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Questioning Planning, Connecting Places and Times

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VOLUME THREE, SPECIAL EDITION
Questioning Planning, Connecting Places and Times

The third volume of plaNext stems from the 9th AESOP-YA Conference, "Differences and Connections. Beyond Universal Theories in Planning, Urban, and Heritage Studies", held in Palermo (Italy), March 2015. This selection of articles opens many questions about the current state of planning research and theory. It shows how new generations of planning researchers search rich and diverse literatures for conceptual inspiration to help in understanding diverse empirical situations. But because of this diversity, new discoveries may echo findings known to past planning scholars, and new conceptual vocabularies create frameworks with which to clothe ideas previously known, or developing in a similar way through diverse strands of intellectual endeavour. How do all these contributions enrich and deepen the wide field of planning scholarship? This is the question at the core of this volume.

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Patsy Healey is professor emeritus at Global Urban Research Unit in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape, Newcastle University. She has developed approaches to collaborative planning practices, linked to an institutionalist analysis of urban socio-spatial dynamics and urban governance. She is a past President of the Association of European Schools of Planning, was awarded the OBE (1999), and the RTPI's Gold Medal in 2007. In 2009, she was made a Fellow of the British Academy. She is author of *Collaborative planning: Shaping places in fragmented societies* (UBC Press, 2006), *Making better places* (Palgrave, 2010) and co-editor of *Crossing borders: International exchange and planning practices* (Routledge, 2010).

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Foreword

Anna Geppert

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It is a pleasure to write a foreword for the third volume of plaNext, dedicated to 'Differences and Connections: Beyond Universal Theories in Planning, Urban, and Heritage Studies'. This volume publishes six papers selected from the YA conference held on this topic in Palermo in March 2015, thanks to the support of Francesco Lo Piccolo, at the time acting President of AESOP. Published since 2015, plaNext is a peer-reviewed journal, created and edited by the AESOP Young Academics Network. Since the beginning, AESOP has supported this initiative for two reasons.

First, we believe that Young Academics benefit of the experience of editing their journal. At a personal level, Young Academics are actively engaged in various dimensions of scientific publication. They are writing, submitting, sometimes reviewing and editing papers in various journals. However, being in charge of the full process of elaboration of a journal from the first editorial choices to the final implementation is a different experience, providing the whole picture. On the side of AESOP, supporting plaNext was a bet on the maturity of the Young Academics and their capacity of carrying through such an endeavour. The present volume proves, once again, that trusting the Young Academics was right. I want to express a special gratitude to the guest editors of this issue. Simone Tulumello, post-doc research fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon, has coordinated the YA conference in Palermo, his alma mater, and given his time, a scarce resource when one is in a post-doc position, for the present issue. Our estimated colleague Patsy Healey, professor emeritus in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University, has supported this project, giving her time and sharing her experience with generosity. Without these intergenerational collaborations, plaNext would not be what it is, and I am proud to state that AESOP is a network where such collaborations take place: a treasure in the contemporary academic system. I am proud to say that AESOP is the only academic association in which I have seen so much energy in the young generation and so much commitment among confirmed scholars to support the new generation.

Second, we believe that plaNext brings to our community a unique value. We hope that the journal will be a place for debating new, emerging ideas, that don't always get through in well-established academic routines. The ambition of the present issue is questioning and going beyond well-established theories points in this very direction. It would not have happened without the commitment of the editorial board of plaNext, Feras Hammami (Editor in Chief), Nadia Caruso, Ender Peker, Simone Tulumello, Lauren Ugur. We hope that by publishing in open access, plaNext will reach out to various audiences, academics of all generations as well as practitioners, bringing new perspectives on planning. It is particularly important in our days, when planning is facing new challenges and undergoing dynamic changes.

AESOP has always supported the initiatives of its Young Academics network. And the present volume proves, once again, that the Young Academics network is an excellent investment for our community!

Questioning Planning, Connecting Places and Times: Introduction to the Special Issue

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Let us open this editorial introduction in an unusual way, made possible by *plaNext*'s innovative approach to peer-review.[1] Let us quote a paragraph from one of the reviews to the articles of this issue, namely the review by Marco Allegra to Ignacio Castillo Ulloa's article. [2]

> One might suspect that this is a simplistic account of the functioning of the planning process: planners, after all, might be creative in their work; take risks (or not); simply rely on their professional expertise, but also use it in a strategic way to negotiate their role in the policy process; display a number of alternative, 'non-planning strategies'; follow a private, particularistic or political agenda (rather than planning handbooks) in doing their job; cheat, lie, manipulate their clients, colleagues or the stakeholders in general. In sum, what the author presents as a dispute between two irreconcilable logics – between the rational, positivistic planner and the hysteric residents – might be part of a broader interaction between a 'planner-actor' and all the other participants to the planning process.

Why do planners do what planners do? Are they moved by positivistic agendas set in stone in their manuals? Are they moved by a normative will to improve the 'world', the 'dream of planning' (Bertolini, 2009)? May their dreams blind them to the specificities of a situation? Or are they 'normal' human beings doing their job better or worse according to their particular interests, their idiosyncrasies, even the fashion or mood of the day? These are recurring questions that planning theory has been delving into for a few decades.[3] Through this issue of *plaNext*, we want to suggest that it is high time to look back and discuss the many ideas

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[1] In recognition of the journal's collaborative spirit, the names of authors are always disclosed, while reviewers are free to disclose their names or not. We are happy to see that the vast majority of reviewers have signed their reviews.

[2] We are grateful for the authorisation to us quote the review. Allegra has recently discussed some of these questions in a short piece (2016).

[3] Seven decades, according to Alexander (2015); while three or four decades have passed by since planning theory has become an acknowledged research field – the first dedicated journal was *Planning Theory*, originally published by Franco Angeli from the 1980s.

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and 'buzzwords' that have been used and misused, created and interpreted in, and by, planning theory.

Ignacio Castillo Ulloa's article is a good example of why it is high time to do so. The article robustly summarises and tests the way Lacan's ideas can contribute to planning theory and practice, Lacan being an inspiration for several planning theorists lately (see, among others, Hillier, 2002; Bond, 2011; Gunder, 2016). But Castillo Ulloa's final words in his paper, looked at critically, highlight how the main practical/theoretical conclusions stemming from a study of Lacan are not very different from those reached by other scholars through other means – for instance Flyvbjerg's phronesis (2004) or Mouffe's agonistic pluralism (2000). Castillo Ulloa's article, then, is both useful in providing some conclusions to the discussion on Lacan in planning, while opening the question of the way different theoretical ideas and buzzwords are being used, re-used and misused.

This is just an example of the way the articles in this issue are capable of reaching conclusions and opening questions about the current state of planning research and theory. The articles show how new generations of planning researchers search rich and diverse literatures for conceptual inspiration to help in understanding diverse empirical situations. But because of this diversity, new discoveries may echo findings known to past planning scholars, and new conceptual vocabularies create frameworks with which to clothe ideas previously known, or developing in a similar way through diverse strands of intellectual endeavour. How do all these contributions enrich and deepen the wide field of planning scholarship? So we suggest this issue is an invitation to discussion and consolidation in our field, rather than a conclusion.

In what follows, we start by way of summarising 'how we got here', from the AESOP YA conference from which this special issue stems to the topics and ideas – the 'differences' and 'connections' sought by the conference – that inspires us to question planning theory and research nowadays. Then, we comment on the issue's articles, with the aim of emphasising the new paths they follow and, at the same time, how they resonate with old ideas. In the brief concluding remarks, we question how a 'new generation of planners' lives the present, in between the will to shape the future and the recurrence of past ideas.

Differences and connections: questioning planning theory-research

This special issue of *plaNext* presents a selection of articles from the 9th AESOP YA conference, "Differences and Connections: Beyond Universal Theories in Planning, Urban, and Heritage Studies", held in March 2015 in Palermo, Italy (see Caruso et al., 2016, for the conference report). The conference was designed to bring forward two perspectives: first, the need to fostering multi- and inter-disciplinary dialogues between planning theory and research, critical urban theories, human and cultural geography, critical heritage studies, and beyond; and, second, the idea that renewed efforts for comparative studies can help de-parochialising urban theories too often based on the study of a few (global) cities, without giving up the construction of theoretical and horizontal understandings and explanations (cf. Robinson, 2016).

