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From stage-managed planning towards a more imaginative and inclusive strategic spatial planning

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Abstract
Planning systems have changed little from the traditional models of the 1970s. They focus mainly on maintaining the existing social-spatial order rather than challenging and transforming it. This is done through a focus on carefully stage-managed processes with subtly but clearly defined parameters of what is open for debate suspending alternative ways of interpretation. These systems fail to capture the dynamics and tensions of relations coexisting in particular places. We argue for a more imaginative and inclusive strategic spatial planning. Core issues for this strategic planning are: imagination to broaden the scope of the possible, social justice, and legitimacy. In the tradition of empowerment planning, co-production, as a mobilizing practice of collective political organization, is introduced. For us, the emancipatory narrative of co-production fulfills a legitimating function. All this calls for a transformative agenda and must revolve around the construction of great new fictions that create real possibilities for different futures. Our three core issues force planners to extend their thinking into other epistemological worlds.

Keywords
Co-production, diversity, inequality, legitimacy, strategic spatial planning

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Introduction

Structural problems challenge planning systems

Evidence in the Global Report on Human Settlements (UN-Habitat, 2009) illustrates that in a surprising number of countries planning systems have changed little from the traditional models of the 1970s (Mazza, 2010). Even where the nature of plans have changed, the basic principles of the regulatory system tend to remain the same (see also CEC, 1997; Watson, 2007). This is cause for serious concern given the nature and scale of structural problems and challenges which places all over the world are now facing (see Albrechts et al., 2017; Cerreta et al., 2010; Healey, 1997a, 1997b; Moulaert et al., 2017; Young, 1990, 2000). Problems emerge out of the framing of particular issues as a problem, challenge, opportunity, whether by interest groups, citizens, planners, politicians, media or some combination. As a consequence, with regard to crucial political (and by extension planning) concepts it depends on who defines, interprets, and uses them. We are fully aware that the problems and challenges are ever changing and hence resistant to description in terms of fixed categories (see also Chia, 1999: 211). Structural problems such as environmental issues (global warming), uneven development, migration, to name just these call for a transformative agenda.

The rollout of neoliberalism as hegemonic urban narrative privileges urban and regional competitiveness, mainly through the subordination of social policy to economic policy. It allows for more elitist forms of partnerships and networks (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009: 618; Jessop, 2000). Moreover, it limits the scope for genuinely innovative development. The neo-liberal condition believes in the strength of a creative capitalism. It focusses on how to most effectively spread its benefits and the, in their view, huge improvements in quality of life it can provide to people who have been left out. Others, as we do, are convinced that the current challenges are central, structural, and the result of unevenly distributed power, the networks of control and influence, of rampant injustices (see Žižek, 2006: 551). Hence, they cannot be tackled by means of traditional discourses and approaches – neither by just more market, more technology, by extrapolating from the past and the present, nor by simply relying on economic growth, or by keeping to vested interests, concepts, and practices.

All this needs both a critical debate that questions the political and economic processes of which existing planning approaches are an integral part and a search for new ideas and practices (see Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010: 328; Sager, 2013: xviii).

In this paper, we argue that the current planning systems essentially seem to legitimate hegemonic strategies and projects. They are "not so much an empowering arena for debating wide-ranging societal options for future development, as a system focused on carefully stage-managed processes with subtly but clearly defined parameters of what is open for debate" (see Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012: 90; Swyngedouw, 2010). As these very carefully orchestrated processes are mainly in favor of groups with access to power, they force concerned and politically engaged citizens and community groups to create their own informal deliberative and democratic spaces (Legacy, 2016: 3121). We (see also Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012: 90) are concerned that actual planning systems support, encourage, and legitimate the post-political planning condition, limit perceptions of diversity and cause deliberate exclusions. In a post-political context, planning systems align with a managerial logic that concentrates decisions into the hands of experts (see Swyngedouw, 2010: 225). They relegate key decisions to non-political economic and private actors (Oosterlynck and Swyngedouw, 2010: 1591). They do not recognize disagreement as the

legitimate and proper basis of the political. In this way, they fail to produce political solutions and result in an institutional and legal deadlock which undermines popular trust in politics. As a consequence, planning faces major ontological and epistemological challenges. These challenges may imply the scope of planning, discourses, approaches, use of skills, its context, resources, knowledge base, and involvement of a wider range of actors.

In search for a new approach

As a reaction, we stress the need to engage with new policy concepts with far-reaching consequences for the modalities of egalitarian and emancipatory change. The new concepts must be linked to attempts to widen and deepen the range of actors involved in policy processes. This involves new alliances, actor partnerships, co-production processes with dissensus as a foundation of democracy. We therefore argue for a more imaginative and inclusive strategic planning based on three main pillars: imagining alternative futures, socio-spatial justice, and legitimacy. This is done within a frame of co-production as a mobilizing practice of collective political organization and practice. The pillars have a relatively consistent logical relationship, not only to epistemological challenges but also to ontological issues.

