación estratégica, materializado a través de InnDEA, y que relación guarda con algunos de los proyectos de la primera fase 1993-2008?

4. TRANSFORMACIONES INSTITUCIONALES (MAR DEL PLATA)

En procesos de transformación política profunda, como los de transición democrática en España y Argentina, los cuales fueron acompañados y exacerbados por una serie de dificultades económicas, sociales e institucionales:

26. Hasta que punto, y de que manera, fueron afectadas, re-construidas o re-configuradas las estructuras y culturas institucionales locales?
27. Piensa que la combinación de cambios económicos, sociales y políticos profundos fomentó un mayor numero de alternativas en términos de nuevas alianzas, formas de asociación y acción cívica, que en turno se tradujeron en

nuevas direcciones de gobierno, contenidos estratégicos, y orientaciones ideológicas?

28. En que medida, y hasta que punto, fueron dichos procesos de profunda **reorganización** institucional condicionados por la crisis económica y tensión político-social experimentada en los años de transición democrática? Cual fue la experiencia de Mar del Plata?

DESCENTRALIZACION POLITICA

26. Que ha sido lo mas importante que ha traído el proceso de descentralización política en la Argentina, y particularmente en el caso de Mar del Plata? Y que hace falta?

A nivel local, descentralización ha promovido mayores niveles de autonomía institucional y jurídica a través de numerosas divisiones territoriales:

27. En Mar del Plata, como han influido estos cambios en la relación sociedad-estado en términos de participación, liderazgo y compromiso publico?

FEDERALISMO

21. Como describiría el funcionamiento de la municipalidad de Mar del Plata en el sistema de gobierno federal? Piensa que es complejo? Podría ser mas simplificado?
22. Hasta que punto es el MGP una institución local verdaderamente descentralizada?
23. Cuales han sido las implicaciones de un mayor nivel de autonomía local? Piensa que mas responsabilidades han conllevado a mas vulnerabilidades en tiempos difíciles/crisis?
24. Que cambios serian necesarios ejecutar en el sistema municipal Marplatense para mejorar sus funciones en el sistema federal?
15. Que tan importantes son las divisiones territoriales existentes hoy en día en comparación con los primeros años de democracia y descentralización?
16. Piensa que estas divisiones facilitan una mejor administración local o plantean

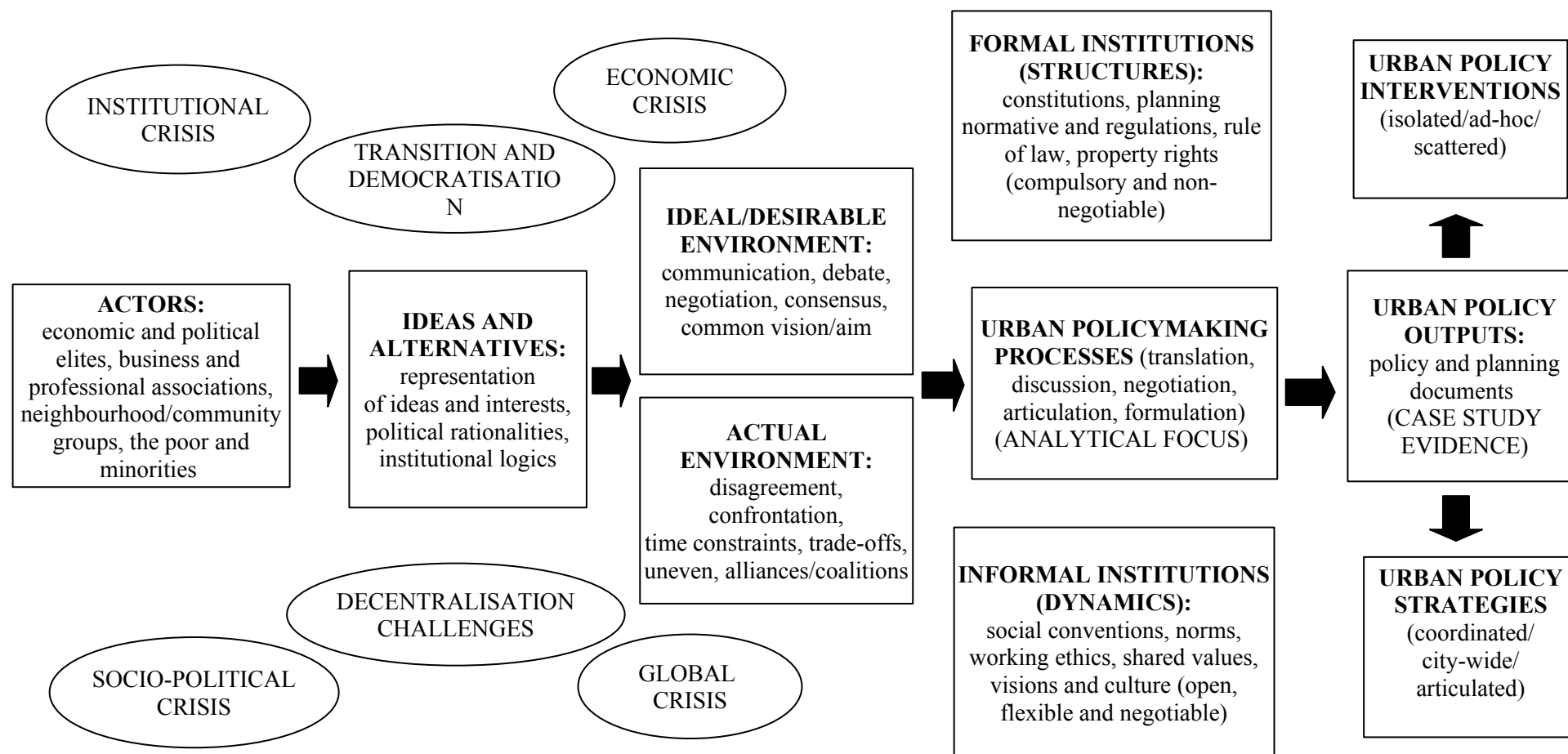
mayores dificultades operacionales? Por que?