The papers, presented by around 40 early-career researchers and five keynote speakers (Patsy Healey, Jean Hillier, Cornelius Holtorf, Laura Saija and Leonie Sandercock) raised discussions around many contemporary issues and problems of urbanisation and government/governance thereof. The six articles selected for this special issue are well in line with the spirit sought for the conference; and employ a set of different approaches to

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question the aforementioned perspectives in the current practice, theory and research of planning. Underlying all the articles is a set of issues, brought forward by recent debates in critical and post-colonially inspired studies, that calls for a re-thinking of the differences between, and connections among, different places and times.

The starting point of many recent discussions in planning and urban studies is the influence of post-colonial studies (see, among others, Slater, 1992; Chakrabarty, 2000; Santos, 2010). Post-colonialism has urged scholars and planners to question the limits of universal theories (Roy, 2009; Tulumello, 2015), and emphasise the peculiarities of places and times. However, for a *praxis* like planning, which is shaped at the intersection of theory and action, relentless post-colonialism can entail the risk of falling into the trap of particularism and localism – consider, for instance, how the 'West'/'South' divide often tends to be transformed from a normative idea of diffusion of developmental strategies to a rigid epistemological divide for explanatory theories. The discussion on the way ideas and theories 'travel' and are 'trans-lated' from place to place, and from language to language (see Healey, 2012; Baptista, 2013; Fall, Minca, 2013; Minca, 2016), can provide the post-colonial project with instruments to reconstruct after, and together with, the deconstruction of critique. In brief, we see two dimensions for this project. First, the research of ways and instruments 'to enrich the material available to those seeking to learn about experiences elsewhere which could help them work out whether and how to make use of them' (Healey, 2012, 196). This should be done using rich descriptions and critical comparison rather than simplified 'best practices', which often conceal hegemonic purposes. And, second, an exploration at the intersection between the 'planetary' scale of production of knowledge (cf. Pease, 2004) and the way ideas produced outside of global circles can be 'trans-lated', circulate and generate impact (or not) (cf. Minca, 2016). This issue contributes to such a project discussing a variety of topics, such as the contribution by Lacan to planning theory (Castillo Ulloa, this volume), collaborative governance (Holvandus and Leetma, this volume) and the upgrading of informal settlements (Fontana, this volume). From this perspective, we see of special interest the empirical exploration of places that have long been at the 'borderlands' of urban theory (Sandercock, 1995; Baptista, 2013), that is, they are not only under-studied but, more importantly, not clearly understandable through traditional labels such as 'the West' or 'Global South' and, at the same time, undergoing processes of turbulent change – like Central America (Castillo Ulloa, this volume), Eastern Europe (Holvandus and Leetma, this volume) or the republics born from the implosion of the former Soviet Union (Smirnova, this volume).

The efforts to de-provincialise urban and planning studies have gone hand in hand with critiques of, and advancements beyond, the technical and rational approaches to planning, and particularly with the attention to dynamics of power and conflict in urban development and public policy (see, among others, Young, 1990; Hillier, 2002; Flyvbjerg, 2004; McClymont, 2011; Metzger et al., 2015). This issue contributes to such a literature putting forward methodological and conceptual instruments. The contributions by Castillo Ulloa (this volume) and Doyle (this volume) focus on the 'discourse' – the discourse of planning and discourses that shape planning practice, respectively. Levin-Keitel (this volume) draws from psychology to study the positioning of actors in governance networks. Questioning differences and connections, in our opinion, offers a privileged viewpoint to debate 'why do planners do what they do' – why they adopt similar approaches in different places, how they build on past ideas or 'brand-new' ones, what can we learn from places distant from the mainstream 'core' of epistemological production. In the next section, we discuss how the articles in this issue question differences and connections, highlighting the way novel ideas often resonate with 'older' ones.

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Novelties and resonances: contents of the issue

Ignacio Castillo Ulloa's article stimulates us to think through the 'theory-practice-research gap', drawing on Lacan's 'four discourses'. Lacan's main contribution to planning theory seems to be the possibility that the emphasis on the 'discourses', and on the discursive strategies employed by planners and other actors, can help overcome the divide between collaborative and agonistic approaches to planning theory (see Pløger, 2004; Innes and Booher, 2010; Bond, 2011). Castillo Ulloa brings us to a 'remote corner of a tropical country', Costa Rica, and draws on Lacan to expose the positivistic agenda of certain planning paradigms and their 'master' discourse – implicitly showing also the way 'Western' paradigms and tools of the trade have been imported, without much adaptation, in many other places. The article is concluded not by setting out any 'new axiom' for planning, but with the suggestion that 'it is in planners' self-criticism – which is the mode of planning critical-hysterical research here developed – that storytelling, Lacanian theory and phronetic planning research could come across, encouraging thereby a more pragmatic and dynamic co-constitution of planning theory, research and practice'. There are links here with earlier ideas drawn from encounters between conceptual articulations and practical realities, which drew on pragmatist and social learning ideas (Friedmann, 1973; Forester, 1993).

Cora Fontana presents Hernando de Soto's proposals about 'land-titling' in informal settlements, one of the rare cases in which ideas from the 'South' have been able to travel and assume universal reach in mainstream discussions. One may suggest that this happened because de Soto's theories conform pretty well to developmental agendas of global institutions such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund: for instance, the hope that the registration of property rights to slum dwellers will allow citizens to become small entrepreneurs conforms to the 'empowerment' agenda long carried out by global institutions and NGOs (see Miraftab, 2004). Fontana concludes that 'the reason that de Soto became so famous and acclaimed […] could be that The Mystery of Capital is a sort of apologia for capitalism and a paean to Western economy'; but adds that de Soto 'deserves credit for triggering international debate on land titling and on informal housing policies and regulation in general, and for achieving all this by putting forth a different point of view that remarked on the importance of a reliable and open legal system'. In other words, despite adhering to Western political economy, de Soto's idea had a role in the overcoming of the traditional, rationalistic approach to informal settlements' regeneration – that is, land-use zoning, demolition and reconstruction. Her article reminds us how deeply the tools of Western-inspired planning practice are grounded in particular systems of land and property rights, an issue which is also raised by those studying at the tension between indigenous people's conception of land and such systems (Lane and Hibberd, 2005; Sandercock, 2004; Meir, 2009; Barry and Porter 2012).

Johanna Holvandus and Kadri Leetmaa study the role of neighbourhood associations in the building of 'collaborative' spatial planning and governance in Tallinn, Estonia. In doing so, the article provides a picture of the way ideas and practices, such as 'governance' and 'collaborative planning', have travelled to contexts in fast transformation under burgeoning neoliberalism. They set their account within a rich portrayal of a dynamically evolving urban governance landscape in a post-socialist political economy. Once again, the practices of formal planning systems are challenged by citizen's organisations and perceptions. The key interest of the paper is the extent and nature of the restructuring of boundaries between state, market and civil society in a post-communist era, as reflected in the growth of neighbourhood associations. Interestingly, a practice which has not been ultimately able to assume a dominant role for practice in Western Europe (see Hillier, 2002; Gunder, 2003)

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seems to have achieved a hegemonic (discursive?) role elsewhere[4]. Among their findings, Holvandus and Leetma show how governance practices based on the free organisation and participation of citizens can hardly become representative of all the groups, interests and values on stake; while already privileged districts are the ones more capable of putting forward claims and requests. This echoes experiences elsewhere (Alfasi, 2003; Falanga, 2014; Davoudi and Madanipor, 2015). The article therefore provides a critique of the concept itself of 'governance' – and supports those who advocate improved 'government' supported by wide practices of 'governance' instead (Ferrão, 2015), that is, practices of civil society mobilisation and engagement co-evolve with those of the state.