Strategic planning and co-production found their origin in the western world. It has spread to Asia, Africa, and South America in very different ways. It got its own color and accent through different institutional systems and planning cultures. Inspiring practices of co-production arose among others in India and South Africa (see Harrison, 2017; Roy, 2005, 2009; Watson, 2014). With our normative view on strategic planning we aim to add to the critical debate on planning and to add some new ideas.

The paper is organized in four main sections. Following this introduction, we briefly deal with planning as a stage-managed process. We then introduce the transformative agenda. And finally we reflect on what we consider to be core issues for a more imaginative, open, transparent, inclusive, and fair strategic spatial planning. We realize that the paper is somehow biased as it is based on our normative view on strategic planning and our personal experiences in planning and political practice.[1] It further relies on a selective review of planning literature and some selected cases.

Planning as stage-managed process[2]

Focus on command and control

A lot of the command and control planning (Healey, 1995: 253; Motte, 2006) characteristic for the Post War Era was about maintaining the existing social order rather than challenging and transforming it. This type of planning became mainly concerned with pragmatic negotiations around the immediate in a context of the seeming inevitability of market-based forms of political rationality. It, still, provides foundational principles for practices of statutory planning. Indeed, most statutory planning is marked by the predominance of a technical logic where decision-making is increasingly pretended to be a question of expert knowledge and not of a political consideration (see Booher, 2008; Motte, 2006; Swyngedouw, 2010). Expert planners, look for technical solutions to the practical, physical problems of the city. By collecting and analyzing data more scientifically, they aim to plan a more efficient, convenient, and healthful system of land-use and transportation in the city. Cities can be planned comprehensively by dividing the city's land into discrete zones (housing, industry, agriculture, nature, transport, etc.).

The interpretation of (traditional) statutory plans in terms of form and content (legal certainty, comprehensive, detailed, etc.) is often a negation of change, dynamics, uncertainty, etc. This means that they soon become outdated, are often utopian, not based upon sufficient and correct data. In a similar way, they barely take into account resources or the time factor or even the possibilities for their implementation. They often force actors to make decision before time is ripe for it. It represents a type of planning that claims to have the knowledge, technical skill, and thereby also the power to steer the development of places. Actions, policies become more rational, decisions more principled, and the future subject to (human) control. The outcome represents an instituted order, a local law. It aims to provide legal certainty by suspending alternative ways of interpretation. In this way, it fails to capture the dynamics and tensions of relations coexisting in particular places.

Some shortcomings

We acknowledge that some state institutions or even better people working in these institutions sincerely aim to renew planning and even succeeded in doing. We nevertheless argue that the main traditional statutory planning becomes less focused on the visionary and imagining the impossible. It becomes more concerned with pragmatic negotiations around the immediate in a context of the seeming inevitability of market-based forms of political rationality (see Haughton et al., 2013: 232). The historic relationship between the planning profession and the state deeply embedded planners in the system. In this way, it limits the scope for alternatives to mainstream political thinking (Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012: 95). This makes it difficult to introduce new principles, concepts, processes, and theories. These are required as they can act as guides for finding adequate, fair, and reliable solutions for the problems and challenges. Within a neoliberal context planning incorporates and reads these new concepts insofar as they do not conflict with the mainstream growth agenda. So, its prime concern seems to provide growth more effectively and efficiently while taking on board lower order issues such as equity, spatial quality, sustainability (see Allmendinger and Haughton, 2012: 95). Hence, our call for transformative practices that create real possibilities for constructing different futures and practices.

The quest for a transformative agenda

Call for a transformative agenda

The continuing and unabated pace of change driven by the (structural) problems, developments, and challenges mentioned earlier calls for transformative practices. The transformative agenda is a modern term for structural change that has been discussed by many in the past (Albrechts, 2010; Friedmann, 1987; Schön, 1971) in the context of planning theory. The transformative is open for demands that lie beyond the existing situation. It implies a structural change in and of the institutional order as a manifestation of the political as the space of power, conflict, and antagonism within human societies (see Mouffe, 2005: 9). Structural change is not just about the formal design of regulatory legislation and resource allocation. To have an effect, it involves changing the discourse in all arenas which are significant for policies (Vigar et al., 2000: 50–51). For change on the ground (systemic change, deep change in society), values and world views have to be involved as they shape practices and may facilitate or inhibit change.

A number of strong manifestos for structural change have been drawn up: for reconsidering the absolute faith in economic growth (Hamilton, 2004; Mishan, 1967), for living inter-culturally (Landry, 2000; Sandercock, 1998, 2003). Others react against existing and persistent inequalities (Harvey, 2000) and aim to create a more sustainable society (Sachs, 2003). In order to (even partially) implement these manifestos, society needs to mobilize all necessary resources in a way such that these new ideas develop the power to travel and translate into an array of practice arenas. This must be done in such a way that they transform these arenas, rather than merely being absorbed within them. In order to make new ideas and strategies travel, one has to ensure that key agents have a common understanding of the direction and that they personify the new ideas and strategies.

