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## NORMATIVITY IN URBAN PLANNING

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*Decisions about urban policy, or the allocation of resources, or where to move, or how to build something, must use norms about good and bad. Short-range or long-range, broad or selfish, implicit or explicit, values are an inevitable ingredient of decision. Without some sense of the better, any action is perverse. When values lie unexamined, they are dangerous.*

- Kevin Lynch (1981, p. 1)

Urban planning has taken on many different forms throughout the history of its practice. It has been conceptualized as acting solely upon space, as well as acting upon society at large. It has been viewed as a purely scientific endeavor, as well as intrincically political. It has been seen as a utilitarian means for the implementaion of sanctioned policy, as well as a means for social change. And it has been regarded as a paternalistic top-down approach based on synoptic knowledge, as well as a democratic bottom-up approach based on pluralistic discourse. Although many of these paradigmatic differences in the definition of planning can be partly ascribed to the evolutionary history of the discipline, planning remains an ‘essentially contested concept’.<sup>1</sup>

What binds the many different conceptions of urban planning together, and thus makes it meaningful to speak of one distinct concept, is a general understanding, that planning is future oriented and ‘seeks to connect forms of knowledge with forms of action’ (Friedman, 1993). As such, planning can be described within the paradigm of the design disciplines (Needham, 1998). Central to

<sup>1</sup> The notion of essentially contested concepts is developed by W. B. Gallie and signifies concepts whose existence is generally acknowledged, although a general definition cannot be agreed upon. This includes concepts like art, democracy and the city (according to Albertsen, 1999)

any design discipline is the role of normative theories in its practice (Needham, 1998; Næss & Saglie, 1999). Planning, in other words, has to have an idea – a vision – about the future, and how to implement it.

Although normativity seems to be at the very core of planning, norms and values – or the question of why to plan – seems to be a territory rarely visited by planning theory (Alexander, 1979; Klostermann, 1978; Moore, 1978). Rather than examining the question of why to plan, it has with much scrutiny delved into the questions of what, and how to plan. This is reflected in the generally acknowledged division of planning theory into theory *in* planning and theory *of* planning (Faludi, 1973; Moore, 1976). Substantive theory, or theory *in* planning, deals with *what* planning is about, i.e. the object of planning, and procedural theory, or theory *of* planning, deals with *how* planning is performed, i.e. the planning process.

Some theorists bulk the two together under the term theory *on* planning, whereas theory *for* planning for some (Næss & Saglie, Healey) signifies theories about relationships and conditions which are conditional to planning, such as behavioural psychology or empirically based theories, whereas others (Faludi, Strand) define it more narrowly as the tools and techniques of planning, such as data generation and communication techniques (according to Næss & Saglie, 1999).

What seems to be missing in this picture, is a normative (or scientific) theory, dealing with *why* to plan, or what planning is for. Obviously, this is not the case, but normative planning theory, rather than being a distinct field of inquiry, seems to be hidden somewhere else. First, as norms and values belong to the realm of politics, it may be argued, that it is constituted by what is normally referred to as political theory. But although planning theory does not have a widely accepted canon (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996), political theory is not generally considered part of planning theory. The reason for that may be, that planning was for a long time considered an applied science, as expressed through the paradigm of instrumental rationality, also referred to as synoptic planning. Second, within procedural theory (*of* planning), a distinction is normally made between normative theories of planning, dealing with how planning *ought* to be carried out, and positive or behavioural theories of planning dealing with how planning *can* be carried out, within the practice settings of the actual planning process (Faludi, 1973; Holden, 1998).

This somewhat hidden position of normative planning theory, is unfortunate, as it may defer the discourse on norms and values in planning, to a question of planning procedures, and whether they are workable or equitable etc., rather than being a question about, what future is planned for. Or, if considered part of political theory, it may be treated with neglect, as something secondary to proper planning theory.

Before embarking on the project of investigating the normativity in planning, it should be noted, that although it is today generally agreed upon, that there is no such thing as value-free, scientific public planning, this does not exclude the existance of some generic qualities in planning, a core definition or something intrinsic to the discipline, which is applicable regardless of conceptional differences. Such a common denominator of planning seems to be extractable from economic theory, as the role of planning as the alleviator of market failure (Alexander, 1979; Klosterman, 1985; Moore, 1978; Sager, 1992).

#### *Different ways of framing normativity in planning*

As normativity seems to be central to planning, then how should it be approached? There seems to be a number of different ways to frame it. One is the retrospect, historical approach, which situates the question of normativity within the evolutionary history of the planning discipline. This approach might be helpful in order to grasp how the discourse on normativity has developed within the discipline, and why it has to for long periods of time been considered beyond planning itself.

Another approach is to frame normativity within a political context of power, or, in Friedman's words, whether planning should work for the maintainance of established power relations, for a gradual system change or for a radical transformation of society (1987). This approach would largely position the question of why to plan, as a question of for *whom* to plan.

A more grounded approach would be to frame normativity within the generally accepted framework of the bulk of public planning as it is carried in everyday practice. This would emphasize the institutional approach, aiming at the achievement of a workable balance between growth, equity, and environmental protection, and express the tension between the interests of state, market, and civil society.

Finally, as norms may be expressed as political values, different planning styles may be seen as the expression of different political paradigms. These in turn, are also often rooted in different ethical or philosophical paradigms. Framed this way normativity in planning becomes a fundamental question of world view.

(The latter two perspectives are not covered in this paper as of yet.)

The aim of this paper is to approach normativity in planning from these different perspectives, starting with a prelude from economic theory of why to plan.

#### ***An economic view of why to plan***

From an economic point of view, public planning may be regarded to be at the expense, both

economically and otherwise, of individual citizens and organizations, and therefore it should to be justified as a meaningful activity. From this point of view, public planning therefore has to have a purpose, which cannot be achieved otherwise, or at least not as efficiently. As such, planning must be an instrument for the realization of public policy goals, which would not come about without intervention.

In a market society, one important form of public intervention is to correct market failure. Market failure occurs when the market is unable to allocate goods efficiently or to distribute them equitably (Moore, 1978). Thus, intervention in order to correct market failure serves both to make the market function better in itself, and to provide conditions which the market alone is incapable of providing. The justification of public planning is therefore partly economic and partly political. On the one hand, it functions to oil the engine of society in order to make it run smoothly, and on the other hand it functions as a tool to correct the way the engine is running.