Meike Levin-Keitel also struggles with the challenge of positioning different actors in complex governance landscapes. She draws on a recent revival of practice-oriented perspectives to planning theory – 'there is no planning, only planning practices' as recently stated by Alexander (2016) –, which characterise planning as a process of decision-making in the context of uncertainty and complexity. If planning is, above everything else, practice, the 'methods' (broadly defined) become the central issues. This article presents us with a methodology imported from psychology, business and organisational sciences, that of systemic constellations, and its utility in spatial planning. Systemic constellations 'focus on the complex interplay of different elements in order to come to a better understanding of the whole system' and can be used for a plurality of goals, such as visualizing questions of power or cultural aspects underpinning the planning process, reflecting on alternative scenarios, supporting interviews with experts. The concept of systemic constellation has parallels with ideas of stakeholder mapping and institutional audits (Healey et al., 2003) as well as the kind of analysis encouraged by those interested in governance networks (Sorensen and Torfing, 2007) and Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2005). Compared to this last, Levin-Keitel's concept seems to provide an instrument that is looser in its application, but without giving up the exploration of power relations and actors' agency (cf. Healey, 2012, 194). She also uses the concept of 'system' to refer both to the 'problem' being addressed and the collection of governance actors, calling up a longstanding metaphor and planning tool in the planning field. Levin-Keitel ends up (incidentally?) raising a crucial question when she admits that the method of constellation planning is very likely to be considered not 'objective enough' (emphasis added) within academic circles. What are the theoretical consequences of the idea of a method useful to planning practice *and* useless in planning research (which, indeed, is about planning practice, cf. Healey, 1991)? First, it problematizes the label 'planners' for its capacity to encompass all those individuals and groups in the 'community of planning inquirers' (cf. Healey, 2012). And, second, it re-opens the very first axiom of the article and brings us to ask what is, then, planning *beyond* practice – for we do think that planning exists beyond its (extant) practice(s) (cf. Brenner, 2009; Marcuse, 2010).

Aliaksandra Smirnova adopts an historical perspective to question the role of the (changing) political and social context in post-disaster reconstruction. Her case, the city of Minsk in Belarus and its rebuilding after the devastation of World War II, is somehow paradigmatic of a decision to re-build a city 'from scratch' according to a paradigm considered 'ideal' by its advocates. The particular interest of this case is the way ideas central to the Modern Movement (land-use zoning, functionalism, rationalist design…) intersect with the necessity to build a Soviet urbanism, for which the construction of monumental and decorative architecture, as well as the absence of spatial segregation were central. Smirnova highlights

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[4] Note that collaborative practices in some form have become quite widespread in the US (see Innes and Booher, 2010; Margerum, 2011; Goldstein, 2012) and are often found in other Western countries as well, but they are hardly 'dominant'.

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some clashes among outputs of the two faces of the 'soviet urban model' – for instance the contrast between the monumental architecture in the urban centre and the homogeneous reproduction of standard typologies in the residential districts – and the complex 'construction' of a heritage in a devastated place. Smirnova builds her argument on the co-presence of two concepts she considers to be in opposition, the 'rational' and the 'ideological', respectively typical of the (Western) Modern Movement and the Soviet state. But let us wonder for a moment what would happen if we considered the 'ideology' of Modern Movement too – an ideology grounded in illuminist, liberal democratic and capitalist concepts (Young, 1990, 243; Sandercock, 2003). Under such a lens, urban planning practices become a space where ideologies at war can coexist, where, irrespective of the 'evaluation' of the outputs of such a coexistence, the irreconcilable is reconciled – a space of dialogue and conflict, after all. Indeed, they continue to co-exist as present generations struggle over what to recognise as 'heritage'.

Aoife Doyle's review article focuses on a new concept which has literally flooded into urban and environmental planning discourse in recent years: resilience. She provides a review that raises a dialogue among three fields central to recent theoretical discussions: the adoption of the concept of resilience in urban studies; critical understandings of the urban dimension of the global economic crisis; and new institutionalisms. Specifically, Doyle advocates a combination of resilience and new institutionalist theories. In this proposal, evolutionary resilience theory has the capacity to ground practice in support of the capacity of cities to 'avoid and respond to shock', but risks becoming a discursive cover for neoliberal agendas; while discursive institutionalism theory can uncover the arguments framing those agendas and allow an open discussion of alternative and more democratic ways.

This article opens many questions, but remains limited in its capacity to bring answers forward by the absence of empirical work. All in all, Doyle's approach resonates with the idea that neoliberalism should be understood, in its contradictory and paradoxical dimensions, through the connections between the global project and the local implementation of policies (cf. Tulumello, 2016). In this respect, we believe the next necessary step would be that of questioning the multi-scalar dimensions of the concept of urban resilience itself, which, Doyle's review shows, is global in the discourse, but quite local in practice and theorisation, having been generated in a context where neoliberalisation is particularly advanced, the UK. What meanings and relevance has 'resilience' assumed in other contexts, such as Southern Europe, where neoliberalisation is a less advanced, albeit incipient and lately turbulent, process (cf. Baptista, 2013; Le Galés, 2016; Tulumello, 2016)?

In conclusion: the 'planning project', future and past

All the articles of this special issue struggle with the relation of concepts to practices, and with how to set practices in a wider institutional context. All in all, they contribute to the discussion on the travels of planning ideas by providing evidence that planning theories are enriched when, rather than explaining processes of 'evolution' of planning 'paradigms', they put the emphasis on patterns of transformation and conflictual coexistence of change and permanence (Getimis, 2012; Tulumello, 2015).

At the same time, this issue shows a generation of researchers that is interested in the 'project' of planning (cf. Healey, 2010), that is, in finding conceptual, theoretical and methodological paths toward a newly normative (a 'neo-normative'?) planning research-practice-theory. By means of newly normative we intend, beyond a positivistic understanding of planning as the application of science to public policy – as Faludi outlined some time ago

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(1973) – and against the risk of theoretical fragmentation that can stem from particularism and localism, the way these scholars consider planning as *present* action to shape the *future*. But, in conclusion, this opens a set of questions about the relation of present efforts to those of the *past*.

New generation scholars live in a very different conceptual world than the generations who began to build 'planning theory' back in the mid-twentieth century – in places such as the Anglophone world (cf. Friedmann, 1987; Hillier and Healey, 2008), Southern Europe (cf. Scattoni and Falco, 2011; Ferrão, 2011) or the Netherlands (cf. Faludi, 2000). It is a world of multiple empirical referents from across the globe, and of multiple intellectual strands offering new inspirations. Perhaps it would be helpful now and again re-connect these new intellectual possibilities to the history of ideas in our field, wide and open as it is. We would surely find some recurrent concepts, such as 'system', perhaps used in different ways and with different realities in mind, or that new concepts, such as 'resilience' are similar to older ideas about change and transformation. And we would find that many of our current concerns have a long history, including the meaning and uses of the term 'planning'. Maybe the 'new' is never so new as we think, yet the 'old' is never so persistent as we fear.

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From Apophenia to Epiphany: Making Planning Theory-Research-Practice Co-constitutive

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This paper addresses the question of how planning research could be reasserted to balance the relationship between theory and practice. To that end, a twofold approach is taken: on the one hand, different interrelations among planning theory, research and practice are set out building on Jacques Lacan's 'four discourses'—the master's, the university's, the hysteric's and the analyst's. On the other hand, a process to formulate the plan regulador (local normative master plan) of a canton in southern Costa Rica is drawn upon, through storytelling, to shed light on the aforementioned relations. The article's in-conclusion is that among planning theory, research and practice, rather than a synergic co-constitution, linkages that challenge, occlude, bypass or control one another are generated. Moreover, due to the apophenic ability of universal(izing)-technocratic(ized) theories to obviate the 'right measure' between action and reaction, discourses of research and practice are manipulated and the role of theory as 'master signifier' upheld. However, the 'counter-discourses' of both the hysteric and the analyst could be articulated by a planning 'critical-hysterical' research, which, in turn, would allow epiphanies to come to the fore, separate action from reaction and, pragmatically and dynamically, co-constitute planning theory, research and practice.

Keywords: Lacanian discourse; planning decision-making; storytelling; master plan; planning 'critical-hysterical' research.