Focus on becoming

Transformative practices[3] focus on the structural problems in society. They construct images of preferred outcomes and how to implement them. Transformative practices become the activity whereby that which might become is imposed on that which is, and it is imposed for the purpose of changing what is into what might become. This means a shift from an ontology of being, which privileges outcome and end-state, towards an ontology of becoming. Becoming takes into account the unconscious, emotional, and social relationships. In this way, it shapes perception, attention, assessment, intention, and commitment (see Hoch, 2017: 308) in which actions, movement, relationships, process, and emergence are emphasized. So, we argue to think in terms of heterogeneous becoming of institutional transformation, the otherness of institutional outcomes, and the immanent continuity of institutional traces. This will imply the abandonment of bureaucratic approaches and the involvement of knowledge, skills, approaches, and resources that, unfortunately, are often external to the traditional administrative apparatus.

Transformative change rarely occurs in instant revolutions. It is the change that actually evolves in many small ways to produce an emergent pattern which, retrospectively, comes together and becomes evident in what history may then describe as "a transformative moment." We could draw a link here with the pragmatist tradition. Forester and Dewey are both much more focused on the transformative potential in practices. How to act in "little ways" to change perceptions, understandings, modes of practice, so that different outcomes become possible and different political cultures gather momentum (Healey, 2008: 284).

Within the frame of co-production as a mobilizing practice, we introduce three pillars we deem necessary to play a pivotal role in a more imaginative, inclusive, and legitimate strategic spatial planning. Creativity is needed to broaden the scope of the possible in a way able to cope with the challenges and to embed structural change. A second pillar aims to make the process more inclusive so that also the voiceless get a say. The third pillar is on legitimacy.

Towards a more imaginative and inclusive strategic spatial planning[4]

Roots and critics

In the 1990s, strategic approaches, frameworks, and perspectives for cities, city-regions, and regions became fashionable in Europe and Australia. Mainly through the impact of the Barcelona model and UN-Habitat it also spread to Latin-America and Africa (see Borja and

Castells, 1997; Gonzáles, 2011; Healey et al., 1997; Salet and Faludi, 2000; Tibaijuka, 2005; UN-Habitat, 2009).

Questions are raised whether strategic planning is up to deal with fundamental challenges ahead. Critics argue that the results of strategic spatial planning, in terms of improvement of the quality of places, have been modest (Mazza, 2011, personal communication; Monno, 2010: 164). Others ask whether actually existing practices of strategic spatial planning really follow their normative groundings. They also point at its weakness in theoretical underpinnings (Newman, 2008). Still others (see Monno, 2010; Moulaert 2011) question the conditions under which alternative futures would materialize. They criticize the lack of concern about the path dependency of the resources, a too sequential view of the relationships between futures, action, structure, institutions, and discourse. Olesen (2011) questions whether strategic spatial planning practices are able to resist the hegemonic discourses of neo-liberalism. Moreover, selected practices (see Albrechts et al., 2017) illustrate that dominant strategic planning models are sometimes reimagined as smoke screens behind which agendas of privatization are implemented. Such practices have become a key component of the neoliberal shift from distributive policies, welfare considerations, and direct service provision towards more market-oriented and market-dependent approaches. These approaches are focused on the pursuit of economic promotion and competitive restructuring (see Swyngedouw et al., 2002: 572). Concern is also raised about the legitimacy of strategic spatial planning, the role of expertise and knowledge, and how to introduce transformative practices (see Albrechts, 2010).

Normative dimension

To partially respond to the critics, we feel the need, in line with Swyngedouw (2014), to change the perspective of planning. We move away from the trend to depoliticize planning by translating (potential) political issues into questions of technical knowledge, skills, and expertise. This implies that strategic spatial planning, at least for the protagonists of a more critical planning, is not just a contingent response to wider forces but an active force in enabling change (see Sager, 2013). This needs to be done according to specific terms (equity, social justice) (Moulaert, 2011: 82). Therefore, as a transformative process, strategic spatial planning needs to involve social science concerns about the relationships between human practices and societal dynamics.

The normative dimension that we inscribe in strategic spatial planning is of an ethical nature. It always refers to values, specific practices. Class, gender, race, and religion do matter in terms of whether citizens are included or excluded in the process (see Young, 1990). The ethical stand is taken on substantive (alternative futures) and procedural issues (see also Forester, 1989) (actors involved in the process, legitimacy). It depends on particular (institutional, legal, political, cultural) contexts and intellectual traditions. For us this implies an agonistic setting in which opinions, conflicts, different values, power relationships are addressed and where actors have the ability to reflect on who they are, what they want. In this way, they can articulate their identities, their traditions, their values. It helps to reflect on what spatial quality, what equity, what accountability, what legitimacy means for them. Without the normative, we risk adopting a pernicious relativism where anything goes (see Ogilvy, 2002). It must be clear that our normative assumptions have to be unpacked in each planning process.