17. Piensa que las numerosas divisiones territoriales y administrativas resultantes de tres décadas de descentralización requieren revisión e innovación organizacional y operacional?
18. En Mar del Plata, piensa que la estructura organizativa del MGP ha sido [o continua siendo] efectiva para formular/coordinar e implementar políticas dirigidas a tratar problemas urbanos convencionales [infraestructura y servicios básicos] así como también asuntos estratégicos a largo plazo?

DESCENTRALIZACION ECONOMICA

28. Que ha sido lo mas importante que ha traído el proceso de descentralización económica en la Argentina, y en el caso de Mar del Plata?
29. Como ha influido la descentralización en los recursos económicos y financieros disponibles a nivel local? Un sistema de gestión de recursos mas eficiente?
30. Existen problemas de disponibilidad, de insuficiencia, de asignación, o de distribución de recursos y por ende de desigualdad territorial? Por que? A que se atribuye la desigualdad?
31. Hasta que punto están sujetas las finanzas locales a problemas de eficiencia, transparencia, corrupción, o de *picardía*?
32. Cual sería el mayor problema dentro de las finanzas locales? La existencia de muchos vacíos entre procedimientos y regulaciones o la falta de mecanismos de cumplimiento, rigor y responsabilidad?

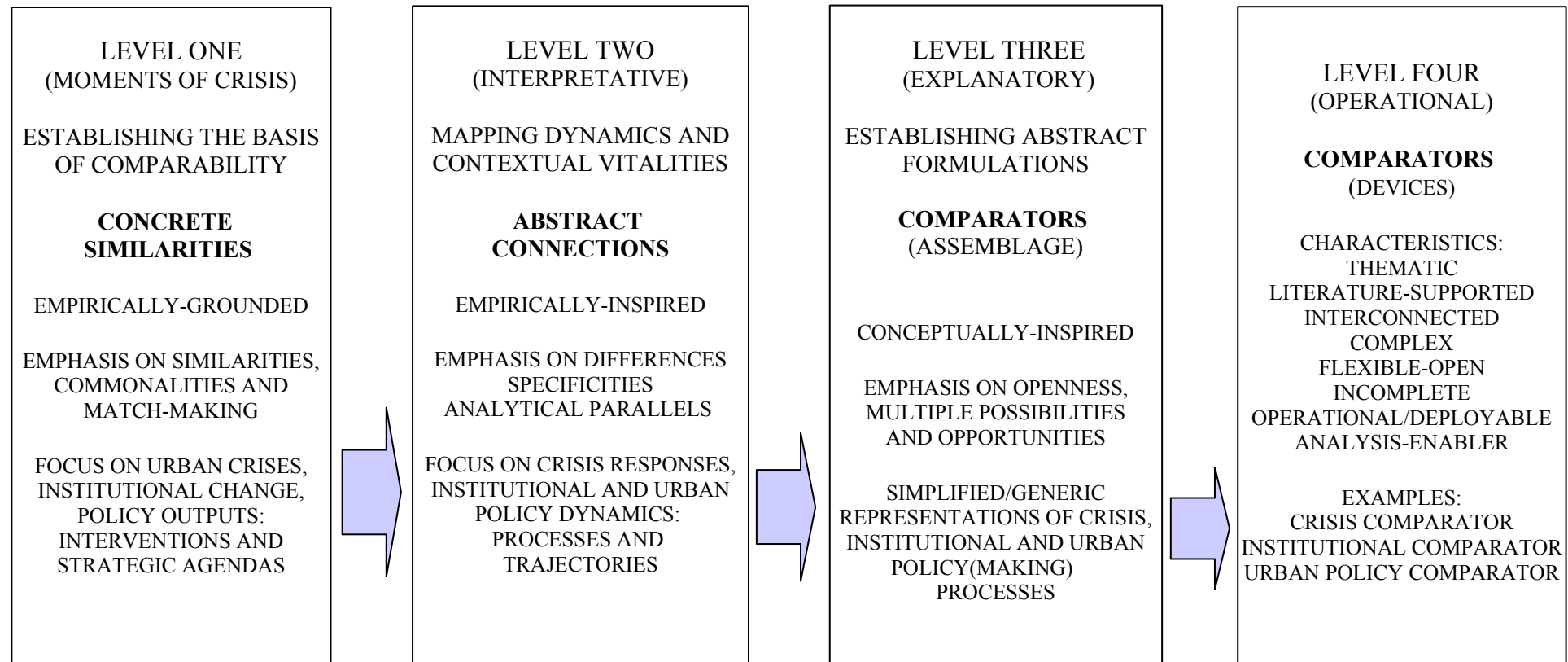
APPENDIX 02: A GENERIC REPRESENTATION OF URBAN POLICYMAKING ENVIRONMENTS AND PROCESSES



* A reduction/simplification of empirical complexities in order to visualise wider similarities and facilitate the articulation of comparators

** Methodological inspiration from Deville *et al* (2016) and Robinson (2016); comparative inspiration from Clarke (1995), Savitch and Kantor (2002), Goldfrank and Schrank (2009); conceptual inspiration from North (1990); Williamson (2000); Panizza and Philip (2014)

APPENDIX 03: COMPOSING COMPARISONS – FROM CONCRETE SIMILARITIES TO COMPARATORS AS DEVICES



* How to approach and process empirical evidence in order to produce and deliver analytical/comparative arguments/answers to the research questions?

** Where to look exactly? How to approach and process similarities and differences in order to make analytical comparisons?

*** The “comparative act” or “platforms of comparison” (see Deville *et al* 2016)

APPENDIX 04: THEMATIC COMPARATORS FOR THE ANALYSIS OF URBAN CRISES, LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND URBAN POLICIES