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Introduction: Disentangling a Gordian knot

> At one time, practice was considered an application of theory, a consequence; at other times, it had an opposite sense and it was thought to inspire theory, to be indispensable for the creation of future theoretical forms. In any event, their relationship was understood in terms of a process of totalization [...]. [H]owever [...] [t]he relationships between theory and practice are far more partial and fragmentary. On one side, a theory is always local and related to a limited field, and it is applied in another sphere, more or less distant from it. The relationship, which holds in the application of a theory is never one of resemblance. Moreover, from the moment a theory moves into its proper domain, it begins to encounter obstacles, walls, and blockages which require its relay by another type of discourse (it is through this other discourse that it eventually passes to a different domain). Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another. No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall (Deleuze, 1977 [1972], p.205-206).

In this paper I engage with the question of how planning research could be reasserted to balance the (intrinsically imperfect) theory-practice dialectical nexus. In so doing, the interest is on knowledge production and application—the epistemological and normative dimension of planning—and a co-constitution of planning theory, research and practice is advocated by dint of a 'critical-hysterical' research. To that end, I draw, firstly, on Lacanian theory to delve into the complexities of planning decision-making processes, wherein, as Jean Hillier (2002) argues through the Lacanian Real[1], there is no absolute knowledge, information or consensus. More specifically, Lacan's theory of four discourses enables to comprehend the relationship between power and discourse, via a set of analytical tools that decompose rhetorical predications aimed at reaching absolute agreement (Bracher, 1993; Chaitin, 1996; Gunder, 2003b, p.294). In sum, the theoretical section discusses the (still) pervasive tendency of producing solipsistic knowledge to underpin universal planning theories that end up suffering from apophenia[2], given their capacity to assert a (socio-spatial) order based on random configurations and their 'tendency to be *overwhelmed* by meaningful coincidences' (Brugger cited in Waldman, 2014; italics in the original).

On the other hand, making use of storytelling, I recourse to my practical, very much empirical, experience in planning, which was supported by a 'universal(izing)-technocratic(ized)' theory. Within the theory-practice interplay the role of research became, during my time as a practitioner, rather diffuse, in the sense that practice, as Gilles Deleuze points out in his above quotation, was usually regarded as the 'natural' offspring of theory, and yet there was a quite noticeable disassociation between what was supposed to happen and what, in effect, took place. Research, I came to conclude, was being misled by the chutzpah of a professional planning practice that, time and again, fell short in its ultimate desire to 'control the future by current acts' without ever realizing that 'the present may be reluctant to give birth to the future' (Wildavsky, 1973, p.128) in the terms planners so stubbornly try to spell it out. My relentless bind became understanding the insistence on pursuing the (exact) same way to go about, though envisioned objectives were not being

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[1] 'The Real is a gap, or rift, where all un-definable qualitative ideals and concepts of the Kantian sublime, the fair, the just, even "what is quality", and above all the "good" can also be considered to reside within a logic of constitutive lack' (Gunder, 2003b, p.243-4).
[2] Apophenia, first coined by German scientist Klaus Conrad as *apophanie* in 1958, refers to a subtle stage of schizophrenia characterized by the capacity to link and render meaningful unrelated details and identifying patterns where there are none (what in statistics is called a Type I error or false positive) (Poulsen, 2012). As opposed to an epiphany (the intuitive capacity to accurately perceive the world's interconnections), an apophany constitutes a deceitful way of comprehension (Waldman, 2014).

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obtained. For years I awaited the man on an ox-cart to hand me in the answer. It was not until I altered radically, via anti-essentialist Lacanian theory, my take on and attitude towards planning praxis that I was able to, so to speak, 'theorize outside the box' and, consequently, comprehend that I had been riding the ox-cart all along.

The paper has two main sections. First, an overview of Jacques Lacan's (2007 [1991], p.11ff.) 'Production of four discourses'—the master's, the university's, the hysteric's and the analyst's. Based on the premise that planning theory, research or practice enacts the agency of one, or several, discourses, different interrelations among them are, thereupon, set out. Second, a story about a planning process to formulate the *plan regulador* (local normative master plan) of a canton in southern Costa Rica is utilized to develop further the outlined interrelations among planning theory, research and practice, by focusing on a tension- and conflict-ridden deliberative process held around the (latent) threat of a natural disaster[3].

The paper's in-conclusion—the here proposed discussion should be boundless—is that among planning theory, research and practice there is no synergic co-constitution, but rather linkages aimed at challenging, occluding, bypassing, directing one another. More particularly, due to the apophenic knack of universal(izing)-technocratic(ized) theories to obviate the 'right measure' between action and reaction, a 'pseudo-Hegelian immediate coincidence of the opposites' is crafted, in which 'action and reaction should coincide, the very thing that causes damage should already be the medicine' (Žižek, 2003). Discourses of research and practice are thus manipulated securing the dominant role of theory as 'master signifier'. Nevertheless, counter-discourses, namely those of the hysteric and of the analyst, could be articulated by a planning 'critical-hysterical' research, which, in turn, would allow 'striking realizations'—i.e. epiphanies—to come to the fore and separate action from reaction, by coupling, for instance, with phronetic research and agonistic views on planning decision-making processes. This rift, accordingly, facilitates zooming in on how local contextual characterizations and micro-practices could influence an epiphanic co-constitution of planning theory-research-practice— an unremitting task that resembles the chimera of disentangling a Gordian knot to fathom out, a second later, that it is made of an infinitude of other knots. On the whole, it would be as if, in regard to the overarching theme of this issue, each knot represents concurrently a (new) theoretical difference and practical connection. Both Lacanian theory and storytelling, therefore, are 'untying' research mediums that, critically and hysterically deployed, may bring practical relays and theoretical points closer together.

Lacan's *Production of four discourses*: By what we say it is meant more than what we actually believe

> There's no such thing as a metalanguage (Lacan, 1999 [1975], p.118).

Lacan's theory of four discourses, departing from the impossibility of perfect communication, centers on the 'formal relationships that each discourse draws through the act of speaking' (Verhaeghe, 2001, p.21). Thus, his theory is to be understood as a formal system that goes well beyond any spoken word. With the aim of identifying and comprehending 'the crucial factors through which language exercises both formative and transformative power in human affairs', Lacan came up with his 'schemata of the four fundamental structures of discourse'

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[3] The planning story (the empirical section of the paper) is intended, first and foremost, as a means whereby shedding light on (i.e., de-abstracting, as it were) some of the theoretical concepts introduced. In addition to that, the story allows elaborating further, through Lacan's theory of four discourses, some of the complications inherent to the planning process (as well as some of the analytical snags, which doing so cannot help but to bring about).

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(Bracher, 1994, p.107). Lacan purposely uses the term 'discourse', rather than 'speech', to denote the 'transindividual nature of language, the fact that speech always implies another subject, an interlocutor' (Evans, 2006 [1996], p.45). Discourse, therefore, 'as a necessary structure that goes well beyond speech', 'can clearly subsist without words. It subsists in certain fundamental relations which would literally not be able to be maintained without language' (Lacan, 2007 [1991], p.12-13). Discourses, hence, can be seen as a sort of encasement that determines the limits of thought, communication and action. Lacan, in time, revisited his definition of discourse and, still emphasizing intersubjectivity, designated it as 'a social link, founded in language' (Lacan, 1999 [1975], p.17). By highlighting the capacity to socially interrelate through language, Lacan's basic assumption comes to the fore, 'namely that each discourse delineates fundamental relationships, resulting in a particular *social bond*' (Verhaeghe, 2001, p.21; italics in the original).