Revisiting strategic planning requires a contextual in-depth reflection on key-issues (co-production, imagining, socio-spatial justice, legitimacy). Such a revisit needs a sense of

(local) context and will take us beyond its traditional boundaries of theory, profession, planning laws, and regulations.

The sense of (local) context. Every situation in which strategic spatial planning is carried out needs a contextual understanding of power and material interests, of (leading) discourses and the constraints of a more-of-the-same attitude (see also Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000: 339). It needs a grasp of the planning system. Who are the key actors, size, and power of strategic spatial planning and statutory planning agencies? What networks are in play and how this relates to local, social, economic, political, and power dynamics (see also Healey, 2010: 14)? The context involves what Healey (1997a, 1997b) calls the "hard infrastructure" laws and regulations which set the framework for the development of plans. It includes also the wider institutional context which covers constitutional arrangements, the legal framework and the culture of decision-making. What policy instruments are used, who can use these instruments and the rules by which they are used. Context also involves the "soft infrastructure" (the practices). Conditions and structural constraints on "*what is*" and "*what is not*" possible are placed by the past and the present. They form the setting of the planning process but also have to be questioned and challenged in the process (see also Dyrberg, 1997). This needs to be done given the specific context of place, time, legal system, power structure, and scale regarding specific issues that are of interest and within a specific combination of actors. This defines the boundaries of a fairly large space between openness and fixity.

Co-production as a mobilizing practice of collective political organization and action. Established institutions seek to reabsorb demands of empowerment of citizens into a distributive framework (see Young, 1990: 90). In this way, representative democracy articulates not all values. Hence, the need to complement it and to add to the fullness of concrete human content, to the genuineness of community links (see Žižek, 1992: 163 about the very notion of democracy).

From participation to co-production

A crucial issue in strategic spatial planning is the way in which people are excluded or included[5] in planning processes and the way the relationship between people, technologies of government, norms of self-rule (Roy, 2009) are organized. Problematically a wide range of these relationships are being compressed into a one fits all concept "citizens participation." This concept does not seem to provide the equal and reciprocal relationship between the state and citizens and among citizens. Indeed, practices in different parts of the world demonstrate (see Mitlin, 2008; Roy, 2009; Watson, 2007; Yiftachel, 2006a) that while rights may be written in laws even violent protest will not guarantee appropriate delivery of services. In the tradition of empowerment planning, we introduce co-production as a mobilizing practice of collective political organization and action. It aims to transform the market democracy into people centered and bottom-up linked democracy and to change urban order in a more egalitarian manner.

In different institutional contexts and in different intellectual and planning traditions, the search for organizing the relationship between (all) actors in a more open and equitable way led to a co-production approach and engagement between the state and (all) citizens (see Albrechts, 2013, 2015; Boyle and Harris, 2009; Cahn, 2000; Mitlin, 2008; Ostrom, 1996; Parks et al., 1981; Time Banks, 2011; Watson, 2011, 2014; Whitaker, 1980). A scan of the literature on co-production reveals that different versions of co-production have emerged independently. This is illustrated by the work of Ostrom and her colleagues in the 1970s at

the Universities of Indiana and North Carolina (Whitaker) and the work by the human rights activist Cahn in the 1980s. For both it proved to be difficult to get a broader acceptance of the concept. In the first decade of this millennium, the concept has re-emerged in theory as well as in practice. Mainly as a response to the challenges in the global south context (see Roy, 2009; Van den Broeck et al., 2004; Watson, 2011, 2014). Mitlin (2008) illustrates[6] with cases the use of co-production as a political strategy of grassroots movements.

In the west, traces of the concept appear, amongst others, in the 1991 Toronto Development Plan (see Milroy, 1992). In the partnership in the UK between Nef (the New Economics Foundation) and Nesta (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) (see Boyle and Harris, 2009). Traces can also be found in the Belgian National Booster Program "In search for effective public involvement in transport planning 1998–2000" (Belgian Federal Office for Scientific and Cultural Affairs, see Albrechts, 2001). Bovaird (2007) illustrates, with case studies in Brazil, France, and England, how co-production has played out in practice. Case studies on co-production by Ostrom, Cahn, Roy, Bovaird, Mitlin cover a wide range of service sectors (such as housing, education, health, sanitation, water supply, sewage treatment) and different versions of the concept.