	CRISIS COMPARATOR	INSTITUTIONAL COMPARATOR	URBAN POLICY COMPARATOR
THEMATIC (research-shaping)	Economic, social, political, institutional and urban crises	Local actors, institutional environments, institutional cultures, urban governance	Urban policymaking processes, strategic agendas, large-scale development projects
LITERATURE-SUPPORTED (ideas from relevant literature)	Narratives of (non)crisis; dealing with uncertainty and instability; economic difficulties vs bankruptcy; immediate vs longterm consequences; political fragility and institutional (il)legitimacy;	Comparative subnational politics; new institutionalism; institutional geographies; public policymaking; democracy and decentralisation; north/south policymaking conditions/environments; formal/informal	Planning paradoxes (management); the performance vs failure traps; the purpose of planning strategies: deal-making and/or flexibility; order-creating vs complexity-allowing measures; prediction vs planning
INTERCONNECTED	Triggered and/or exacerbated by institutional issues and urban policy agendas (?)	Shaped by episodes of crisis, urban policy agendas and political/economic interests	Shaped by contextual specificities; local institutional change and episodes of crisis
OPERATIONAL/DEPLOYABLE	After the comparators are composed, they are deployed and put to work with the empirical evidence that initially inspired them		
ANALYSIS-ENABLER	The crisis comparator encounters a wide range of instances and meanings of crisis when it is deployed back into the world that inspired it. Though economic crisis was the main source of inspiration, as the research unfolded, it became increasingly clear that crisis was much more than an episode of economic difficulty and crisis entailed many other social, political, institutional and urban complexities. As in the other comparators, crises are observed across both case studies (despite the numerous specificities each episode presents)	The institutional comparator encounters a considerable degree of messiness and non-linearity in the institutional environments and urban policymaking dynamics of both case studies. Indeed, contradictions coexist within local institutions but might become more visible when the comparator interconnects with its crisis and urban policy counterparts – which will allow us to examine, for example, whether and how institutional dynamics might change in times of crisis. The recent democratic history of Spain and Argentina and the complex federal systems	This comparator encounters numerous analytical dichotomies when it revisits the empirical evidence that originally inspired it. Multiple paradoxes emerge within the urban policies and strategic agendas that shaped each city over the last three and a half decades, which (when put together into conversation) provide a productive ground for the analysis of longterm urban development trajectories. Focusing on planning contradictions, for example, would allow us to develop arguments around issues and perceptions concerning strategic planning while considering both cities

	and thus provide us with a common point of departure for our comparative analysis. Multiple place-specific narratives and responses will help us to produce more nuanced understandings of whether and how crisis shape local institutional change and urban policy outcomes in the longterm. In addition, the consideration of the multiple dimensions of crisis will allow us to gain new insights concerning the complex and unpredictable nature of the realities that cities face while trying to formulate longterm urban policies and strategies. In combination with the other comparators, it will also be possible to examine how crises might be triggered and/or exacerbated by earlier urban policy decisions, city strategies or particular institutional features that characterise the contexts researched.	in which their cities are embedded, allow us to see that despite important constitutional achievements, there are a number of less tangible practices (sometimes labelled as informal institutions) shaping the everyday of municipal affairs. These are particularly visible across departments dealing with urban and planning matters. Again, and similarly to the two other comparator, formal/informal practices are observed across both cities in multiple forms. Therefore, a systematic analysis of them (and of the “messiness” that urban policymaking and governance entails) will put both cities into some sort of analytical/open conversation rather than in a competition to identify which one is messier (or more informal) than the other.	through the “same” analytical lens rather than placing one against the other. Indeed, this comparative exercise will require the consideration of differences across cases and the examination of the specific/ contextual conditions in which such contradictions have emerged. This would allow us to find new sources of analytical inspiration and debate. Given the interconnectedness of this comparator with those of institutions and crisis, new analytical opportunities are also opened up. For instance, we could examine the extent to which urban policy agendas and citywide strategies might be influenced by episodes of crisis, what are their imprint in the content/direction of such urban policy interventions, and how such crisis narratives/responses ultimately shape urban policy outcomes/trajectories.

* These comparators are inspired by empirical evidence, theoretical insights, and the research interests of the author. However, other comparators are also possible (e.g. social development, social housing, environmental issues, sustainability, coastal management) by considering other concrete similarities (empirical departure)

** These three comparators aim to facilitate the comparative analysis of two case studies, the production of empirically-grounded answers to core research questions and the delivery of alternative understandings of urban crises, urban governance, local institutions and urban policymaking processes

** What do we learn by comparing the two cities? What do analytical comparisons entail beyond the exploration of similarities and differences?