There are four possibilities to 'socially bond': the discourse of the master, the discourse of the university, the discourse of the hysteric and the discourse of the analyst (Lacan, 2007 [1991], p.11ff.), representing, 'respectively, four fundamentals social effects: (1) governing/commanding, (2) educating/indoctrinating, (3) desiring/protesting, (4) analyzing/transforming/revolutionizing' (Bracher, 1993, p.53). Each of the four discourses is represented by an algorithm, which, in turn, is composed of four algebraic symbols: S_1 (master signifier), S_2 (knowledge), $ (the spilt subject) and *a* (surplus enjoyment). What tell each of the four discourses apart is the position that these symbols have within the algorithm, and one anticlockwise quarter of a turn gives rise to each discourse. Lacan also named specifically every seat as follows (Evans, 2006 [1996], p.45; Fink, 1997 [1995], p.131; Bracher, 1993, p.54):

Speaker		*Receiver*
Agent	$\longrightarrow$	Other
Truth	$\longleftarrow$	Product/Loss
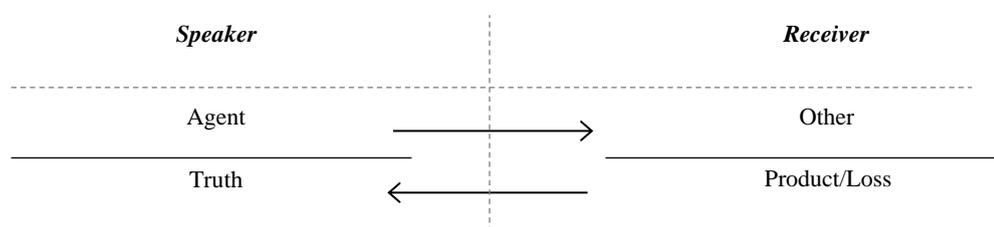
The discourse of the master

Due to historical reasons, it is both phylogenetically and ontogenetically 'a sort of primary discourse' that constitutes the outset of the other three discourses and embodies 'the alienating functioning of the signifier to which we are all subject' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.130). Its inception happens in the symbolic order and provides thereby the constitution of the subject with a formal expression (Verhaeghe, 2001, p.26). The dominant position is occupied by the master signifier (S_1) that is 'to be seen as intervening [...] in a signifying battery that we have no right, ever, to take as dispersed, as not already forming a network of what is called knowledge' (Lacan, 2007 [1991], p.13). Moreover, the illusion of equating the subject with its own signifying is aimed at excluding 'the unconscious—the knowledge that is *not known*—as this would jeopardize the ego's sense of certainty and autonomy' (Newman, 2011, p.349; italics in the original). The matter of concern of the master, in this regard, rather than knowledge, is certainty—as long as everything functions as desired and power is retained, is not worth bothering with discovering why and/or how things work.

The discourse of the university

The agency here is taken up by knowledge (S_2) and, as a result, 'systematic knowledge is the ultimate authority, reigning instead of [the master's] blind will, and everything has its reason [...] providing a sort of legitimation or rationalization of the master's will' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.132). Therefore, any one attempt to produce 'absolutely' neutral knowledge is, after all, a pursuit of domination over the other to whom knowledge is being conveyed (Evans, 2006 [1996], p.46). The university's discourse, on such account, stands for the hegemony of knowledge—a characteristic that becomes visible, for instance, in the modernist supremacy of science and its standardized knowledge centered around an alienating master signifier that enables it to come into play (Gunder, 2004, p.307; Verhaeghe, 2001, p.30). That being so, 'working in the service of the master signifier, more or less any kind of argument will do, as long as it takes on the guise of reason and rationality' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.133).

The discourse of the hysteric

It 'is associated with the practice of protesting, and in this sense it is always pitted against the authority of the Master' (Newman, 2011, p.349) and any of its (ir)rational articulations embodied by the university's discourse. The split subject ($) performs the agency, addresses the master signifier (S_1) and demands to 'prove his or her mettle by producing something serious by way of knowledge' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.133). To that end, the hysteric has to turn the other into a master signifier; however, any answer found (or given) is doom to fail, because the network of signifiers (S_2) are unable to couple a particular answer with the driving force underscoring the *object petit a* occupying the seat of truth (Verhaeghe, 2001, p.29). Consequently, the hysteric's and the university's discourse are nemeses and whereas knowledge, in the former, is what the hysteric gets off on; in the latter is what justifies the 'academic's very existence and activity' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.133).

The discourse of the analyst

Once the final quarter of a turn has taken place, the surplus enjoyment (*a*) occupies the commanding position and triggers the analyst's discourse. As it is the actual inverse of the master's discourse, psychoanalysis, in Lacan's view, 'is an essentially subversive practice which undermines all attempts at domination and mastery' (Evans, 2006 [1996], p.47). The discourse of the analyst is therefore the sole 'effective means for countering the psychological and social tyranny exercised through language' (Bracher, 1994, p.123), because it gives way to a subversive subjectivity that bridges the gap between university and hysteria (Žižek, 2006b). For this purpose, the analyst looks into the precise points in which the conscious and the unconscious split and has the analysand '"coughs up" a master signifier that has not yet been brought into relation with any other signifier' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.135). The analyst then attempts to relate this 'new' master signifier with other (already existing, or, knowable) signifiers, by means of a link 'established between each master signifier and a binary signifier such that subjectification takes place' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.135).

All in all, Lacan's psychoanalysis and, particularly, his schemata of four discourses offer analytical depth avoiding to become a definitive 'master's discourse on truth', because psychoanalysis, 'without itself constituting a "metalanguage"', '*allows* [...] *to understand the functioning of different discourses in a unique way*' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.198/133; italics in the original). I will next discuss how these four discourses operate within certain interactions among planning theory, research and practice.

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Lacan's four discourses within the planning theory-research-practice triad: Looking for the creative side of apophenic knowledge

Lacanian thought has been prolifically utilized in the field of planning to provide new insights to theoretical and practical research (see, inter alia, Gunder, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2011; Gunder & Hillier, 2004; Hillier, 2002, 2003; Hillier & Gunder, 2005). Lacan's work, moreover, is pertinent to other disciplines and areas of human thought and action, given its engagement with both the practical and the abstract (Fuery, 1995; Gunder, 2003b, p.293). Lacan's spatial metaphors and his tactical use of them, more specifically, lead the way to a psychoanalytical (broader) understanding of the tangled process of social space production (Pile, 1996, p.122); which, in turn, 'includes an appreciation of planning practices' deployment of power, or governmentality, via the prescription and prohibition of activities in urban and regional space' (Gunder, 2003b, p.293).

In what follows, relationships are established among planning theory, research and practice, when each of them is the agent of one or various discourses. Lacan's discourse theory is therefore deployed to widen the 'understanding of planning practice' as well as 'of agonistic discourse or debate, authority/expertise, and the *realrationalität* of planning process' (Gunder, 2003b, p.299; italics in the original). It is important to note that just because one of the discourses is called 'the hysteric's discourse' that hysterics are inescapably circumscribed in it. Contrariwise, 'as an analyst, the hysteric may function with the analyst's discourse; as an academic, the hysteric may function within the discourse of the university' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.130-131). That being so, planning theorists, researchers and practitioners can move among discourses and, though their efficacy remains unaltered, their physical structure 'suffer from the obstacles and shortcomings endemic' to whatever discourse they choose to use, because, irremediably, 'a particular discourse facilitates certain things and hinders others, allows one to see certain things while blinding one to others' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.130).

The twofold character of the communication agent

Additionally, Lacan's distinction between 'full' and 'empty' speech is to be considered when analyzing linkages among planning theory, research and practice: 'as a rule, empty speech is conceived as empty; nonauthentic prattle in which the speaker's subjective position of enunciation is not disclosed, whereas in full speech, the subject is supposed to express his or her authentic existential position of enunciation' (Žižek, 1998 [1993], p.94). Hence, between empty and full speech there is also the duality between the 'subject of the enunciated' (i.e., 'I', the first person; the psychoanalytical ego) and the 'subject of the enunciation' (i.e., the subject of the unconscious whose signifiers differ from and even contradict what is enunciated).

Full speech is not then simply filling out empty speech, '[q]uite the contrary, [...] it is only empty speech by way of its emptiness (of its distance toward the enunciated content which is posited in it as totally indifferent) which creates the space for "full speech"' (Žižek, 1998 [1993], p.94). This ostensible contradictory capacity of the subject renders the agency of the Lacanian discourse inconsistent and inauthentic (when the master siginifier (S_1) is exerting the discourse); consistent but inauthentic (in the case of the academic, i.e., knowledge (S_2)); inconsistent and yet authentic (this dualism is that of the hysterical split subject ($\$$)); and consistent and authentic (condition that the analyst (*a*) possesses) (Žižek, 1998 [1993], p.274).