Immanence of the political

To reframe strategic spatial planning in a more radical way, we use the theory and practices of the social innovation approach. This approach has a focus on political mobilization among vulnerable communities (see Moulaert, 2011; Moulaert et al., 2017). We combine this approach with the theory and practices of co-production. The immanence of the political in co-production is expressed by thinking and acting in common (an interpersonal dialogue) in a way that puts equality of all to speak and act at the core. Co-production helps people to make sense of what they experience as well as giving them hope for the future. It turns issues into political questions, provides space for expressing disagreement and conflict. It creates practices and institutions needed for a vibrant agonistic public sphere (see also Mouffe, 2005: 76) and for constructing alternative futures. In co-production, participants are both character and joint authors. As authors, they construct their own content and strategies that others read, interpret in diverse, and often conflicting ways. As characters, they produce in other engagements other contents and strategies and they take part in actions that are not entirely of their own making (see Throgmorton, 1996: 47).

With co-production, we aim to legitimize multiple epistemologies and, theoretically at least, give them equal standing in the spirit of pluralism. It aims to produce a space where the vulnerable, disempowered, the voiceless, the unnamed, the uncounted get a voice, become named and counted. It aims to change the routines of existing socio-political configurations and constitutive power relations. It recognizes disagreement as the legitimate and proper basis of the political. It is deeply committed to the values and norms of communities and aims to construct an environment that is more in accord with those commitments. The inclusivity of co-production gives communities discursive forums to express their preferences and ideas in planning processes. It also creates space to question the normative assumptions underlying existing structures and institutions (see also Healey, 1999).

Co-production has a capability of mobilizing members by tapping the power of the "we" voice that does not resonate in the otherness of the "they" voice. This power can elicit meaningful thoughts and feelings from groups who are sensitive to the language of marginalization. It can be transformative in a way that an imposed process can never be. In this way, actors discover layers of stakes that consist of existing, but perhaps as-yet unconscious interests in the fate of their community (Healey, 1997b: 69, 91–92; Healey, 2006: 542).

Co-production, as an innovative collective practice emerging from below, challenges more fundamental political issues as its implication for the distribution of power between citizen and state (Mitlin, 2008; 345). In this way, co-production is part of a much broader shift that is emerging across all the sectors, and most obviously in those fractures between public and private. It emphasizes repeated informal interactions and derives from a strong ethical sense (see Boyle and Harris, 2009: 22). Co-production increasingly looks outwards to communities to create supportive socio-spatial places. It seeks out local energy where it exists to help deliver and broaden policies/actions. It sees citizens for what they can do. It reframes the focus from serving needs to fostering community (see Harrison, 2017 who shows that some forms of co-production may exist in Johannesburg). In this way, co-production urges contributions from those in the system as well as those outside the system. It helps to stop us seeing actors in terms of "us" and "them." This implies that those who are in the system or have easily access to the system as well as those who are outside the system have to decide collectively what the issues are. What is possible in a plan or policy and what is not possible and why. To make it work this requires the allegiance of citizens to a set of shared ethico-political principles (liberty and equity for all). It cannot allow the existence of conflicting principles of legacy in its midst (Mouffe, 2005: 122).

Developing co-production forces us to think about the underlying causes of inequality, path-dependency, how these can be tackled and embrace very different ways of framing involvement of communities. For us "inclusiveness" points at the necessity to include communities who have needs, aspirations, ideas, visions oriented to radical change. These communities should be included with a proactive role. They should be empowered and solicited to activate themselves in producing transformative practices (see Mitlin, 2008; Roy, 2005; Yiftachel, 2006b).

Important in this respect is the emergence of "Southern" and "South-Eastern" perspectives in recent years (see Roy, 2005; Watson, 2014; Yiftachel, 2006b). Hence, our call to open up planning theory and western planning systems for discourses and practices from the South and South-East.

Three pillars

Imagining alternative futures. As Badiou (2005) argues, "proper" politics must revolve around the construction of great new fictions that create real possibilities for constructing different futures. This requires foregrounding and naming different futures and recognizing conflict and struggle over the naming of trajectories of these futures. To exclude the construction of great new fictions and its inherently critical perspective is to condemn planning to accommodation of the status quo.

Imagining alternative futures is a process by which communities co-produce trajectories (images, narratives, stories, etc.) of future states for their community. This challenges the combination of knowledge (traditional scientific, tacit/experiential knowledge of local communities). It also challenges the critical consciousness of the social, political, and spatial reality, practical judgement with the creativity of the design of alternative futures.

These processes have to avoid to disembody the present in favor of an utopian difference. This is important because also future generations of citizens must have the ability and the right to make their own histories by interpreting what a plan/policy means in light of their own experience (Holston, 1995). Alternative futures have to include conflict, ambiguity, and indeterminacy as constituent elements and have to consider the unintended and the unexpected as part of the model. The ambition expressed in alternative futures needs to be high enough that it cannot be accomplished through business as usual. They must be sufficiently clear, easy to understand and communicate and powerful to arouse and sustain the actions

necessary for (parts of) these futures to become a reality. Feasibility (political, spatial, social, economic, psychological) provides not only a context but also a challenge.