Public goods, according to economic theory, is defined by two characteristics. First, they are nonrivalrous, in the sense that the consumption of a public good by one person does not preclude its simultaneous consumption by someone else. Second, they are nonappropriable, meaning that it is impossible to specify clear ownership of a public good, and hence to restrict its consumption (Klosterman, 1985; Moore, 1978). However, pure public goods are rare, and in reality many public goods are ‘quasi-public’ (Klosterman, 1985) and share some similarities with private goods (Moore, 1978). Clean air, for example, may be considered a pure public good, as it can be enjoyed simultaneously by everyone without limiting the supply, while at the same time it would be impossible (in practice) to restrain its consumption. Clean water on the other hand, may be considered a quasi-public good, as it might be of limited supply and its consumption can more easily be restrained.

The nonappropriability and nonrival character of public goods makes it difficult, if not impossible for the private market to supply them satisfactorily. In the private market, goods are priced according to supply and demand. This works fine with private goods, such as labor or consumer items, where demand and supply is easily bargained. If you want a car, you have to buy it. The consumption of public goods on the other hand, due to their nonappropriability cannot be restricted, and therefore people will not be inclined to pay for them. You can breathe all the fresh air you want, whether you pay for it or not.

So, in theory, if people were to pay for a public good in the private market, they would be likely to underestimate their real appreciation of it and attempt to become ‘free riders’ on the expense of others, as they cannot be excluded from its consumption, once it is provided. Or they may fear that others might

do the same, leaving themselves as ‘suckers’, paying for more than they get. According to this attribute of public goods, if they were to be provided in the private market, it would be impossible to gain an income which would be sufficient to pay for the costs of their provision.

The nonrivalrous character of public goods means, that once they are produced, they can be consumed (almost) without additional costs. The costs of providing tap water lies in constructing the pipings, not in having the water flow. Thus, if the costs of providing public goods were to be retrieved by pricing their use, it might discourage some from taking them into account, which would not affect the costs, but only reduce the overall value in terms of the welfare provided. In other words, the public good would benefit less people, but at a higher price for each user.

Due to the nonappropriability and the nonrivalrous character of public goods, they cannot be provided effectively in a private market situation. Adam Smith's famous invisible hand fumbles, and a market failure occurs, making public intervention in the market economically justifiable.

Externalities, or spill-over effects, are unintended side effects of activities, which impact other activities, without having any direct consequences for the activity causing the effect. They are similar to the concept of public goods, but can be both positive and negative in their consequences. If a chemical plant emits pollutants to its environment, it has no direct consequences for the company, because the costs of doing so are carried by those who get affected by the pollution. There is therefore no economic incentive for the company to do anything to reduce pollution, and a negative external effect occurs (Klosterman, 1985). If a public transportation system, such as a metro, is implemented, it increases the accessibility of the land around the subway stations. In addition, the value of the land is likely to increase, and the implementation of the metro thus causes a positive external effect on behalf of the land owners.

In order to prevent negative external effects, public intervention is necessary. Interestingly enough, whereas the costs of preventing negative external effects resulting from private actions are carried by the intervening public body, the value of positive external effects as a result of public action, as in the case of the metro, rarely translates into public revenues, but are generally benefitting the private sector.

Opposite to externalities are prisoner's dilemma conditions, which are associated with lack of information. A prisoner's dilemma condition occurs, if the pursuit of individual interests, lead to outcomes which are sub-optimal, not only for whole, but also for the individual. If, for instance, a neighborhood is in decline, its landowners have a mutual interest in its improvement, in order to retain the rental value of their property. The improvement of the neighborhood is dependent on the

support of all landowners, through the improvement of the individual properties. However, if not all buildings are improved, the effort of improving one building will be in vain, and thus each individual landowner will be reluctant to undertake improvement. The result is further decline, leading to a decreased rental value for all (*ibid.*).

Both the concept of public goods and prisoner's dilemma conditions are related to another phenomenon, the 'tragedy of the commons',<sup>2</sup> which has to do with the problem of large numbers (Moore, 1978). Like the Rousseauan maxime, that what is to the benefit of man is not necessarily to the benefit of mankind, the tragedy of the commons expresses the situation where, in the short run, an activity may be advantageous to all individuals independantly, while in the long run being detrimental to all.

This condition occurs when demand exceeds supply: If everybody want to drive their own cars, it works as long there is enough road capacity. However, if traffic exceeds the capacity of the road, it will lead to congestion, and everybody get delayed. But although everybody get delayed, there might still be an incremental advantage for each driver by car driving, compare to other solutions.

Furthermore, the difficulty of changing the mode increases with the number of individuals involved, as communication gets more difficult, while at the same time, the relative impact – positive or negative – from a changed behaviour decreases. In other words, if a small number of individuals are concerned about, say, litter in the streets, it is relatively easy to agree upon street cleaning measures, and at the same time, the impact of refraining from littering is relatively bigger, and thus relatively more meaningful.

The provision of public goods and the prevention of negative externalities, prisoner's dilemma conditions and situations like the tragedy of the commons are all difficult to handle by means of the market and individual initiative. Therefore, some kind of public intervention is required. However, public intervention can take different forms, of which planning is only one. Other forms of intervention is taxation/subsidization and legislation.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the need for intervention alone, does not justify the need for planning, as other forms of intervention may be more efficient. From an economic point of view, nonetheless, it is still a prerequisite for the deployment of public planning (Klosterman, 1985; Moore, 1978).

Finally, whether planning should be practiced in order to alleviate market failure or not, is not only

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<sup>2</sup> The term was coined by Garrett Hardin in 1968 in a seminal article in Science, describing how the ancient british system of commons broke down due to overgrazing, and is widely used as a metaphor for the deterioration of the global environment.