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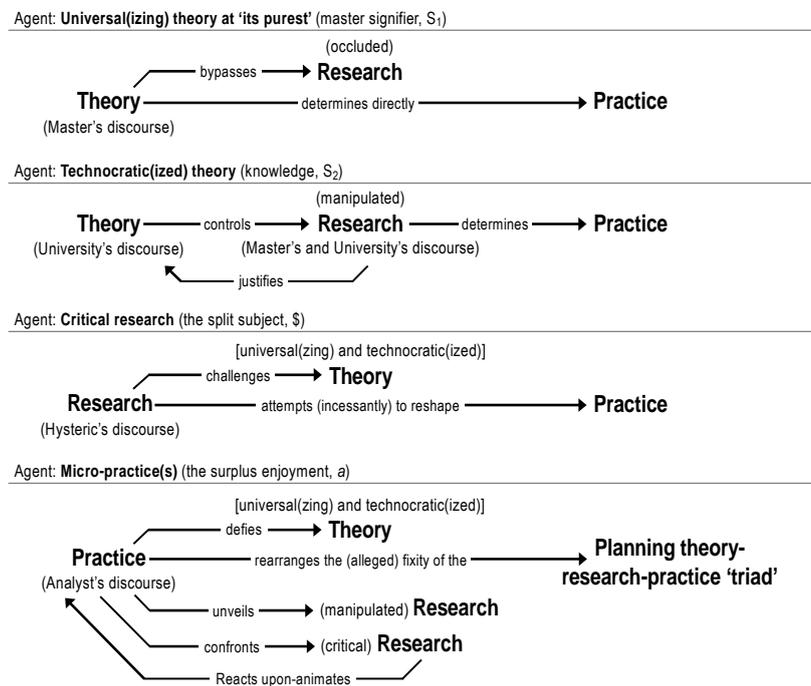
Figure 1. Relationships among elements of the planning theory-research-practice triad according to type of agent and discourse deployed / Source: own elaboration.

Universally equating theory with practice

As shown in Figure 1, the first case is that of 'universal(izing)' planning theory as master signifier (S_1) making use of the master's discourse. Given that the master (theory) is not at all concerned with the production of knowledge, research is bypassed and practice thereby encapsulated in a standardizing manner. Such straightforward passage from theory to practice states that no epistemological base is (allegedly) needed, in order to assert what, how and/or why has to be done. Discourses of universal(izing) planning theories smack inevitably of contradiction: socio-spatial reality could never be tamed! Yet they may well seem honest in advancing a well-ordered space for people to live pleasantly, cherish nature, practice truly participatory democracy, and so on. The catch, though, is that 'ideas of complete information, a harmonious society and of consensus are the Lacanian impossible Real of utopian dreams rather than actual lived reality' (Hillier, 2003, p.45). Universal(izing) planning theories therefore acquire a tinge of inauthenticity in their tragic fruitless efforts to symbolize and materialize the Real, for all they end up doing is misleading it.

Universal(izing) theory's 'alibi'

In the second case, technocratic(ized) theory, in the form of knowledge (S_2), utters the discourse of the university. Research is controlled to justify universal(izing) theory and, ultimately, determine practice. To that end, research employs either the discourse of the master or of the university. In the former scenario, power, bestowed, wielded and articulated by 'servant' planning researches, 'defines, and creates, concrete physical, economic, ecological and social realities' (Flyvbjerg, 2003, p.320); whereas in the latter scenario,

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research aids to turn rationality into rationalization to then get away with it. Planning research within this interaction, despite being consistent ('planning recipes' are, in themselves, coherent discourses), is helplessly inauthentic, for it is at the service of the obfuscating interests of technocratic(ized) planning theory.

Howling universal(izing)-technocratic(ized) theory down

The third case displays critical research as the split subject ($) articulating the discourse of the hysteric to defy both universal(izing) and technocratic(ized) theory. In so doing, critical planning research attempts incessantly to reshape practice, by recognizing that it is a matter of neither systematization nor dogmatism, rather of uncertain disarray and unorthodoxy. There is a large body of planning literature that may well be seen as 'critical-hysterical' research, in which the hysteric's discourse is the 'discourse of both the questioning academic and the questioning planning student seeking the production and assurance of new knowledge (S_2)' (Gunder, 2004, p.307). However, answers, if any are found, never coincide with the ones originally sought, because hysterical knowledge cannot 'produce a particular answer about the particular driving force of the object *a* at the place of truth' that is the actual drive of the hysterical agent (Verhaeghe, 2001, p.29). Thus, critical-hysterical research, while being authentic (their demands to the master/technocractic academic are legitimate), is doomed to be inconsistent due to its incapacity to pair questions/problems and answers/solutions together. Yet, the planning critical-hysterical researcher, by way of this deception, unconsciously eludes the universal(izing)-technocratic(ized) planning theorists' megalomaniac desire of either bypassing or wiping out problematic/conflictive practical situations.

Getting rid of universal(izing)-technocractic(ized) canons

The final interaction is triggered when practice, as surplus enjoyment (*a*), performs the agency of the analyst's discourse. The planning analytical practitioner, akin the critical-hysterical researcher, challenges universal(izing) and technocratic(ized) theory. In consequence, the manipulated technocratic academic is unveiled and the critical-hysterical researcher confronted; who exerts a counteracting influence on the analytical practitioner. It is hard to put one's finger on what tells one from the other, given that, at times, they could perfectly be the same; however, not simultaneously. Therefore, the relationship between the planning analytical practitioner and critical-hysterical researcher resembles, in some way, that between the analyst and the analysand, in which, 'while the analyst adopts the analyst discourse, the analysand is inevitably, in the course of analysis, hystericized' (Fink, 1997 [1995], p.136). Analytical practice and critical-hysterical research, in this way, follow a principle of discovery that, instead of seeking to state universal delusional canons, grounds theory in reality. Because of this, practice, through the discourse of the analyst, is able to rearrange the alleged 'fixity' of the planning theory-research-practice triad—a fixity that, not surprisingly, is safeguarded by either universal(izing) or technocratic(ized) theory.

These four cases show that among planning theory, research and practice there is not a synergic co-constitution. Conversely, diverse linkages spawn following the directive influence of the discursive agent. Particularly, when universal(izing) and technocratic(ized) theory perform the agency of, respectively, the master's and the university's discourse, research and practice are subdued. Knowledge and the way it is created, distributed and used suffer, as a result, from apophenia—experiencing delusion as revelation and providing from no substantial to limited insight into the true nature of reality. However, 'apophenic' knowledge can be counteracted, for apophenia is also the spontaneous perception of connections and

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meaningfulness of (apparently) disconnected phenomena. Given that such propensity 'most closely links psychosis to creativity', 'apophenia and creativity may even be seen as two sides of the same coin' (Brugger, 2001, p.205). In the subsequent section, storytelling is used to examine how apophenic planning knowledge, embodied by universal(izing) and/or technocratic(ized) theoretical discourses, is critically and hysterically called into question; that is to say, *looking for the creative side of apophenic knowledge through a critical-hysterical analytic lens.*

Stories *in* and *for* planning: From mere anecdotes to critical-hysterical (self-) assessment

> A reflective storytelling session is just what seems needed when planning efforts result in nothing tangible over time (van Hulst, 2012, p.300).

Stories are pertinent to planning because, being structured around things that matter to people, they 'construct and carry the identities of groups' (van Hulst, 2012, p.302). Moreover, 'good planning might include collecting and telling stories about both the past and the future' that could be at odds with each other, which raises the issue of 'how one can compare differing stories and choose among them' (Throgmorton, 2003, p.126). In so doing, it must not be overlooked that power largely influences how stories 'get told, get heard and get weight' (Sandercock, 2003, p.26)—let alone remembered and reflected upon. Storytelling, additionally, helps planners 'ground' the technical data collected via scientific methods, which, remarkably at the local level of communities[4], brings in the so-often-sought-to-be-avoided political side of planning, for 'empirical (micro)studies of storytelling in practice allows us to zoom in on the political process that is inherent in storytelling and between storytelling and other planning activities' (van Hulst, 2012. p.301). All things considered, storytelling can constitute 'a model of planning' (when practical stories are reconstructed) and/or a 'model for planning' (when storytelling enables people to articulate their stories) (van Hulst, 2012, p.303).