Alternative futures may plug into existing processes but also reveal how things can be different, how things could be truly better, how communities can be innovative, how the natural creativity of the actors involved can be unlocked to improve their communities. They also may reveal how they can legitimize these natural tendencies that are typically inhibited or suppressed by the daily demands of their governance systems. Alternative futures simply refuse to accept that the current way of doing things is necessarily the best way. They differ from the established or traditional way of thinking, in which there is hardly any choice and hardly an awareness of other possibilities. They invent, or create, practices as something new rather than as a solution arrived at as a result of existing trends. This is in relation to the local context and to the social and cultural values to which a particular community is historically committed.

The effort to imagine (structurally) different futures, as a co-production process of continuous mutual learning, lies at the very heart of the transformative practices. It requires new concepts and new ways of thinking, creativity, and original synthesis. It brings this imagination to bear on political decisions and the implementation of these decisions. This stresses the need to find effective connections, right from the beginning, between political authorities, citizens, and implementation actors. Creative transformation refers to changes in governance relating to current and historical relations of dominance and oppression. With the construction of alternative futures strategic spatial planning aims to enable a transformative shift, where necessary. It aims to develop openness to new ideas to understand and accept the need and opportunity for change (see the transformative agenda's mentioned earlier). Alternative futures are created not just as technical means to predefined ends, but as social undertakings. As a learning process they have emancipatory potential.

Alternative futures must comprise realistic but at the same time daring policies/actions. They point, in a very specific way, to the critical issues and challenges ahead, creating a sense of urgency among as many actors as possible. They astonish and confront our most deeply ingrained believes about what is important and why. They fight complacency and reveal how things can be different and truly better by shifting the unthinkable into the realm of the possible, making the impossible possible. As a co-production process they motivate actors to take action in a specific direction. They help to frame the actions of different actors. Alternative futures as a result of co-production processes avoid to become locked within the interstices of the state and the powerful actors in society. Friedmann (2011: 71) calls these "leftover, marginal areas where social practice is inconsequential because it poses no threat to the basic configurations of power."

Socio-spatial justice. Neo-liberalism fueled the privatization of ever increasing aspects of life with landscapes of winners and losers (see Smith et al., 2008; Watts, 1994). It provoked a shift from collective forms of identity to more individualized subjectivities (see Rose, 1996). Against a background of structural asymmetries, with our second key-issue (socio-spatial justice), we focus on empowering communities through new concepts and new ways of thinking. These concepts change the way resources are (re)used, (re)distributed, and (re) allocated (the distributional question), and the way the regulatory powers are exercised.

Socio-spatial justice addresses in an explicit way who is benefiting and who pays, who attempts to change planning instruments and how, for what reasons and with what consequences for their content and meaning. This requires a need to recognize the deeply pluralistic character of our communities and the often irreducible conflicts of values and interests. Values, interests, views, ideas, policies from actors are different. Therefore,

strategic spatial planning involves choices and hence inevitably works in a context of conflicts, clashes between the different actors. Conflicts for which no rational solution could ever exist (see Mouffe, 2005). Hence, the necessity to open up strategic spatial planning, as a field of contested planning rationalities and spatial logics for a plurality of understandings. This challenges planning to design and facilitate processes able to accommodate these core issues within a context of ever increasing cultural difference. This requires planners to extend their thinking into other epistemological worlds, like walking in another's shoes (see Unemoto, 2001). Not only is this difficult (and some would say impossible), it is a skill seldom emphasized in professional training (Unemoto, 2001: 17).

With co-production we call for constructing a new governance culture through a more collective decision-making and empowerment of citizens (see Mitlin, 2008; Roy, 2009; Watson, 2014). In order to challenge the established institutions and structures and to provoke a shift in power relations, we need ways of knowing (Sandercock, 1998) that constitute an epistemology of multiplicity for planning practice.

Planning for multiple publics (Sandercock and Forsyth, 1992) argues for a celebration of difference while addressing the problems of inequality and exploitation. The immanence of interpersonal dialogue in co-production could be beneficial for creating an agonistic public sphere as the primary connector between people and power (Young, 2000: 173). This implies making participants understand their experiences as perspectival and partial: moving discourse from claims of self-interest to appeals to justice, enhancing the social knowledge of participants in the course of expressing, questioning, and challenging differently situated knowledge. Therefore, we need to construct strategies that treat communities not just as a container in which things happen but as a complex mixture of nodes and networks, places and flows, in which multiple relations, activities, and values co-exist, interact, combine, conflict, oppress, and generate creative synergy (see also Healey, 2007: 1).