<sup>3</sup> In legal terms, planning is most often also a kind of legislation, as plans by their adoption aquieres the status of legal documents. However, there is a significant difference between planning documents and laws, as – in most cases – laws are general and applies universaly, whereas planning documents are specific and applies only to local situations.

a question of its potency in doing so. Ultimately it remains a political question, or a matter of conviction, to which extend market failure *should* be alleviated, as formulated by Campbell & Fainstein:

*The duality between planning and the market is a defining framework in planning theory. A person's opinion of planning reflects his or her assumptions about the relationship between the private and public sectors – and how much the government should 'intrude'.* (1996, p. 6)

### ***A historical view of why to plan***

The idea of planning cities, in some form or another, is as old as urban civilization itself. Planning in the modern sense, as the act of systematically applying knowledge to action (Friedman, 1987) for a purpose which reaches beyond urban form, is a more recent conception, dating back only to the beginning of the twentieth century (*ibid.*). In this form, planning has undergone a dramatic development, from the formative years from the late nineteenth century to around 1910, through a period of institutionalization, professionalization and self-recognition between the two world wars, to a period of standardization, crisis and diversification in the postwar era (Campbell & Fainstein, 1996).

### ***Planning for beautiful cities***

Predating this development, urban planning as an activity took on already in the middle of the nineteenth century out of sheer necessity, as a means to control the development of the new urban growth, which was the result of the breakthrough of the industrial society and which was facilitated by the invention of the railway. Although planning in this period bore some resemblance with premodern planning, as a means to impose an authoritative divine or imperial order on three-dimensional space in the form of orthogonal design (Friedman, 1987), a new aspect in the form of utilitarian efficiency, had been added.

Rooted, as it was, in military strategy and the new polytechnic science of engineering, planning in this form was regarded as a purely spatial activity, aiming at the rational allocation of space to different purposes, in such a way that maximum utility at minimum cost was achieved. In order to accomodate the needs of the growing industry and the new urban growth, land had to be provided for industry and housing, and made developable through the layout of streets and the provision of waterpipes and sewers and other technical infrastructure.

But still, the monumental qualities of the city, as a cultural expression of society were regarded important. As industrialization had changed the traditional power relations in society, the emerging metropoles became symbols of the new industrialist bourgeoisie (Lefebvre, 1996). Theaters,

museums, parliament buildings and other institutions of this new class, along with parks, boulevards and squares became new features of the city, and the grandious layout and interconnection of these elements became a primary task for urban planning (Hall, 1996). The Ringstrasse in Vienna, Hausmann's transformation of Paris, Cerdà's extension of Barcelona, and – somewhat later – the City Beautiful tradition in the United States are all famous examples of this monumental tradition in urban planning.

Focussing exclusively on utility and aesthetics, monumental planning was a purely technical matter, and a job for engineers and architects, and in its application it became a willing tool of the ruling class. Although partly criticized for applying a crude and unsensitive form of aesthetics (Sitte, 1965), the sins of monumental planning were of a much more severe kind. Despite its many achievements in city building – many of which are still widely treasured today – it remained neglective, and even directly adversary, towards any wider social purpose (Hall, 1996).

### *Planning for social improvement*

Towards the end of the nineteenth century it became increasingly obvious, that the beautiful city had a rather ugly backside. Despite the fact that the recent city extention had alleviated the cramped conditions of the overpopulated european cities of the early nineteenth century, by allowing development beyond the often still existing renaissance fortifications, millions of urban dwellers still lived in misery. And although the great epidemics such as cholera and typhoid had been battled successfully, hygiene – a key word in the urban critique of the time – was still far from satisfactory. And for many, the daily fight for survival presented a life of long working hours and travel times, and poor housing at high prices (Hall, 1996; Howard, 1985).

Appauled by the living conditions of the urban poor, well-meaning members of the middle class started agitating for what was to become the reform movement and ultimately the profession of urban planning (Fishman, 1977; Thomas, 1985). The central figure in this movement was Ebenezer Howard who conceptualized the garden city as a radical alternative to the city-building of the nineteenth century. Although specific (but somewhat mediocre) in its considerations about the spatial layout of the city, the concept of the garden city was first and foremost an attempt to link a vision for a new social order to its expression in physical space, thereby giving birth to the idea that the purpose of planning is beyond mere utility and the aesthetic expression of the city.

Although the concept of the garden city was originally both radical in scope, in terms of its vision of social change, and comprehensive in its considerations about the larger urban system as a web of interlinked communities, its application in practice was more modest. Even though the concept

gained immense popularity, it quickly mutated into an urban design concept for garden suburbs, stripped of its original regional potential as well as its organizational and social principles. As such it was to become associated primarily with a specific architectural form – embraced as it was by the traditionalist architects Unwin and Parker – and became a primarily residential type, favoured largely by the middle class (Hall, 1996).

Nonetheless, planning for social purposes had been put firmly on the agenda, and the improvement of urban living conditions became a primary task for the emerging planning profession. Whatever form planning took, the provision of light, fresh air and green spaces were steady ingredients, and the illustrations agitation for new and better living environments by comparing the dark slums of the old city with the green and sunny paradise of the new were numerous.

But the focus was still on the physical environment and the material quality of life. The devised means of improvement – light, air and green space – were rather simplistic, and the approach was that of the technician – now in the form of the (architect-) planner – devising technical solutions to physical problems. And essentially, the formulation of both the problems of the city as well as their solution came from above, from the newborn professionals, making the entire venture a paternalistic one.

#### *Planning for the welfare state*

As both cities and society became increasingly complex towards the middle of the twentieth century, the scope of planning was widened to encompass not only socio-spatial but also purely social concerns. Planning became institutionalized as a governmental tool for the adjustment – economically, socially, as well as spatially – of society. By this shift, planners were increasingly recruited from both the technical and social sciences, and sociologists, economists, lawyers, demographers and statisticians became engaged in planning (Friedmann, 1987).

Not only the physical layout of cities, but also the provision and distribution of public services and amenities such as, schools, hospitals, sports facilities and parks, as well as major infrastructures such as highways and electric power systems, became objects of physical planning. Planning became an instrument for policy implementation, including not only technical-functional, but also social, economic, and environmental rationales. As a societal activity, operating in the 'public domain' (*ibid.*), planning was justified with reference to the public interest, as a means to provide public or collective consumption goods (Klosterman, 1985).

