

Planning and Projects: Three Visionaires Friedmann, J., Trueba, I. and Ramos, A

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Abstract It is impossible to talk about planning as a scientific meta-discipline without mentioning one of the most influential worldwide figures in the second half of the twentieth century: John Friedmann. His contribution to the planning concept on his *Planning as Social Learning* theory is still very relevant. This paper shows the intellectual connection between Friedmann, Angel Ramos and Ignacio Trueba, two of the Spanish intellectual drivers in the engineering project knowledge area, who contributed to the foundation of the Project Engineering Spanish Association. The three of them share a broad vision of the project and abandon the “blue print” planning model. They also see the project as a transformational tool that requires a different planning style to the one which prevailed in the 70s—both in public and private domains. They were pioneers in structuring Knowledge/Action in a different way, both in academic institutions where disciples helped to bring about change—and with direct action via projects.

Keywords Projects · Planning, social learning · Knowledge/action · Three visionaries

1 Introduction

Planning and Project concepts are deeply linked both, at public and private domain. They come together in relation to what could be called “operability” and are also intertwined in the context of Academy as they share teaching and research lines. The relationship between Plans, Programs and Projects is traditionally included in

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Fig. 1 Trueba et al. (1995)

the curricula of technical universities. The project is the operational tool of Programs and Plans (Fig. 1).

Manjón said, in a way that reflects the flavour of tradition that remains alive (De Arce 2002):

The best teacher is not the one who has more knowledge, nor the one who gives more lessons, but the one who better educates, that is, the one who has the special gift of helping students to become women and men owners of themselves and their skills; the teacher who associates his work to his students' work and guides them to participate of the benefits of their knowledge.

Professors John Friedmann, Ángel Ramos and Ignacio Trueba, belong to the group of relevant innovative people within the Planning and Projects domain who, from their university departments, were able to create new ways of thinking and acting.

In the words of Ibáñez Martín (1995)

The word style comes from Latin and Greek and means the stiletto which was used to mark letters in the boards covered with wax that preceded the paper. And, alike any writing machine – according to detective novels – has its own identification marks, such stiletos had also theirs, which enable to discover the author of the texts. This is why style no longer means the material tool, but the idiosyncrasy, the personality, the specific way of seeing things that a person or a type of person has.

Since the beginning of the Department of Urban Planning at the University of California, Los Angeles, created by Professor Friedmann in 1969, a new thinking around planning started, of which academics from the five Continents have benefited; Ángel Ramos and Ignacio Trueba initiated the Project and Rural Planning Department at the Technical University of Madrid in 1985. Since the very beginning, they contributed to the creation of the Project Engineering Spanish Association (AEIPRO: Asociación Española de Ingeniería de Proyectos) and promoted periodical meetings that, with time, became the International Congresses of Project Engineering, its XVIII edition held in 2014.

Julián Marías said he was convinced that the intellectual affiliation worked in the opposite direction as the biological one. The latter, he said, is proclaimed and acknowledged by the parents, who claim the paternity over their sons, while in the case of the former it has to be the son one who publicly acknowledges the parent

and admits the debt with the master, showing the influences he has received and have led him to be the way he is (Carpintero 2008).

The common trends of thinking of the three professors are analyzed below and can be summarized in three concepts: *Modern Project*, *Environmental Claim and Knowledge/Action in Postmodernism*.

2 Key Starting Concepts of the Three Professors

The idea that the scientific knowledge about society could be applied to the improvement of this very society was developed, at first, in the XVIII century. By that time, it was widely believed that the thinking derived from any worthwhile valuable idea had to be practical, and its consequences should be measured with a rigorous mathematical method (Friedmann 1987). Modern utopian ideologies considered science, technology and planning as infallible tools to the rational control of nature and society (Llano 1988). These ideologies, despite their differences in different countries, have a common philosophical root that has been called postmodernism (Spaemann 2004).

2.1 *Modern Project and Its Influence in Engineering: Blue Print Model*

In the Modern Era, planning was seen as something linked to power (Schumacher 1976). The so called Modern Project is associated to this concept of planning—blue print project—and is based on engineering and scientific rationality with top-down approaches: blue print, is a top-down-approach linked to an objective and reductionist rationality with deep roots in the fields of engineering and construction (Bond and Hulme 1999). From this approach the first models of development planning were designed (Mannheim 1949; Lindblom 1977; Etzioni 1968).

The influence of Saint Simon (1760–1825) was clear in the vision of this Modern Project, contributing with complementary approaches to scientific Planning. Saint Simon suggested an image of society in which “Scientists and Engineers”, as the people most aware of organic laws in society, should draw the future according to a global plan (Friedmann 1987).