** What does the interconnectedness between the themes of the comparators produce in addition, what sort of analysis?

** How might the comparators address the overall research aims, objectives and/or questions?

**** Crisis is a central topic of this research: it enables connections across themes by defining wider contextual circumstances and/or re-defining its own meaning**

APPENDIX 05: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

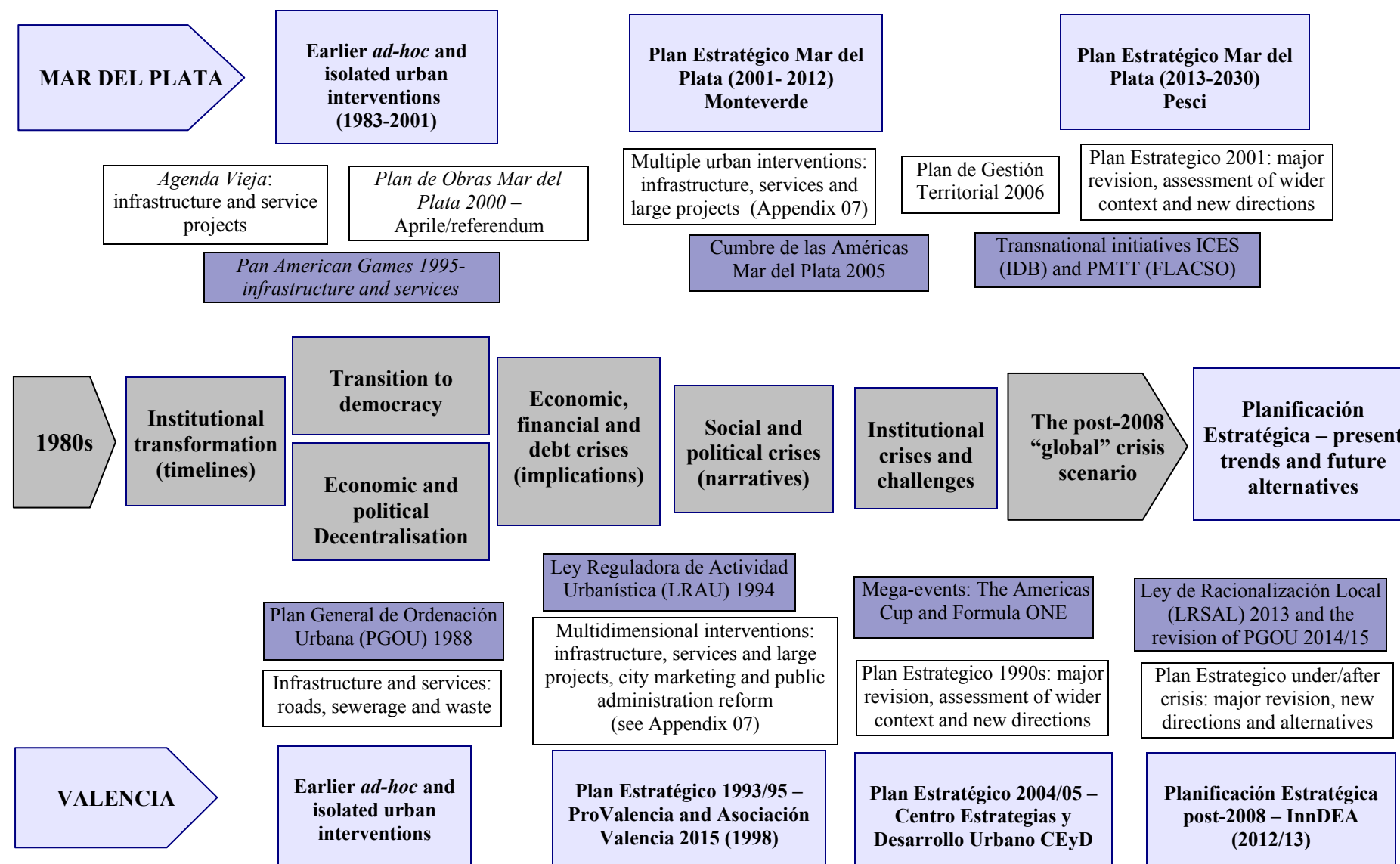
VALENCIA (24)