From its anarchist roots, planning had developed into a well-defined profession, which saw its practice as a purely instrumental one of implementing public policy by means of scientific

knowledge:

*In this view, planning was a form of social engineering in which the objective value-free knowledge of the natural and social sciences could be applied to issues of public policy just as the objective findings of natural science are applied through engineering.* (Klosterman, 1983, p. 216)

By this definition a clear distinction was made between facts and values. Whereas planning as a scientific endeavor, was only to deal with quantitative questions of fact, any expression of value was considered beyond planning, belonging solely to the realm of politics (*ibid.*). Along this line of thought, quantitative methods became central to planning, and the planning process was conceptualized as a repeated cycle of goal formulation (input from politics), problem formulation, definition of different planning scenarios, evaluation of means against ends, and decision, followed by implementation and subsequent monitoring and feedback.<sup>4</sup>

The scientific nature of planning was largely constituted by its ability to overlook and control this process. Planning therefore had to be synoptic and comprehensive, as every aspect relevant to planning had to be charted, and every effect of planning had to be controlled. Charged with this scientific precision, however, planning was viewed as the proper means for guiding the course towards implementation the often long range goals of the welfare state.

Allthough the aim of planning was still to achieve goals which were beyond the physical environment itself, planning in this paradigm had seemed oddly familiar to the planning of the nineteenth century. Although western societies had meanwhile become democratic, planning was again readily at service to the ruling powers as a technical science. And although planning was deployed for the purpose of promoting the public interest, it largely ignored any distributional questions (Klosterman, 1985).

#### *The proliferation and crisis of planning*

From the late 1950s and up through the 60s and 70s, synoptic planning based on instrumental rationality became subject to increased criticism on both epistemological as well as political grounds. An early critique held that the synoptic planning model was unachievable in reality, as true comprehensiveness would require endless amounts of time and money. Moreover, as real-life politics imply an incremental process of mutual partisan adjustments, the idea of scientific planning based on initial goal formulation was seen as illusory, and planning, it was deemed, in reality was an incremental sequence of leaps from one stepping stone to the next (Lindblom, 1973, orig. 1959).

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<sup>4</sup> This is the essense of the model of synoptic planning. Some authors formulate it more truncated (Hudson, 1979) and others more meticulously (Friedman, 1987). See also Scott & Roweis, 1977.

Although attempts were made to mend the deficiencies of the synoptic planning model by combining it with features of incrementalism (Etzioni, 1973), the final blow (to both) came from Rittel & Webber, who stated that the paradigm of science and engineering is fundamentally unapplicable to planning. Because the question of whether planning problems have been resolved satisfactorily or not cannot be reduced to a matter of scientific fact but is always a matter of values, they are inherently 'wicked'. Given the infinite number of variables concerning the implementation of planning, there is no way to determine whether a planning solution has actually worked. All planning solutions are therefore 'one-shot-operations', rendering futile any attempts to correct planning measures on the basis of feedback (1973).

Also political critique soon proliferated. Given the many disastrous results of rationalistic planning, especially within housing, but also the narrow technical rationale which lay behind much traffic planning (Hall, 1996), the questions of what and whom planning was for, (re-)entered the planning discourse. Two major strands of critique emerged. One was opposing institutionalized planning, either in the form of advocacy planning or in the form of radical planning. The other was aiming at a democratization of institutionalized planning, in the form of transactive planning.

Advocacy planning emerged as a reaction to the centralist and technocratic values underlying the synoptic planning model, speaking the case of the poor, of neighborhoods, and other groups, whose views and interests were not represented by institutionalized planning (Alexander, 1979). Radical planning, in its activist formulation, sought a general retreat from society, 'content to operate in the interstices of the Establishment rather than challenging the system head-on' (Hudson, 1979, p. 390). Personal growth, cooperation and freedom from authoritative rule were the central values underlying this approach (*ibid.*).

A similar set of values formed the foundations of transactive planning, although this strand was aiming at society at large. Rather than dealing with overarching goals for an anonymous public, planning goals, by the standards of the paradigm, should be formulated in a collaborative process including the people who were affected by the planning. As much as focussing on the goods and services that planning provides *for* people, planning was measured by its effect *on* people. As transactive planning was the only alternative to synoptic planning which offered a new way for institutionalized planning, it was to become far the most influential. However, it presented a major modal change for planning, as it required a shift from technical and analytical skills to communicative skills and mutual learning processes (*ibid.*), as the process of planning in itself became an important goal of planning.

Later on, in the 1980s, carried by the neoliberal winds blowing from Thatcherist Britain and

reaganist USA, planning was swayed by yet another trend. Taking side with the corporate world, supporters of strategic planning and public-private partnership argued that traditional planning presented an unnecessary restraint for the free forces of the market, thus inhibiting growth and welfare (Kaufman & Jacobs, 1996). Moreover, a contended supremacy of the market led to the suggestion that planning tasks as widely as possible should be transferred to the private hand (Squires, 1996).

This proliferation of planning into many different styles, regardless of many constructive contributions to the development of the discipline, has in many ways weakened the status and legitimacy of planning within society. And even though planning continues to be carried out, and few seem to question the necessity of planning – in some form or another – it seems harder than ever, unequivocally to answer the question of why to plan. In that sense, it seems evident that planning, now more than ever, is in a state of crisis (Friedman, 1987).

This brief account of some 150 years of planning indicates the remarkable changes which the discipline has envisaged since the precursory activities of monumental planning in the 19th century to the seeming confusion of the present day. Not only has there been a shift in focus, from the immediate physical environment to broader societal goals, but its very ability to handle the tasks that it has been deployed to solve has been repeatedly questioned and reformulated. In its conceptualization it has been swaying forth and back between being regarded as a value-free technical or scientific endeavour or a means for redefinition of values and social change. This oscillating course of the discipline has largely reflected its changing position as being either at the service of the establishment or the disenfranchised.

### ***A political view of why to plan***

As planning is a future oriented activity, it must be founded on a vision about how this future should be. A conservative vision would want it to be little different from the present, and would see planning as a tool for system maintenance. A radical vision, on the other hand, would want it to be much different from the present, and would see planning as a tool for system transformation. Mediating between these extremes, a moderate vision would want things to alter gradually, and would see planning as a tool for gradual system change (Friedman, 1987).

Different planning styles may accommodate these positions more or less distinctly, and some may even be ambiguous about them. Some are formulated explicitly in favour of a certain role for planning, while others only implicitly sustain a given position. Whereas system-maintaining planning is generally bureaucratic and articulated by the state, system-transforming planning is a

form of autonomous action in opposition to the state. System-changing planning, by nature, may encompass aspects of both (*ibid.*).