This view was inspired by the sciences of engineering and by the idealism of engineers who were under Saint-Simon’s influence, (Wolf 1981) and implied important consequences in the vision of humankind and its relation with nature, influencing the early development models and the classic engineering projects (Hayek 1955).

This planned strategy of society was called Social Planning within the Modern Project, in such a way that “every man is an individual belonging to a social

organism to which he has to be subjected and should be satisfied with the generous advantages that enjoys as part of the current system, which is firmly acknowledged as the best of all possible” (Ramos 1993).

2.2 Modern Project and Its Influence in Engineering: Blue Print Model

The peculiar dignity that modern thinking attributes to humankind comes directly from the idea of dominance. One of the consequences of this approach was the awareness that “modern project does not consider caring and respecting nature; these issues are not so important in the light of efficiency and utility (essential laws that should not be interfered); solidarity with nature does not exist because nature has to be dominated”.

Environmental Claim questions, with lights and shadows, if the technical progress, which has been undoubtedly reached, considers the ethical progress of humanity.

Figure 2 summarizes a workshop that took place in Cervera de Pisuerga (1984). The figure shows the view of Ángel Ramos who considered a comprehensive vision of what had been the relationship of humankind with nature and saw in the future the knowledge—Know How—as the understanding of nature that would go beyond what had happened since the XVII century (Cazorla 1999).

The idea is to find a solution to what Schumacher claimed: “it can be said that the modern world that has been modelled by technology stumbles from crisis to crisis” (Schumacher 1976).

Among other visible signs of damage, Schumacher highlights the deterioration of the soil where the action of humankind takes place. In this context it makes perfect sense the view of Ramos (Cazorla 1999) who pointed out the historic break in the idea of progress that has been present during the second half of XX century. A turning point from which a new Project, which claims respect for nature as part of

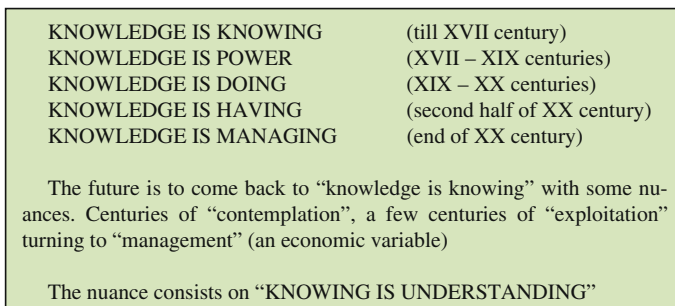


Fig. 2 Ramos (1984)

the real concern for the lives of the people who currently inhabit the planet and will inhabit it in the future, should start.

That reflection allows to state two key elements of the conceptual process that is being described: first, the project that claims respect for nature, and second, the condition of living condition of people now and in the future. Trueba (1995, 2002) identifies the connection between these two elements when, referring to Ángel Ramos, says: “His knowledge on natural resources, his scientific and research concern and, above all, his colossal sensitivity and respect for nature have contributed to my education” (Trueba 2002). As a consultant to FAO for several years, combining this work with his position as Professor of Projects at Technical University of Madrid, he had the opportunity to actively participate in the design of new methodologies for projects that FAO would launch in the 70s (FAO 1991) and that would then be adapted to teaching an business domains, aiming to promote a new concept of Project that considers the respect for Nature and integrates it in the future business decision making process (Trueba 1995).

2.3 Knowledge/Action in Postmodernism: Elements of a New Project

As it has been stated above, Modern Project is reluctant to abandon old views and Environmental Claim calls attention to the crisis of the system. This section intends to initiate the intellectual building of a new Project framed in an emerging post-modernism and considering the key elements that, according to our three visionary masters, should be included.

The word postmodernism appears, by the first time, in the book of Toynbee *A Study of History* (Toynbee 1987) referring to a swift of paradigm with regard to modernism. As it has been described above, it appears as a reaction to: the failure of technocratic modernism, the idea of an endless progress, and the setback caused by the environmental claim that postulates the search of a lost balance (Cazorla et al. 2013).

Since the beginning of the 90s, different authors highlight the emerging of this postmodernism as a new cultural and ideological approach with other values and trends that claims new ways of thinking and acting in increasing contrast to the dominant trends in the past (Ballesteros 1989). In this new Era, the lack of novelty of the industrial and capitalist society, which turns into an “old” society, becomes evident. Some authors refer to this shift as *postmodern sensibility to difference* (Clope et al. 1991; Philo 1992).