Interviewee (acronym in text)	Profession; years of experience	Institution(s)/sector represented
MAL	Technical advisor; +20 years	Municipality; InnDEA
JEM	Private consultant; +20 years	Asociación Valencia; CEyD
GIM	Architect; +30 years	Municipality; Local universities
EUR	Private consultant; +20 years	CEyD; InnDEA
FLA	Civil servant; +20 years	Municipality
POC	Former mayor; +30 years	Municipality
RAJ	Academic; +30 years	University of Valencia
SEP	Civil servant/academic; +30 years	Municipality; Local universities
CSE	Social/political activist; +10 years	Proyecto Ciudad Construida
GIX	Academic; social activist; +20years	University of Valencia; EXNURB
PAU	Technical advisor; academic; +20	University of Valencia; Municipal
RIM	Consultant; civil servant +20 years	CEyD; Municipality
TXA	Civil servant; +20 years	Municipality
JCC	Academic; political activist +10	University of Valencia, AULAC
BOI	Public law/academic; +20 years	Municipality; Local universities
VIC	Private sector: real estate; +20years	Architecture studio; real estate
JOS	Consultant; local analyst; +20years	Oficina Técnica Urbana; OTIU
FIG	Civil servant; +30 years	Municipality
JON	Social/political activist; +30 years	Colectivo TERRA Critica
LIN	Private sector; technical advisor	Feria de Valencia; Municipality
PEZ	Civil servant; +30 years	Municipality
QUI	Architect and planner; +30 years	Municipality
GLE	Private sector: developer; +30years	Confederación empresarial
GID	Academic; social activist; +20years	Polytechnic University; TERRA

MAR DEL PLATA (28)

Interviewee (acronym in text)	Profession; years of experience	Institution(s)/sector represented
AOZ	Academic; private roles +20years	Colegio de Arquitectos; UNMdP
KIC	Civil servant; public sector; +20	Municipality; OSSE
NEP	Alderman; public sector; +30	Municipality: communications
JAM	Private sector: developer; +20	Family firm; board of EMTUR
PER	Academic; consultant; +20 years	Architecture firms; UNMdP
DIM	Academic; political activist; +30	UNMdP; Comisión Mixta P.E.
RAF	Civil servant; academic; +30	Municipality; COPAN; UNMdP
MUD	Private sector: real estate +30	Colegio de Martilleros
PAZ	Academic: historian; +30 years	UNMdP
LAX	Civil servant/social activist; +20	Municipality; Local Think Tank
LEM	Academic; consultant; +30 years	UNMdP; CEPAL; CIEyS
GIC	Civil servant; +30 years	Municipal social/housing areas
BET	Public sector (various); +30 years	Municipal; ENOSUR
MEG	Academic: geographer; +30	UNMdP
ELO	Public sector (various); +20 years	Municipality; OSSE
TOV	Academic: planning; +10 years	UNMdP; ICED-IDB
OSC	Private sector: construction; +30	Centro de Constructores-Anexos
GIO	Public sector (various) +20 years	Municipality; EMTUR
FAL	Public sector (various) +10 years	Municipality; EMVIAL
GOB	Academic; social activist +20	UNMdP; Comisión Mixta P.E.
JOA	Academic; technical analyst; +10	UNMdP; OSSE; ENOSUR
CIG	Political/social activist; +20years	Multi. Think Tank/associations
SEG	Academic; consultant; +20 years	UNMdP; PMTT; EMVIAL
LOC	Civil servant: regional; +20 years	Ministerio de Interiores B. Aires
BIG	Academic; social activist; +10	UNMdP; Local Think Tank
ZON	Consultant; strategic expert; +20	Multi. public-private institutions
DEL	Civil servant/social activist; +20	Municipality; Local Think Tank
PIN	Public law/academic; +30 years	UNMdP; Municipality

Appendix 06: Timelines of local institutional and urban policy change across Mar del Plata and Valencia since the early 1980s



Appendix 07: CONCRETE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE URBAN STRATEGIC INITIATIVES OF VALENCIA AND MAR DEL PLATA