Despite these ambivalences and differences, the different roles for planning as either system maintaining, changing or transforming represent fundamentally different conceptions of why to plan. And as the question of whether the established order should be maintained or changed is intrinsically linked to the question of power, they also express different views for whom to plan.

### *Planning for the status quo*

One of the most significant critiques of the synoptic planning model was presented by Charles E. Lindblom (1959) and was pointed at the impossibility in practice to obtain an overview of all aspects relevant to the formulation of comprehensive plans. In his famous article 'The science of muddling through', he therefore suggested the adoption of an incremental approach to planning (or in fact to public administration in general), by which any aspiration to comprehensiveness was deliberately declined upon, in favour of step-by-step action defined by a 'realist' apprehension of what is feasible.

As planning is generally viewed as a deliberate process leading to the implementation of specified goals (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1996), incrementalism has largely been viewed as a non-planning approach, based on laissez-faire premises (Alexander, 1979; Fainstein & Fainstein, 1996). However, even though incrementalism may be regarded as the opposite of planning, it has gained much attention within planning theory, as 'it produces the fruits of planning in its results' (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1996, p. 272).

The central argument in Lindbloms critique is, that although the rational-comprehensive method of synoptic planning, with clarification of values and subsequent policy formulation on the basis of comprehensive analysis of alternatives may be preferable in theory, this method is impossible in practice. The reason is, that it is impossible in reality to establish an information base for analysis which is truly comprehensive, and therefore it is impossible to take all relevant factors for decisionmaking into account.

Instead he argues in favour of incrementalism, or what he calls 'the successive limited comparisons method' as superior to the rational-comprehensive method in solving complex problems (such as planning problems), because no ultimate goals are defined, but only solutions within reach are considered. The fundamental difference between the two approaches is, that whereas the rational-comprehensive method approaches problems 'by root', the successive limited comparisons method approaches problems 'by branch' (Lindblom, 1959).

This however, is not a problem, Lindblom argues, because, in reality, choosing between values is only possible when concrete policies, which offer a different weighing of values, can be compared. Hence, values cannot be evaluated in beforehand, but only chosen between during the process. And thus, specifying the goodness of a policy is relative, as it becomes a matter of its preferability to other policies. Furthermore, because politics in reality are always incremental, there is no reason why radical alternatives should be evaluated, because they are unrealistic and therefore politically irrelevant.

As choosing between policies in practice is often a question of, in a sense, choosing between lesser evils, any given policy may be preferred simultaneously by more conflicting parties as the best solution possible, although for different reasons. Hence, fundamental disagreement can be resolved in practice, as means do not correspond to only to one end. Agreement, then, becomes the practice test for the goodness of policy, and 'therefore it is not irrational for an administrator to defend a policy as good without being able to specify what it is good for' (*ibid.*, p. 160).

Because social science is not capable of fully predicting consequences of policy moves, the rational-comprehensive method does not work in reality, and may at even be deleterious. Therefore, planning is better off choosing a method of incremental changes, as it would otherwise risk 'lasting mistakes' (*ibid.*, p. 165). The incremental approach, due to its ability to adjust along the way, is also more capable of catering for the fact that policy is a continuous process and not made up once and for all.

Finally, whereas the branch model works by comparative analysis of incremental changes, any attempt to precursory policy formulation requires abstraction, as 'man cannot think without classifying' (*ibid.*, p. 165), the root model relies heavily on abstracted 'theory'. Theory, however, is often of little help to practice, because it is greedy for facts – as it can be constructed only through large data collection – and insufficiently precise for processes that move through small changes.

Although Lindblom's critique of rational-comprehensive planning is certainly relevant in many ways, his 'realist' approach shares the view of rational-comprehensive approach of planning as something merely applied to politics – however intertwined with politics in its application, and thus as devoid of normative content in itself. Nonetheless, in the deliberate rejection of any radical policy scenarios, incrementalism is inherently conservative. When working 'by branch', only minor adjustments can ever be achieved, and the system as it is, is generally maintained. This may be a very workable approach, but by nature, working for radical, or even moderate change, is working against the current. While floating with the stream is always the easiest thing to do, being mainstream is basically to accept the way things are.

Although 'the way things are' is always an expression of the existing power relations, this does not worry Lindblom at all. While, in the most bureaucratic sense, taking the administrator's point of view, he is not interested in why planning is carried out, but only in how it can be carried out with the least effort and the highest level of integrity on behalf of the administrator (planner):

*Since the policies ignored by the administrator are politically impossible and so irrelevant, the simplification of analysis achieved by concentrating on policies that differ only incrementally is not a capricious kind of simplification. In addition, it can be argued that, given the limits on knowledge within which policy-makers are confined, simplifying by limiting the focus to small variations from present policy makes the most of available knowledge. Because policies being considered are like present and past policies, the administrator can obtain information and claim some insight. Nonincremental policy proposals are therefore typically not only politically irrelevant but also unpredictable in their consequences.* (ibid., p. 162)

An obscuring factor in revealing the conservative nature of incrementalism is, that by stressing the 'realism' and the operational virtues of the approach, it may appear to be purely positive. However, describing planning as it is (positive theory of planning), rather than as it ought to be (normative theory of planning) does not mean that planning as it is, is not normative. It might only suggest that it is so implicitly, rather than explicitly.

In sum, although incrementalism – or nonplanning – may not explicitly be meant to be conservative, it produces the fruits of conservatism in its results. Or, in the words of Ernest R. Alexander: 'To the extend that one agrees ... that the *status quo* is good and needs only minor changes, ... he or she will accept nonplanning to some degree' (1979, p. 122, emphasis in original).

Different from incrementalism in its clearly formulated theoretical foundations, but similar both in its partial view of planning and its uncritical stance towards existing power relations, is the concept of strategic planning. Originally developed in the corporate world as a means for corporations to plan more effectively in a world of increasing uncertainty, strategic planning began to gain attention within public planning in the early 1980s (Kaufman & Jacobs, 1987).

Although the deficiencies of comprehensive planning were widely acknowledged by that time, as was the case for incrementalism, the arguments in favour of strategic planning was largely based on a critique of comprehensive planning, with which public planning was equated (ibid.). Much like incrementalism, strategic planning was solicited as being realistic, not overexpecting the capabilities of planning, as being more concerned about estimating costs, and a generally better performance in getting the job done.