As the traditional concept of planning has been deeply linked to the so-called Modern Project, also called Euclidian Project, one of the intellectual temptations that emerged was synthesized in an “Euclidian or nothing” trend (Cazorla 2006). A way to solve this matter was the definition of Friedmann (1987) of the Planning concept as “the professional practice that specifically searches to link ways of

knowledge with ways of acting”, that this author proposes in a relevant paper which was awarded as the best of the year in USA (Friedmann 1993). This definition leads to conceive planning as something different to engineering where means are efficiently related to ends and projects draw the course of action.

Where the balance between the need of developing Projects from a non-Euclidean concept of planning can be found? What knowledge/action would be valid in this postmodernism context? To properly address this questions, it seems relevant to turn to Aristoteles and the interpretation of Llano (1988).

The acting has not always been right as can be seen by the generated model. It should be clarified that the assessment of actions as good or bad actions is not a result of the actions themselves but something constitutive of them. The purpose of doing and acting has different nature. The purpose of doing is to reach a product, while the purpose of acting depends on the agent. Aristoteles leads us to the conclusion that the good praxis is an end in itself. The praxis—human action—does not search, unlike the production, the perfection of an external work, but the perfection achieved by the agent (Llano 1988).

The recovery of the real concept of action in this new Era has a first component of a new style of planning that affects the relations of people with both, nature and other people, and leads to say that “what is not fair to Nature cannot be, at the same time, optimum and functional” (Spaemann 1983). In other words, “we shouldn’t do all what is technically possible” (Ramos 1993).

Within the action, the notion of care is included by Llano as another key concept in the context of the new postmodernism sensitivity: “the rationalist and unidimensional attitude of dominance should be replaced by the original unity of contemplation and action that characterizes the care (*epimeleia*)” (Llano 1988).

In line with the approach that Friedmann (1993) described in the already mentioned paper and with Alejandro Llano, Ramos (1993) writes about *care* as a guide concept for action: “care never acts arrogantly nor intends to aggressively break into reality”.

The care concept, at operational domain, corresponds the term respect in the framework of knowledge. Millán Puelles said: “Respect for Nature is also a natural human need, a primary need of our way of being which satisfaction appears to be valuable by itself” (Millán 1984).

The synthesis is that we can move forward. Figure 3 shows that the restructuring of coordinates in the operational context will lead us to an integrated vision when formulating projects (Trueba 1995) which will result from a good doing, but with a deep approach of respect, based on knowledge and care intrinsically linked to action. Bringing this postmodern sensibility to a postmodern planning model requires consistence—values—that enable to discover and redesign vital areas that take into account participation and commitment, these being understood as “the personal contribution” of every agent involved in the Project (IPMA 2010).

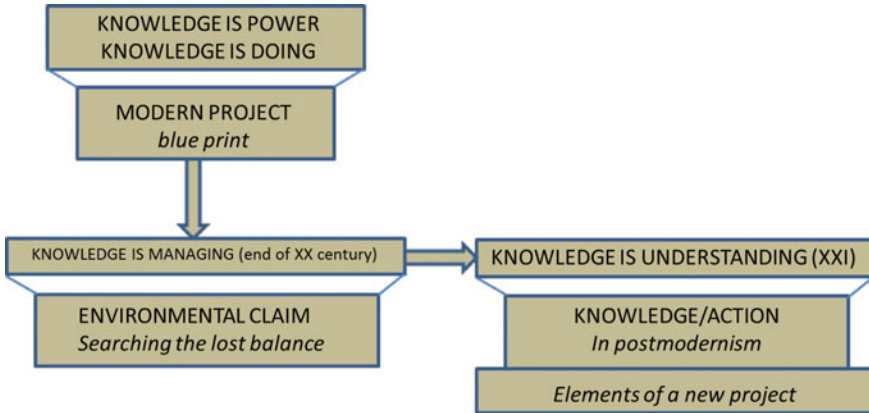


Fig. 3 Thinking from the three professors

3 Friedmann, Ramos, Trueba: Their Specific Intellectual Contributions

The previous section has been devoted to set the intellectual background of the three authors. Their particular contributions to the field of Planning and Projects follow.

3.1 John Friedmann: Planning as Social Learning

The Social Learning concept appears in the international literature as a way to develop an alternative Planning concept to the existing planning models in public domain. In 1973, Friedman published a book entitled *Retracking America: A Theory of Transactive Planning*. The book caused a truly intellectual shock in the North-American academic environment. It proposed a new system that would replace the bankrupted model that the American post-industrial society was facing. The book criticizes Allocative Planning, in force at that time, which dealt with the distribution of a number of scarce resources among different beneficiaries, and advocates for an innovative management planning, with a key element: the personal relationship that should exist between expert and customer (Cazorla 2001).