In order to provoke a shift towards socio-spatial justice a more imaginative and inclusive strategic spatial planning needs a relational perspective, change agents, an agonistic democracy, and empowerment through co-production. Change agents are needed as they personify the new ideas, strategies, and practices. Communities become in this way both the text and context of new debates about fundamental socio-spatial relations, about thinking without frontiers (Friedmann, 2011: 69). All this needs new kinds of practices and narratives about belonging to and being involved in the construction of a community and in society at large (see also Holston, 1995; Yiftachel, 2006a). The question concerning who is to be considered an actor in a particular context or situation is not only an epistemological challenge but also a fundamentally ontological issue (Metzger, 2012: 782).

Legitimacy. Most statutory planning is concerned with the regulation and management of changes to land use and development. It is basically concerned with the location, intensity, and amount of land development required for the various space-using functions of city-life. It embodies as to how land should be used for expansion and renewal proceed in the future (see CEC, 1997; Cullingworth, 1972). Most of these plans aim to provide legal certainty. Statutory plans get their legitimacy by handing the decisions on the approval of plans over to the elected political representatives of the local government: legitimacy through vote. After that, the plans become local laws. Usually, a developer is required to lodge a planning application with the government body, mostly a local council, for approval. That application is assessed by the statutory planner to see if it complies with the relevant planning objectives, controls, standards, policies, provisions. It decides for approval or rejection. If we look carefully we could distinguish different types of legitimacy. At the input side legitimacy through the involvement of technical people to produce a robust plan, politicians

through vote and mostly some form of public participation in the planning process. Moreover, there is the legitimacy of the handling of the application by the statutory planner whether or not backed up by the alderman/vice-mayor responsible for planning.

As (mainly) non-statutory processes, questions are raised on the kind of legitimacy of strategic spatial planning processes (see Mazza, 2013: 40). The mainly voluntary character of most strategic spatial planning experiences seems, for some, to act as a structural antidote against marked standardization (see Sartorio, 2005[7]).

Legitimacy is not only a procedural problem (who decides) but also a substantive problem (the link between strategic spatial planning and statutory planning). Both Olesen and Richardson (2012: 1690) and UN-Habitat (2009) argue that strategic spatial planning needs a specific political and institutional context and that it is sensitive to specific intellectual traditions. For Mazza (2011, personal communication, 2013) and Mäntysalo (2013) the possible detachment of strategic spatial planning from the statutory planning system into a parallel informal system would pose a serious legitimacy problem. So, instead of detaching strategic spatial planning from statutory planning Mäntysalo (2013: 51) identifies strategic spatial planning not only as planning distinct from statutory planning but also as a planning framing the statutory–strategic spatial planning relationship itself. In line with Friedmann (2004: 56) he argues that, as a consequence, the object of strategic spatial planning should not be on the production of plans themselves but on the co-production of insights of prospective change and in encouraging public debates on them. It is a way of probing the future in order to make more intelligent and informed decisions in the present (Friedmann, 2004: 56).

In their planning context, the authors are familiar with an end product of strategic planning that may consist of a critical analysis of the main processes and structural constraints shaping places. This could amount to realistic, dynamic, integrated, and indicative long-term visions (frames), plans for short-term and long-term actions, a budget, and flexible strategies for implementation. It constitutes a commitment or (partial) (dis)agreement between the key actors.

Legitimation of the strategic spatial planning we propose is linked to co-production. With co-production the narrative of strategic spatial planning becomes a narrative of emancipation. It fulfills a legitimating function. It legitimates social and political institutions and practices, forms of legislation, ethics, modes of thought and symbols. It grounds this legitimacy not in an original founding act but in a future to be brought about, that is an idea to realize. This idea (of equity, fairness, social justice) has legitimating value because it is universal (see Lyotard, 1992: 50) but allows dissent about their interpretation. So, apart from legitimacy stemming from a representative mandate, in strategic spatial planning, as a co-productive process, legitimacy may come from its performance as a creative and innovative force, its capacity to deliver positive outcomes and actually gaining benefits – all this within the context of a people-centered democratic society.

A level of engagement with the state is required to reform practices (Mitlin, 2008: 339). We are well aware that this needs a fundamental shift in the balance of power not only between governments and citizens but also between different private actors (see Boyle and Harris, 2009). So, redefining the mission of the public sector is central to a more imaginative and inclusive strategic spatial planning.

Epilogue

We have argued that, within the frame of a hegemonic neoliberal discourse transformative practices are needed (Mazza, 2010). We deem this necessary given the nature and scale of the problems, challenges which places are facing today. Although statutory planning has a role

to play in this respect it runs short in providing answers needed. The reason is that statutory planning is often reduced to carefully stage-managed processes that define what is open for debate and what is not. Moreover, it fails to produce political solutions and results and relegates key decisions to non-political economic and private actors. The interpretation of (traditional) statutory plans in terms of form and content is in effect often a negation of change, dynamics, and uncertainty. It represents a type of planning that claims to have the knowledge, technical skill, and thereby also the power to steer the development of places. Places could be planned comprehensively and planners make it run more efficiently by using the appropriate techniques. Rational tools and methods do matter for us but not as theoretical foundation.