Central to strategic planning is the concept of SWOT-analysis, which is the idea of analysing Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats as the basis for strategy formulation. This is done in a sequence of scanning the environment, selecting key issues, stating a mission and

formulating goals, undertaking internal and external analyses, developing strategies, and formulating plans for strategic action, succeeded by monitoring, updating and repeated scanning (*ibid.*).

This cycle may appear familiar, as it bears strong resemblance with the classic model of the process of comprehensive planning (cfr. above). The crucial difference being however, that by the strategic planning model, the environmental scan preceedes goal formulation, whereas by the comprehensive planning model, goal formulation is the basis for all the succeeding steps. In other words, by the strategic planning model goals are formulated on the basis of what appears feasible, rather than on what is politically desirable.

As is the case for incrementalism, this is a significant reduction of the scope for planning, but again, not without a certain bias. Strategic planning, being originally a corporate model for action, focuses specifically on what the acting body is good at; something which is expressed by favouring strategy over policy. Hence, fields in which the acting body is weak, are not considered as feasible fields of action and are left out in the plan formulation.

For businesses which can allow themselves to be selective in their scope of action, this may not represent a problem, as their main objective is to produce the best result on the bottom line, regardless of how. The policy, or strategy, pursued may have no end in itself, as long as it translates into dollars by the end of the day. Most often, however, public planning – when not defined narrowly within a public corporation or agency, with a similarly narrow scope of tasks – includes the provision of services which, by nature, are not productive or profit generating. When the strategic planning model is applied to public planning, it is therefore likely to change not only the planning performance but also the planning objectives, and hence, it becomes a question, not only of getting the job done, but also of what job to get done.

In focussing on strengths rather than weaknesses, strategic planning prioritizes fields in which performance is good and neglects fields in which performance is poor, leaving out any discussion about which performance is wanted. Like with incrementalism, this is most likely to have the outcome that the existing order of things will prevail, as existing strengths get stronger, while existing weaknesses get weaker. Strategic planning must therefore be regarded to be predominantly conservative style of planning.

Furthermore, strategic planning may also to some extend be regarded as nonplanning, from a public planning point of view. In focusing on competition as a way to gain advantage from strength, it does to some extend play by the rules of the market. In doing so it works counter to the tasks of public

planning of alleviating market failure, as it is impossible to do both.

In this latter respect, strategic planning is similar to the concept of public-private partnerships, which, although not canonized as an actual planning style, has also been paid increasing attention within planning, during the 1980s. The fundamental idea of public-private partnerships is to hand over public sector tasks to the private sector, in order to achieve better performance. This idea is founded in the belief, that because the private sector is more productive, innovative and effective than the public sector, both sectors will be better off, if public sector tasks are laid in the hands of the private sector (Squires, 1991).

As such, the concept of public-private partnerships is rooted in the ideology of privatism, which, basically, is the belief that the joint forces of the private sector and the market are, by nature, always superior in promoting development. And hence, the primary task of the public sector should primarily be to facilitate private capital accumulation. Therefore, public planning should support the private sector for the purpose of growth, by augmenting market forces, rather than supplanting them. Furthermore, any corrective measure that might intervene in private investment decision making or challenge market forces for the betterment of the community is explicitly rejected (*ibid.*).

Given the economic dominance of this view, public-private partnerships have been put to work especially when economic development has been seen as the primary task of planning. Such a narrow definition of the scope of planning, however, leans towards a definition of planning similar to that of the paradigm of instrumental rationalism:

*Given that [development] is presumed to be principally a technical rather than a political process, cities must work more closely with private industry to facilitate ... restructuring in order to establish more effectively their comparative advantages and market themselves in an increasingly competitive economic climate. Such partnerships, it is assumed, will bring society's best and brightest resources (which reside in the private sector) to bear on its most severe public problems.* (*ibid.*, p. 269)

This view seems to fail to acknowledge, or rather to ignore, that neither cities nor markets are neutral but, on the contrary, arenas of conflict which are not only structured by, but also reflect, differences in wealth and power. As such, the city does not represent a unified interest, just as little as the market works for a unified goal. On the contrary, the city represents several conflicting and unequal interests, which the market is incapable of – or uninterested in – unifying. In fact, this is the very reason why there is urban politics.

So, the rosy idea of unifying the forces of the public and the private sector for the mutual benefit of both is, at best, illusionary. Not only does the self interest of the market in the city make it incapable of working as a neutral tool for a unified goal, but the possibility of establishing a unified goal is in

itself is a misconception. On the contrary, the annihilation the role of planning as a corrective measure against market failure in favour of one of promoting the market, represents a strong bias in favour of the market.

The aim of the market, of course, can only be expressed in economic terms. Favouring the market, therefore also promotes a view of the city in terms of exchange value at the expense of a view of the city in terms of use value. In a market economy, use value is a vulnerable concept in relation to exchange value, and by favouring the latter over the former, the losers will be those who praise the city for its use value, and the winners will be those interested in its exchange value (*ibid.*). As those viewing the city in terms of its exchange value, typically real estate developers, commercial business interests and manufacturers, represent the traditional power base in society, in opposition to 'ordinary' people for whom the city is a place to live and work, introducing markets as a force for development seems to "... reinforce prevailing unequal social relations and dominant values ..." (*ibid.*, p. 270).

Allthough the planning approaches described in this section have been solicited on the basis of their 'realist' rather than idealist approach and justified with reference to their operational qualities, they are not devoid of normative content. By its clear ideological foundation in privatism, the normative position of the concept of public-private partnerships, however, is much more explicit than is the case for both incrementalism and strategic planning. But building on existing power relations is always easier than trying to change them. Approaches which put an emphasis on feasibility, therefore, seems enevitably to be conservative in their achievements – an attribute which they do all have in common.

#### *Planning for radical transformation*

As planning deals with the allocation of space and ressources for different purposes, it can be formulated as a question of 'who gets what, when, where, why and how' (Davidoff, 1973, p. 292). In this view, it is clear, that planning may favor some more than others. And as the conservative planning approaches discussed above are favoring the established powers in society, they are unlikely to respond to the needs and desires of underprivileged and politically unorganized groups in society (Etzioni, 1973).