URBAN INTERVENTIONS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING (VALENCIA)	URBAN INTERVENTIONS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING (MAR DEL PLATA)	GROUNDS FOR COMPARISON
Pre-Planificación Estratégica (1980s-1993)	Pre-Planificación Estratégica (1980s-2001)	EMPHASIS ON BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES
Post-Franco: proyectos de infraestructura y servicios urbanos incompletos heredados, reconfigurados y desarrollados durante el primer gobierno democrático (ver Libro de la Ciudad 1979-1982)	Agenda Vieja: proyectos de infraestructura y servicios urbanos pendientes por décadas; AND Plan de Obras Mar del Plata 2000 (ver Así Crecimos 1983-1990)	- INTERVENTIONS THAT RESPONDED TO LONGSTANDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND BASIC SERVICE NEEDS - INTERVENTIONS THAT IMPROVED QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE
Jardín de Turia – múltiples intervenciones y proyectos relacionados con el desarrollo del parque en los 1980s	Parque Municipal de los Deportes Teodoro Bronzini 1995; COPAN y el Plan de Obras Mar del Plata 2000	- INTERVENTIONS THAT SERVED AS FOUNDATIONS FOR LATER (STRATEGIC PLANNING) PROJECTS
Planificación Estratégica – ProValencia (1993), Asociación Valencia 2015 (1998) CEyD (2004)	Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata – Monteverde (2001-2013)	EMPHASIS ON A MIXTURE OF MATERIAL, SOCIOECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGIES
1. Infrastructure <i>Abrir Valencia al mar; y Valencia ciudad verde Europea – ver plan (7-45) (2-26)</i>	1. Infrastructure <i>Plan frente marítimo; y Programa de espacios públicos – ver plan (3-4) (3-3i)</i>	- THE CONSTRUCTION AND UPGRADING OF WATERFRONT INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE REVITALISATION OF GREEN AND PUBLIC SPACES
1) Balcón al Mar (y vías de acceso i.e. Av. Blasco Ibanez) 2) Plazas x, parques x, playas x (i.e. Central y Cabecera)	1) Litoral Marítimo – Centro 2) Plazas x, parques x, playas x (i.e. Colon y similares)	
2. Urban Services <i>Mejorar la calidad medioambiental de Valencia – ver plan (2-19)</i>	2. Urban Services <i>Plan maestro de infraestructura de servicios – ver plan (3-2) *Prioridad</i>	- THE PROVISION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE SEWERAGE NETWORK AND RELATED SEWER/SANITARY PROJECTS
1) Red de Alcantarillado 2) Actuaciones para Acequias 3) Emisario Submarino	1) Red de Cloacas 2) Planta de Efluentes 3) Emisario Submarino	
3. Large Projects <i>Creación de nuevas centralidades urbanas de alto valor simbólico y social – ver plan (7-47) (5-37)</i>	3. Large Projects <i>Programa de atractivos urbanos y revitalización de áreas centrales – ver plan (3-3ii)</i>	- THE CREATION OF NEW, AND REVITALISATION OF OLD URBAN CENTRALITIES THROUGH LARGE/ICONIC PROJECTS
1) Ciudad de las Artes y de las Ciencias; Av Francia 2) Plan de urbanismo comercial	1) Vieja Estación Omnibus 2) Centro Guemes	
4. City Marketing <i>Capital y símbolo de una Comunidad Valenciana próspera, culta y solidaria – ver plan (5-34) (5-35)</i>	4. City Marketing <i>Marketing de la ciudad y desarrollo de la imagen marca – ver plan (1-4) *Prioridad</i>	- CITY BRANDING AND THE PROMOTION OF THE CITY FOR WIDE RANGING EVENTS: CULTURE, SPORTS AND BUSINESS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