The challenge is to find a systematic method that provides a critical interpretation of existing institutional, social, political, and spatial reality. That reflects creatively about possible futures and how to get there in view of the local context and planning tradition.

To add to the debate, we propose, additional to statutory planning, a more imaginative and inclusive strategic spatial planning. This strategic planning is conceived as a state-led but co-productive, open, selective, and dynamic process. A basic purpose of this strategic spatial planning is to position communities as both the text and context of new debates about fundamental socio-spatial relations based on social justice. It is about thinking without frontiers, providing new kinds of practices and narratives about belonging to and being involved. In a dissection of the process, we reveal key issues that underlie this strategic spatial planning: imagining, socio-spatial justice, legitimacy. In a world where actors are interdependent and have a (implicit) reason to engage with each other, we place the key issues within the frame of co-production as a mobilizing practice of collective political organization and action. We consider co-production as an engine of change that makes a difference between systems working and failing. The narrative of emancipation embedded in co-production provides, next to a legitimacy through vote also a legitimacy grounded in a future to be brought about, that is an idea to realize.

From our normative view, strategic spatial planning needs to raise and question structural issues. Main questions to be raised are how to cope with equity, how to work in the face of conflict, how to work with actors in and outside the system, how to use the impossible as emancipatory imagination (see Forester, 2010; Monno, 2010; Moulaert, 2011 and also Yiftachel, 2006a; Mitlin, 2008; Watson, 2011)? How to cope with the uneven distribution of uncertainty based on class or status? This needs to be done as it not only burdens the vulnerable, disempowered, the voiceless, the unnamed with ignorance but encourages them to feel morally responsible for this condition (see Hoch, 2017: 302). In this way, we turn the selection of issues, the definition of problems, challenges, and opportunities into political questions. This makes it possible to draw a link with the planning system, unevenly distributed power relations, the control mechanism, deep injustice, or of a fatal flaw inscribed in the system (Žižek, 2006: 553).

We argued that the capacity of a planning system to deliver the desired outcomes is dependent not only on the legal–political system itself but also on the (local) conditions underlying it. These conditions affect the ability of planning systems to implement the chosen strategies. We also call to broaden the scope of planning theory with theory and practices of social innovation and discourses and practices from the South and South-East.

Strategic spatial planning as presented in this paper aims at securing political influence. It requires a change to the status quo for the benefit of more just and fair communities. This makes it certainly confrontational as it is directed at change by means of specific outputs (plans, policies, projects) framed through spaces of deliberative opportunities. Strategic spatial planning with its normative and ethical dimension is presented as an

ideal to be aimed at rather than something that can be perfectly achieved. It is not presented as a panacea for all problems and all places. With its introduction, the world of planning and planners inevitably becomes more complicated and messy. However, it is in making planning issues and approaches messy that transformative practices can take place (see also Campbell, 2002: 351).

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Notes

1. These experiences are mainly Western European.
2. We are fully aware that planning systems vary significantly across (and for a number of countries even within) national contexts (see CEC, 1997). The English spatial planning system for example is substantially distinct from that in other parts of Europe (see Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010: 328).
3. The focus on structural transformation does not imply that day-to-day problems are not important for planning. They are important! But there is evidence that, for whatever reasons, spatial planners are often left out, or leave themselves out. Or else are reduced to being mere providers of space when major decisions are at stake.
4. The term strategic planning is more common in continental European planning literature (see Albrechts, 2004; Balducci et al., 2011; Motte, 2006; Salet and Faludi, 2000). It often matches with UK literature on spatial planning (see Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009; Brand and Gaffikin, 2007). Moreover, there is ample evidence that in many strategic plans the often more abstract discourse is turned into something more tangible and is redefined into a more familiar vocabulary of statutory planning (see also Olesen and Richardson, 2012: 1703).
5. The neglected criteria mentioned by Gregory (2017: 160) and his recommendations (161) alongside the vast literature on consensus building and social innovation are highly relevant for co-production processes. Co-production is a way to provide citizens with the necessary structure and resources to play a proactive role in any phase of the planning process and make their ideas, projects, actions, etc. really matter in practice. Co-production does not imply mass participation and great volumes of information. It requires willingness to engage in joint transformative practices.
6. Mitlin uses cases of the Orangi Pilot Project (Pakistan), Slum Dwellers International, FEGIP, a federation of local residents associations in Brazil, and the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia.
7. See also Hillier (2003) for strategic spatial planning in Australia at a metropolitan scale which often tends to be a set of long-range blueprints for investment.

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