This contention is the motivation for Davidoff in his call for advocacy and pluralism in planning (1973):

*The just demand for political and social equality on the part of the Negro and the impoverished requires the public to establish the bases for a society affording equal oportunity to all citizens. The compelling need for intelligent planning, for specification of new social goals and the means for achieving them, is manifest. (*ibid.*, p. 277)*

Two basic obstacles, in Davidoff's view, are in the way of a just planning which would cater for

alternatives to the established views of planning. First, traditional planning is centralized within public planning agencies which hold a planning monopoly. This leads to narrowness in the definition of possible planning scenarios. Second, the underprivileged groups in society have no established channels for their points of view. Therefore, their opinions about planning have no voice. The measure that Davidoff suggests as a means to remove these obstacles is to make planning more pluralistic, offering broader alternatives for evaluation, and to make planners deliberately advocate the views of the underprivileged.

Because plans always have different social and economic consequences for different groups of people, they are always politically contentious. To charge a single (municipal) planning agency with a planning monopoly is therefore undemocratic, as it is likely to be biased in favor of the established order of things, as well as the technical rationality of the planning profession. And even if several planning alternatives are offered, they are likely to be narrowly defined within the same paradigm, as the parameters for variation are still set up by the same body of planners.

By opening up for other planning agents to produce planning proposals in a pluralistic planning situation, would allow for genuinely different planning views to enter the discussion. A plurality of plans representing a wider range of views would form a more informed base for political discussion, which in turn would improve the level of rationality in planning. Furthermore, the critiques of established planning would find a medium by which to render constructive, enabling citizens' organisations and others critical of central planning to become proactive rather than reactive, as they are likely to be under the traditional planning system.

In order for alternative and especially underprivileged views of planning to be present in the discussion, they must be solicited by the professional planners. Instead of making claim to a meaningless value-freedom, planners, in Davidoff's view, should therefore not only explicate their underlying values, but wholeheartedly engage themselves in favor of what they 'deem proper'. The metaphor of this approach is that of a lawyer advocating his client's interest in a lawsuit:

*The idealized political process in a democracy serves the search for truth in much the same manner as due process in law. Fair notice of hearings, production of supporting evidence, cross examination, reasoned decision are all means deployed to arrive at relative truth: a just decision. (ibid., p. 279-280)*

Advocate planners, in other words, should present the arguments of the groups they represent in a language understandable to the decisionmakers. In this view, an important task of the planner is to act as a mediator between different views. At the same time, the planner should inform his clients about the effects of different planning proposals, as well as legal and organisational aspects of planning. This attributes the planner with a double role of both educator and informer, much

different of that of a technical expert devising the proper remedies for planning problems.

The concept of advocacy and pluralism in planning is based on an inclusive definition of planning, which not only acknowledges the inherently political nature of the discipline, but also requires a fundamentally different approach than traditional planning. It is not just a question of making planners and planning agencies do differently; it has consequences for the entire structural organization of planning. As Davidoff acknowledges, resources must be allocated to advocate the views of groups and organizations which would otherwise not have a voice in the planning process. But also different forums for communication, as well as other decision making processes would be required.

As such, the plea for advocacy and pluralism in planning is also a wish to fundamentally change planning to be something else than it has traditionally been. It is therefore not a 'realist' view of planning, but a radical view, by which planning must be changed, in order to change the outcomes of planning.

Another fundamental critique of planning, similar to that of Davidoff's, both in its wish to change the focus of planning, and in its epistemological implications for the practice of planning, comes from feminist planning theory. Based on feminist theory, which developed in the 1970s and 80s, especially within the arts, humanities, and social sciences (Liggett, 1996), it is rooted in the idea that 'gender is a significant aspect of the cultural, social political, and economic construction of reality' (Ritzdorf, p. 445). Feminist theory thus contends that gender and gender differences pervade all aspects of social life, including language, moral consciousness, as well as categories of thinking (Friedman, 1996). Therefore, as little as theory can be value neutral in general, it cannot be gender neutral either.

This has implications for planning on two levels. First, as society and planning alike are historically male-dominated, traditional planning has tended to focus on male issues and to give second priority to issues of importance to women. Second, established norms for relevance, credibility, and methodology exclude female ways of knowing, communicating and acting.

As it is a fundamental assumption in feminist theory, that women are oppressed or devaluated by society, their views and needs are not appropriately catered for by current planning. Whereas traditional planning theory ignores or justifies inappropriate or exploitative treatment of women, feminist planning theory focusses on issues such as the implications of the different economic status of women and men, women's location in, and movement through space, and the relation between public and domestic life (Ritzdorf, 1996). The difference between traditional and feminist planning

would be expressed, for example, through the priority given to adequate provision of child care, or the importance given to public versus individual transportation. But also on the level of physical design, more attention would be paid to issues such as personal safety and pedestrian access (Fainstein, 1996; Ritzdorf, 1996).

In many ways, traditional male-dominated planning can be described as favoring economic growth and efficiency, which can be measured in monetary terms, over issues relevant to women, who are still performing the majority of nonpaying reproductive labor. This gives a bias towards 'hard' services, such as infrastructure and buildings over 'soft' social services. By regarding the physical environment from an economic point of view also neglects the use aspect of space, as demonstrated in residential zoning and the resulting division of home from work (Fainstein, 1996).

Traditional planning theory is strongly committed to functional rationality as the basis for human action and to the use of abstract principles and rights as criteria for decision making. According to feminist theory, however, female ways of knowing include narratives, listening, and visual forms of communication, as well as tacit and intuitive knowledge and 'learning by doing' (Sandercock & Forsyth, 1996). Therefore, a fundamental problem exists, both in planning research and practice, in that established norms exclude female frameworks of justification.

As female ways of knowing are subject-related, feminist theory holds that knowledge is autobiographical and gendered in nature, and emphasizes that personal experience and grounded research are valuable theory-building and research tools. It rejects the notion of detached science, and asserts that research must bridge the gap between theory and practice. In addition it is in favor of a holistic approach to problems as well as cooperative problem solving (Ritzdorf, 1996).

The feminist approach to planning stirs up conventional norms and views, concerning the content as well as the epistemological foundations for planning. Although it is not alone in this venture, it does so with a distinct focus and a specific set of values. Whether these are all specifically feminist has been subject to dispute. Ironically, feminist epistemology has also been criticised for being unconscious of its own embeddedness in dominant culture as a white western middle-class notion. In addition, it has been questioned whether women is at all a useful unifying category, as it may not transcend the categories of class, race, ethnicity or sexual preference. (Sandercock & Forsyth, 1996).