The epistemological process developed by Friedmann from then on, continues being explored in its wider ramifications. Karl Popper sees science as a matter of refuted hypothesis that become stronger when they resist the testing. Conversely, Friedman feels that, in the case of social practice, the contrary should occur. The role of the planner is not, in any case, the building of theories, but the innovation of society. The planner should be the professional responsible for mobilizing resources

and bringing together public and private energies to achieve innovative solutions to the challenging problems in the public domain (Friedmann 1993).

The processes of Planning as Social Learning are based on the idea that any effective learning comes from a real experience of change. The population involved in a Project actively participates in the Planning, by means of their own behavior, attitude and values that generate actions addressed to join their experienced knowledge (Hulme 1989) to the planner's expert knowledge providing a mutual learning (Azgyris and Shön 1978).

The respect for the people involved—working with them—has enabled to develop methodologies of participation, negotiation and deep ethical approaches resulting in relevant professional and academic success (Cazorla 2013).

3.2 *Ángel Ramos: Physic Planning and Projects*

Friedmann became the director of the Urban Planning Program at University of California, Los Angeles, in 1969. It was then when his practical experience as a consultant of governments and institutions in different countries was consolidated in lessons that benefited students from the five continents. A similar journey was made by Angel Ramos who during the 60s developed an intense professional activity, related to the environmental restoration in civil works, and became professor of the Chair of Physic Planning and Projects in the Faculty of Forestry at the Technical University of Madrid in 1971. As a professor he devoted all his dynamism to train professionals and researchers seeking the balance between the aggressive technology and the preservation of the environment widely claimed by environmental groups (Fernández-Galiano and González Alonso 1999).

His reflections of those years shaped a very relevant publication, *Physic Planning and Ecology*. This publication continues to be an unavoidable reference for management of the natural environment to this day.

Angel Ramos is, together with Ramón Margalef and Fernando González Bermúdez, a visionary who introduced a new way of thinking, doing and developing human actions—Projects—in Nature.

The practical translation of this new approach faces important difficulties.... The unavoidable need to satisfy, in so many fields, human needs and, therefore, continuing to develop projects is one of the main ones. Some radical views seem to overlook this reality. Analogously, the economic growth focus ignores the side effects of a Project. (Ramos 1979)

Friedmann promotes a method of working with people by means of crossing expert and experienced knowledge. Ramos is committed with a dialogue with Nature “be able to see, be able to appreciate, be able to give value” promoting a sustainable development which is rooted in the acknowledgment of biotic and abiotic variables that make it possible to find “the difficult equilibrium point that, many times would not be in one of the ends neither would be the mean point”. Facing reductionists at both sides, Ramos contributes with an integrated view of the

problems and the solutions addressing emergencies and trepidations, deadlines, and projections in time (Ramos 1993). Nature should be respected. Nature has her own physiognomy and a previous destination: this is why it is important to discover, in that quiet dialogue, the natural rhythms and, at the same time, to develop projects that integrate such valuable information.

3.3 Ignacio Trueba: Project and Rural Planning

Ignacio Trueba became professor and head of the Chair of Engineering Projects in the early 70s. By that time, he had already developed a vast professional work both, in public domain—participating in the formulation of the so-called Provincial Plans in the previous decade—and as consultant to FAO and the World Bank of UN. He continued his work in the Projects and Planning Department at the University of Madrid that was created during the 80s, as a consequence of the new organizational strategy of Spanish universities (Trueba 2002).

That professional experience happened to be very useful to advance on methodologies for formulation and evaluation of projects from a wide interpretation of the concept of Project that “involves many more disciplines than just technology and includes the economic development, social policy and environmental preservation fields” (Trueba and Morales 2011). This “way of seeing” projects in a broad sense leads to a systematic decision making process known as the Project Cycle. “Alike all living things, the Project is born, grows, develops, produces fruits and dies. It has a vital cycle”. (Trueba 1982, 1985).

The concept of Rural Planning linked to projects was an innovative intellectual contribution that was several years ahead of what the European Commission would call Community LEADER Initiative (Liaisons Entre Activités de Développement de l'Économie Rural), to promote rural development through projects and implementing methodologies of social participation and respect for the environment that is still valid today.