Furthermore, the fact that within the story I play an active double role (telling and being a part of it), proves that it is not as far-fetched for planning practitioners to face the internal (and innate) contradictions of their profession. Becoming a sort of dissident, resisting to practice planning ubiquitously and opening up to other forms of 'getting things done' is a critical-hysterical analytical path that animates a more fruitful co-constitution of theory, research and practice. Such attempt, too, is most necessary, because when planners neither question themselves, nor can imagine any other (theoretical, analytical and/or practical) alternative, they are inevitably feeding 'the growing ineptitude, if not irrelevance, of (in)organic and traditional intellectuals, whose cynicism often translates into complicity with the forms of power they condemn' (Giroux, 2009, p.177).

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[4] Here 'community' refers to a group of people living in close proximity and sharing certain common values and interests, rather than administrative planning units.

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The story: Digging into the ulterior dimension of the past

> The writing of histories is not simply a matter of holding a mirror up to the past and reporting on what is reflected back. It is always a representation, a textual reconstruction of the past rather than a direct reflection of it (Sandercock, 1998, p.36-37).

In some remote corner of a tropical country that is poured out in countless flickering planning schemes, there once was a planning office in which clever planners retrodicted knowledge to predict nature's behavior. That was the most arrogant and the most untruthful moment in the 'country's planning history'—yet indeed only a moment. After nature had taken a few breaths, the planners' cocksureness froze over and the clever planners remained astounded and speechless[5]. This caustic passage summarizes the storyline of a tale about how planners do their work abstracting themselves from real-life situations; namely that, by means of technical expertise, the present and future of territorial units of political administration can be, respectively, fixed and guided. In carrying out such an overarching task, planners are (thought to be) 'neutral, objective, rational adjudicators of the public interest' and their plans 'have a single literal meaning [...] that any intelligent person can grasp' (Throgmorton, 2003, p.128). However, planners are anything but unbiased and their 'future narratives' cannot help to be subject to manifold interpretations.

Bringing disarray into order: Planning as post hoc fallacy

> The task of relating processes of decision to the social conditions in which they must operate is hampered because rational planning is supposed to stand as universal truth not subject to alteration through experience (Wildavsky, 1973, p.152).

To practice, officially and formally, planning in Costa Rica can basically means two things: working either for or on behalf of the state, to put together master plans that promote what is known as *ordenamiento del territorio* ('territorial ordering'[6]). Thus, a group of professionals with diverse backgrounds stick to an already established methodology to produce master plans. That is how I first understood, by and large, the practical dimension of planning as I ventured into the field roughly ten years ago. In time, I also realized that planning, as previously mentioned, was markedly state-led and, due to a strong influence of the American planning tradition, highly statutory. The working method, in theoretical terms, though (still) remains somewhat rudimentary, has been deeply shaped by the rational-comprehensive planning paradigm, which places at the heart of planning thought and action the figure of the 'planner-analyst' who goes about following the dictum of 'the more comprehensive the analysis of the planning problem[s], the better the plan' (Mäntysalo, 2005, p.24). Without ever deploying the discourse of the analyst—as it may be wrongly inferred—we, a group of 'planner-analysts', drawing on the university's and, if it were the case, the master's discourse, created master plans, in which the 'public interest' was confined to our 'planning expertise'.

Such mode of planning, as Saul Newman (2011, p.347; italics added) observes, 'is an elite practice and *discourse*: it is the idea of a certain order of space imposed from above upon pre-existing social relations' through the supremacy of technical-knowledge jargon. In order to make the master plans more appealing and (at least allegedly) more understandable, planners normally make use of an eye-catching 'label' (e.g., democracy, freedom, social well-

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[5] The acute reader may well have recognized that these lines are a paraphrase of Friedrich Nietzsche's (1989 [1873], p.246) *On Truth and Lying in an Extra-moral Sense* introductory paragraph.

[6] In planning literature the notion of *ordenamento territorial* is usually translated as 'spatial planning'. Yet, for the purpose of this discussion, it is better to bear in mind the (more) literal translation of 'territorial ordering'.

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being, sustainability[7], and others of that ilk), which operates as the Lacanian 'master signifier' of the discourses that comprise the plans and whose 'value lies in what they symbolize, crucial identity-shaping ideas [...] that are greater than the individual and hence give the subject a sense of meaning and belonging' (Gunder, 2004, p.301). On such account, the utmost normative goal of the master plans I helped producing—the very abstract notion of 'quality of life'—was articulated via 'common-benefit' planning solutions that needed be defined through scientific inquiry instruments. This, nonetheless, was—and most likely still is—nothing but a faulty attempt, given that planners, while crafting master plans, have to fall back on a 'set of knowledge, beliefs, and symbolic practices' that 'are the components of discourse, the subcodes that support the [hollow] master signifiers' (Gunder, 2004, p.302). What we were therefore doing was designing planning strategies that reduced what in reality must have been a myriad of codes and subcodes to what we so firmly and unilaterally believed 'quality of life' was and, what is more, how it, once achieved, was going to look like.

However, master plans, as I quickly experienced (and, at the moment, not without a tinge of frustration), rarely see the light. They end up truncated due to: legal appeals (opposing partially, or even totally, the plan); the excessively long bureaucratic process required to enact the plans; lack (and, oddly enough, sometimes excess) of political support; shortage of both human and technical resources to implement the plans; and, mostly, the positivist logic that buttresses the master plans, which 'magically' extricates the planning process from any difficulties. Master plans, to put it another way, are based on an aphoristic idea of 'bringing, for once and for all, disarray into order' by means of a post hoc fallacy that, as Aaron Wildavsky asserts in the aforementioned quote, rejects 'alteration through experience' because planning is deceivingly to be regarded as bulletproof.

Planes Reguladores: The more (precise the) rationalization, the greater the irrationality

For the most part, I was involved in the production of *Planes Reguladores*, local master plans operative at the political-administrative level of cantons. Municipalities, in collaboration with the *Instituto Nacional de Vivienda y Urbanismo* (INVU, national institute of housing and urbanism), are to formulate, enact and supervise these plans, relying on a handbook[8] (every now and then updated) that contains a specific methodology. Such ubiquitous procedure consists of six consecutive phases: (1) data collection; (2) analysis and diagnosis; (3) forecast; (4) proposals; (5) approval and adoption; and, finally, (6) management for implementation (INVU, 2006, p.9).

This mode of planning is (or, at least, is supposed to be) very exhaustive. While making the plan, a lot of prominence is given to accurateness: information gathered has to be all-encompassing, findings thorough and intricate, and forecasts as well as proposals definite. Acceptance and implementation of the plan, as a 'natural' result, are thought to be smooth and easy. Nevertheless, I started to notice, after having tested the method a couple of times,

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[7] See Gunder (2006) for a thorough discussion on how sustainability, as master signifier, has pervaded planning theory, practice and education.

[8] The manual, as specified in the version here quoted, was elaborated by the *Dirección de Planificación Urbana* (Department of Urban Planning) of the INVU together with the *Ministerio de Vivienda y Asentamientos Humanos* (Ministry of Housing and Human Settlements) and the Project Management Unity of the PRU-GAM Project (aimed at generating a new regional plan for the *Gran Área Metropolitana*, the country's largest urban agglomeration, with the financial aid of the European Union) as a 'technical instrument' whose objective 'is to create a structural model, balanced, efficient, hierarchical and in complete harmony with the environment and the national idiosyncrasy [...] to generate more human cities, in keeping with urban work, beautiful and with an improved quality of life' (INVU, 2006, p.1).

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that a basic principle was being constantly and inexplicably overlooked, namely that 'planned decisions often have unplanned consequences' (Wildavsky, 1973, p.129). This 'self-inflicted' blindness was foremost evident whenever a zoning scheme was put together ranging from a 'macro-scale' (sometimes covering several thousand square kilometers) to a 'micro-scale' (using the cadastre to determine land uses). There was, in other words, a explicit incongruity between the theoretical planning framework (rational-comprehensive) we drew upon and 'the real world of practical planning intervention', given that '[t]he one is the quintessence of order and reason in relation to the other which is full disorder and unreason'; it was as if '[p]lanning theory [had] set itself the task of rationalising irrationalities [...] bringing [...] a set of abstract, independent and transcendent norms' (Scott & Roweis, 1977, p.1116).