Regardless of these disputes, feminist planning, in Liggett's words, still offers a distinct critique and devises a different way for planning, as

*... feminist theory offers a variety of tools with which to begin the work of knowing and reacting to the limits of current 'realisms' in planning. Following the tradition of advocacy planning and working with current concerns with equality and ethics in planning, feminist theory offers a*

*foundation from which to shape and reproduce the discipline.* (1996, p. 454)

### *Planning for moderate change*

A third way of planning, positioned politically between the conservative styles of incrementalism and strategic planning, and the radical forms of planning such as advocacy planning, suggests moderate change, on the basis of democratic planning processes. While most forms of radical planning attempt to redefine planning to meet particular interests of specific groups of people, whether it is the interests of the poor, of minorities, or of neighborhoods facing problems of gentrification or redevelopment which is not their interest, and therefore tends to be in opposition to the established planning system, democratic planning<sup>5</sup> attempts to redefine institutionalized planning itself.

Criticizing both traditional technocratic forms of planning and partial planning styles, democratic planning focusses on the planning process and particularly on communication as a means to enhance democracy in planning. On the one hand, traditional planning is criticized for giving priority to economic rationality over the needs and wishes of the citizens as well as the regard for the environment. More fundamentally, though, the hegemonic power of scientific reason over other realms of knowledge in planning is questioned, as it represents an *a priori* exclusion of alternative discourses (Healey, 1996).

On the other hand, the advocacy approach, by which planning is conceptualized as a power game, is also criticized. By putting hard against hard, and treating each interest as a power source and the planning process as a bargaining process aiming at creating 'a calculus that expresses the power relations among the participants' (*ibid.*, p. 250), it discloses the possibility of mutual learning, which depends on communication and dialogue.

One of the first to address the question of communication in planning was John Friedman, who developed the concept of transactive planning (1973b). Friedman contends, that a major problem in planning is, that the planners and their clients don't speak the same language. The differences in thinking and language between planners, who rely on processed (technical) knowledge, and the their clients, who typically rely on knowledge which is based on personal experience, represent a communication barrier, which makes it difficult rationally to link knowledge to action. Because of this problem, seemingly rational planning efforts are at risk of rendering irrational (Forester, 1980; Friedman, 1973b).

Whereas processed knowledge is based on theories about narrow aspects of the worlds, which are

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<sup>5</sup> Democratic planning is used here as a common denominator for Friedman's concept of transactive planning (1973b, ) and Healey's concept of communicative planning (1996, 1999).

generalizable (although only under limited circumstances), personal knowledge is richer but less generalizable. As such, different ways of knowing constitute different cultural realms which mold peoples approach and behavior. In order to improve communication, it is therefore not enough just to 'speak in simpler terms'; the very relationship between planner and client must be changed.

Hence, transactive planning focuses on planners and clients as individual persons and the way they interact, in order to establish a setting in which communication mediating between different ways of knowing can ultimately lead to meaningful planning:

*If the communication gap between planner and client is to be closed, a continuing series of personal and primarily verbal transactions between them is needed, through which processed knowledge is fused with personal knowledge and both are fused with action. (ibid., p. 177)*

Because planners might not be able to give useful advise if technical rationality is deployed in a detached manner, it is important for them to be able to understand the reasons behind the tasks they are asked to solve. This involves a process of mutual learning where personal knowledge and technical knowledge is exchanged and both undergo a change, so that a common image of the situation can emerge and a new understanding of the possibilities for change can be discovered.

In this view, planning is not guided by common fundamental ideas or principles about what is good and bad (Healey, 1996); on the contrary, these definitions must be constituted during the planning process. In order for this to be achieved, the planning process must be founded on an acceptance of otherness, openness, and a readiness for change. It requires accept of conflict, as agreement may not always be achievable, but also implies mutual preparedness for continued dialogue (Friedman, 1973b).

Therefore, the planning process cannot be forced, neither should it be. As transactive planning is based on communicative rationality, its primary task is to guide the process of planning. The views of the client must be respected, although they may change through the process of mutual learning. However, understanding and behavioural change takes time. Hence, the role of the planner is neither political – to want things to happen, nor implemental – to make things happen (ibid.).

Although later contributions to this view of planning are largely congenial with Friedman's concept of transactive planning, they make more explicit reference to critical theory and the notion of communicative action as developed by Habermas (Forester, 1980; Healey, 1996). Building on Habermas' universal pragmatics, Forester stresses that acts of speaking must be comprehensible, sincere, legitimate and truthful, for communication to be meaningful. This understanding, he contends, is crucial in planning (as in other aspects of life) because the contested nature of planning easily leads to distorted communication, which ultimately may lead to counterproductive

as well as undemocratic planning decisions (Forester, 1980).

Whereas Friedman stresses the importance of undistorted and meaningful communication on the interpersonal level, Forester argues that it is equally important on the organizational as well as the political and ideological level, as they constitute the larger frameworks of discourse, or thought-worlds, within which communication takes place. In this picture, the contribution of critical theory to planning is to develop 'pragmatics with vision – to reveal true alternatives, to correct false expectations, to counter cynicism, to foster inquiry, to spread political responsibility, engagement, and action' (ibid., p 283).

As the vision of planning, in this view, is one of democracy and a just planning process, democratic planning in itself does not have a vision about substantive goals. Clearly, as the very idea of democratic planning is, that planning goals must emerge out of a communicative planning process, any preemptive formulation of substantive goals would be adversary to its conception. Hence, the goals of democratic planning can only be recapitulated from its application in practice.

According to Healey (1996) the contours of a 'common sense' are detectable, within which the elements of a substantive agenda are evident. Not surprisingly, these elements include economic development, cultural issues, prevention of segregation and polarization, and environmental protection and sustainability. Therefore, 'the general purposes of ... planning ... are to balance these connecting but often contradictory aims' (ibid., p. 246). This act of balance is the topic of the following section.

#### ***A practice view of normativity in urban planning***

[...]

#### ***A philosophical view of normativity in urban planning***

[...]

#### ***Conclusion***

[...]

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