The role of rural communities as actors of their own development by means of bottom/up methodologies, enabled to carry on engineering projects that conform and develop rural territories, connecting their traditional technical-economic component with other components already mentioned (Cazorla et al. 2013).

4 What the Three Visionary Masters Have in Common: The Values of the Planning and Project Professional

To frame this section it seems appropriate to recall an essential metaphysical feature. Since Aristotle, there is an intellectual agreement on the fundamental “modes of being” and their nine accidental types, also known as predicaments or categories.

As the being is reflected in knowledge and language, that “modes of being” correspond to different types or sorts of predicates that can be attributed, hence the name of predicaments (Alvira et al. 2001). All accidents infer the substance: the being of a subject. Besides, every accident has its own essence, which conditions the substance in a particular way (Alvira et al. 2001). Among the nine accidental types, some are called extrinsic because they don’t affect the substance itself but only infer externally: the position (*situs*), place/where (*ubi*), condition (*habitus*), time/when (*quando*). There are other accidents that do affect intrinsically the matter: among these, we focus our research in the accident called relation.

4.1 Relation: An Essential Category of Substance for Action

The relation is an accident whose nature consists on the reference or conformation of a being towards another one. The key of this accident is something like abandoning oneself and going towards another. The very reality of this relation is, therefore, extremely weak and imperfect as it constitutes a pure “respect for” (Alvira et al. 2001).

So far our reflection to shows how this metaphysical background influences our three visionary Masters. Even though its reality is very weak, the scope of the relation accident is important and constitutes one of the key features that can be found as common to the three authors.

Human-Nature relation (Ramos), Expert-Experienced knowledge relation (Friedmann) and Urban-Rural relation (Trueba), are cohesive concepts meaning that *knowledge is knowing how to relate*. These concepts have been analyzed above and they have a common basis: humans and their actions with their peers (Friedmann), with Nature (Ramos) and with spatial contexts (Trueba). On the grounds of this basis the three authors intend to change reality according to a deep sense of how such reality is.

4.2 Planning Professionals and Projects: Some Inspired Principles

Through the reading of these pages a distinct element of the three Masters is expected to become clear: their professional performance in very different environments. In the case of Friedman as international consultant; meanwhile, Ramos worked in a company devoted to the restoration of landscapes; and Trueba combined works as public manager of plans and programs with works as international consultant to FAO and the World Bank. After intense years of work they became university professors and occupied relevant positions which enabled them to provide brilliant intellectual contributions linked to their living and experienced reality

in a very dynamic cultural context. Some inspiring guide principles for professionals of planning and projects, who are immerse in the postmodern context are mentioned below. Llano, in his book *The New Sensibility* (1988) provides a synthesis of the thoughts of the three Masters.

Principle of solidarity. The Modern Project has created incompatible social spaces, while a postmodern Project claims social compatible domains, prioritizing solidarity spaces that have their most solid foundation in the dignity of people and are projected in the “care and respect for nature, living things, and landscapes that extend beyond themselves into the human condition” (Ramos 1993).

Trueba (2002), resumes that thinking when he writes: “a global solidarity, to remind us of our commitments every day and to promote an action for rural development based on freedom, is needed”.

Principle of integrity. Although the challenge of interdisciplinarity seems to have been conceptually assumed, there is room to develop a field that was initiated by the thinking of Ramos, Trueba and Friedmann. The latter conceptualized a relevant term when he expressed that planning entrepreneurs are mobilizers of resources that seek to bring together public and private energies to solve public problems. But such planning is not addressed to seek benefit, but to obtain special values. Its intention is explicitly normative (Friedmann 1992).

It appears here, with its full meaning, the integrity with its “integral” dimension taking into consideration the values—ethical rather than technical—in such a way that, those planners should justify their action in public domain as that which causes human promotion and diversity—also ecological—in the global world (Friedmann 1993).

Principle of complementarity. We conclude with Llano (1988), who facing the dominant strategy of conflict—which confuses what is different with what is contrary—promulgates another way of thinking that is not exclusive, but inclusive, and defends the complementarity of the differences. There is not better complementarity than the spatial one, where the rural world is presented as a balancer of an urban world that has generated more harmful consequences to the environment in general and to humans in particular.

5 Conclusion

As a conclusion, it can be said that our three visionary Masters knew, without explicitly formulating it, to develop a thinking in the principles that have been mentioned. But, above all, and connecting with what was said at the beginning of this paper, they were able to see it and teach it to future generations that today develop this thinking in a natural way. In the words of Santiago González Alonso (Cazorla 1999) referring to D. Ángel Ramos, “as a treasure received almost unnoticed, by *osmosis*”.

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