1) Feria Muestrario Internacional 2) Actividades turísticas: VLC Turismo (?) 3) Eventos deportivos: Copa Américas y F1 4) Palacio de Congresos	1) Hotel Provincial/Complejo Casino (?) 2) Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (?) 3) Festival Internacional de Cine 4) EMTUR – eventos culturales, de negocios y deportivos	
5. Public Administration <i>Hacer una administración ágil, eficaz y organizada</i> – ver plan (5-38)	5. Public Administration <i>Estructuras y competencias municipales, participación, y profesionalización</i> – ver plan (4-1/2/3) *Prioridad	- THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW STRUCTURES, FORMS OF ORGANISATION AND PROFESIONALISATION/MANAGEMENT ACROSS LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES
1) Organización y gestión para satisfacer los ciudadanos 2) Reorganización de procesos internos de gestión pública 3) Establecer mayores competencias y recursos a las administraciones locales	1) Estructuras y competencias adecuadas a las nuevas funciones del estado local (incluyendo la función estratégica) 2) profesionalización de la carrera municipal 3) presupuesto participativo	
Planificación Estratégica – InnDEA (2012-presente)	Plan Estratégico Mar del Plata – Pesci (2013-presente)	EMPHASIS ON SMART AND SUSTAINABLE CITIES STRATEGIES AND MODELS
Propuesta de InnDEA: Smart City (iCITY)	Modelo de cuatro frentes integrados	- INTERVENTIONS INFLUENCED AND FINANCED BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS/REGIONAL BLOCS - PROPOSALS OFTEN IN CONTRADICTION WITH REALITY AND HIGHLY CRITICISED BY LOCAL PROFESIONALS/EXPERTS - LESS PARTICIPATORY
Estrategia Valencia 2020: Antecedentes	ICES-IDB	
City Marketing: VLC Business City	PMTT	
Buenas Practicas: Nacionales y Europeas		

Appendix 08: INFORMATION SHEET PROVIDED TO INTERVIEWEES

UCL DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

I, Alvaro Sanchez Jimenez, request your participation in a research project that explores and compares local government transformations and policymaking processes in times of crisis in Valencia and Mar del Plata.

I would appreciate an opportunity to interview you as part of my study. The study looks at the experience of local governments at formulating policies and strategies that aim to deal with economic pressures and sociopolitical tensions deriving from crisis. It considers how local government officials and/or agents evaluate policy alternatives and make decisions in times of increased socioeconomic pressure, and simultaneous institutional/organisational restructuring, in order to respond to the multiple infrastructure and service needs of local populations.

Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary and there is no reward for participating or penalty for not participating. Involvement in this study requires your participation in an interview that will last for approximately one hour. You will not be obliged to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable and have the option to decline to respond to any questions asked. You will also have the option of terminating your participation at any stage that you choose.

All data collected through the interview will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. You will also have the option of remaining anonymous in which case all transcripts and reports will be appropriately coded to ensure that your request is fully respected. You will also be provided with transcripts and the research report if requested.

The results of the research will be utilised for completing a PhD thesis, to be submitted to the Geography Department at University College London; data will also be used to inform presentations and academic articles.

If you have any concerns regarding the study or if you require any additional information please contact me to discuss these further.

Kind regards,

Alvaro Sanchez Jimenez

Email: alvaro.jimenez@ucl.ac.uk

Mobile: 0044 7776 02 2709

Appendix 09: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

UCL DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

Participant Consent form

I hereby confirm that:

I have been briefed on the research that Alvaro Sanchez Jimenez is conducting on local government transformations and urban policymaking processes in Valencia and Mar del Plata.

- I understand what participation in this project means
- I understand that my participation is voluntary
- I understand that I have the right to not answer any questions that I do not feel comfortable with
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw my participation at any time I choose
- I grant permission for a voice-recorder to be used during the interview
- I understand that any information I share will be held in the strictest of confidentiality by the researcher in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998
- I grant permission for the information I provide in the interviews to be published as part of the research findings

Optional clauses:

I hereby request that I be guaranteed anonymity ☐

I hereby request a copy of the research article ☐

Participant Signature:_____.

Date:_____.

Appendix 10: FINAL ETHICS REPORT OF FINDINGS

Wednesday 04th March 2015

Final Report of Findings

Ethics Application 5504/001

Title: Local Government Transformations and Urban Policymaking Processes in Times of Crisis: A Comparative Study of Valencia and Mar del Plata.

Dear UCL Research Ethics Committee,

Following your request on the ethical approval letter dated 27 February 2014, I would like to inform you that my fieldwork activities in Valencia (Spain) and Mar del Plata (Argentina) developed as outlined in the ethics application form, with no amendments and no ethical issues to report. I had no inconveniences at all over the past twelve months. I interviewed a wide range of institutional actors, mainly professionals from the public and private sectors, involved in urban policymaking processes and strategic planning initiatives. I did not work with vulnerable individuals or other sensitive groups. None of the participants had issues regarding consent, confidentiality, and/or withdrawal. On the contrary, they were most familiar with all these procedures.

Yours sincerely

Alvaro A Sanchez-Jimenez