The insistence, with such a narrow-minded attitude, on making use of the same means to achieve the same (unachievable) goals was rooted—I eventually settled—in a '[m]isplaced faith in the norms of rationality' that can be any minute easily 'transmuted into normless use of power' (Wildavsky, 1973, p.152). This is why we, as rational 'planner-analysts', were unable to learn from experience, because 'to learn one must make mistakes and planning cannot be one of them' (Wildavsky, 1973, p.151). Moreover, in order to avoid criticism, which would uncover such internal contradiction in our work and, more specifically, our judgment, master plans were presented, deploying both the discourse of the master and the university, as the only possible way to reverse the undesirable situations previous master plans— produced almost exactly like the new ones—have paradoxically prompted. That is to say, the solution of the problems planning could not thus far resolve (or preempt) was more of the same 'old' planning. In consequence, a sort of 'planning without planning' emerges capable, via universal(izing) and technocratic(ized) theory, of producing 'reality itself deprived of its substance, of the resisting hard kernel of the Real' (Žižek, 2003). Here is when discourse, either the master's or the university's, become one endless soliloquy and knowledge helplessly aphophenic.

In such effort to equate action and reaction; i.e., averting opposition to the plan, there is yet a significant oddity: the input of people, which undoubtedly could mean contestation, is granted and encouraged (in particular for the approval and adoption of the plan, the fifth phase) throughout the whole process of creation of the *planes reguladores*—the thing is, *how* citizen participation is understood and thus fostered/dampened!

Citizen participation and Planes Reguladores: Do as I say and everything will be just fine

The method to formulate the *planes reguladores* (and master plans in general), thus far described, does seem to be incompatible with a substantive, not tokenistic, democratic planning decision-making. Citizen participation, notwithstanding, is a requisite without which the plans are, in principle, unviable. To make things a bit knottier, citizen participation, as it reads in the 'planning handbook', is a means whereby assuring that planning decisions, in determining the 'quality of life' (the plan's master signifier), reflect the needs, desires and preferences of people; rather than constituting a group of purely technical superimposed solutions (INVU, 2006, p.32). Moreover, in the section where the six phases to create the plan are described, citizen participation, it is stressed, must take place during certain phases pointing out the expected input of local residents. While citizen participation, seen like that, appears to be a catalyst for the master plans not to fall on stony ground, it is, in the very end, aimed at facilitating that 'people *accept* systematically the analysis and proposals of the *plan regulador*, ensuring thereby its implementation and development' (INVU, 2006, p.10; italics

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added). In point of fact, citizen participation does not go further than, as Sherry Arnstein put it, 'the first rung'.

Now, that being so, why feigning that citizen participation has a role to play in the creation of *planes reguladores*? A hypothetical[9] answer might be that master plans operate as a 'converging point' coalescing (sometimes forcibly) a range of stakeholders. The plan is, in itself, a medium to channel support, given that 'the existence of a formal plan suggests a greater commitment to the objectives and the subordinate goals in the plan than one would expect in the absence of such a visible public document' (Wildavsky, 1973, p.129). The *planes reguladores*, therefore, are frequently instrumentalized to convene electoral support and cope with bureaucratic requisites to have funds devolved from higher governmental tiers. Thus the interest amid local officials—and not necessarily among experts—in (the creation of) *Planes Reguladores* and 'tolerance' of limited and distorted citizen participation.
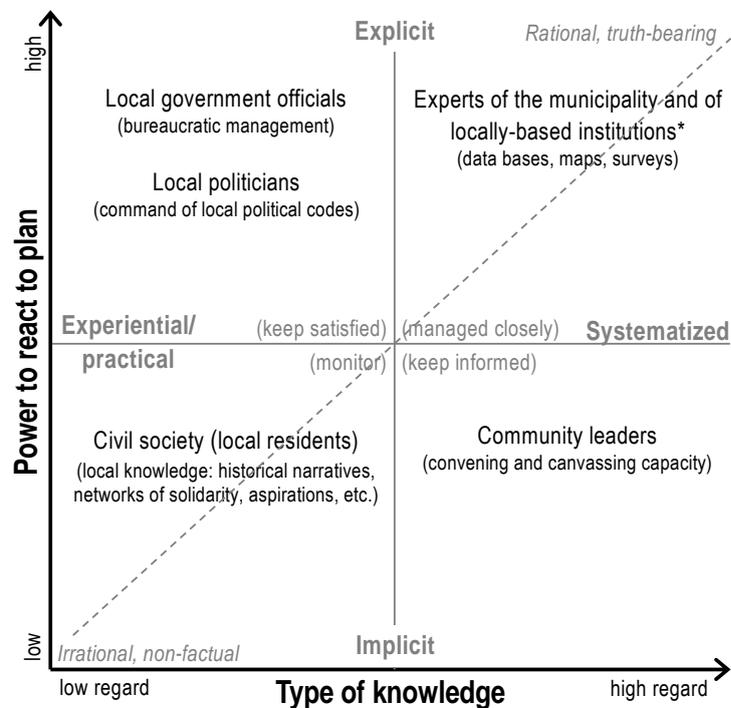
* It refers to either regional or local offices of central government institutions in charge of themes like electricity, water supply, public transportation, road systems, etc.

Figure 2. Mapping of stakeholders, according to the professional team's perspective that creates a *plan regulador,* correlating power to react to the plan with type of knowledge / Source: own elaboration, based on Mitchell et. al (1997) and Healey's (2007, p.245) typology of knowledge.

Here, the 'gap between the fantastic universal Real of the public supposed to (or having the right to) know and the reality of the public supposed to believe' (Hillier, 2003, p.47; Dean, 2001) is observable, given that access to information and the way it is made known to the public is controlled, in great detail, by experts carrying out the plan (sometimes under the spell of 'hidden' powerful actors). In the long run, the input of civil society, within the

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[9] I do not believe there can be a definitive version about what drives us to behave illogically or irrationally.

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constellation of the stakeholders (see Figure 2), is rendered irrational and non-factual for the sake of decision-making and taming of reaction to the plan. Yet it has to be allegedly taken into account. Local residents, all in all, are stakeholders to be monitored and, consequently, become the 'public supposed to obey'—just nod, be quiet, cooperate and everything shall be fine. However, those thought to obey can dare, all of a sudden, to bite the hand that 'plans' them.

A noumenal versus a phenomenological tale of the future

> The elements of the strange orb were immediately calculated, and it was at once conceded by all observers, that its path, at perihelion, would bring it into very close proximity with the earth. There were two or three astronomers of secondary note who resolutely maintained that a contact was inevitable. I cannot very well express to you the effect of this intelligence upon the people. For a few short days they would not believe an assertion which their intellect, so long employed among worldly considerations, could not in any manner grasp. But the truth of a vitally important fact soon makes its way into the understanding of even the most stolid (Edgar Allan Poe, *The Conversation of EIROS and CHARMION*).

Citizen participation, according to the handbook, could take place via public assemblies, focus groups, thematic workshops, roundtables, open house, storytelling, interviews, inter alia. Focus groups, interviews and public assemblies were the participatory tools most frequently deployed while I worked generating *planes reguladores*. Interviews were typically conducted during the first phase (data collection) and a public assembly was organized to present the final draft of the plan (approval and adoption) and allow discussion (yet, none of the opinions, desires, worries, etc. are binding). Focus groups, on the other hand, were organized throughout the whole planning process. All the information gathered in focus groups sessions, which conflates stories (both past and future) local residents shared, was later on sorted out—a process in which local knowledge almost inevitably withers, given that '"community storytellers" construct and tell contending stories, but these people typically disappear in plans [...]; the planner supplants them as storyteller, usually in ways that cannot be discerned' (Throgmorton, 2003, p.134). However, people can reclaim their 'authorship' whenever they feel their take on the past or the future is being misled and their livelihood hence threatened. Such was the case in the frame of the participatory planning process of a canton in southern Costa Rica.

People, in none of the planning processes I partook, evidenced great interest in the *plan regulador*. Reasons for that are multifarious: eroded image of municipalities (with which the plan is directly associated), lack of information, faulty canvassing and communication strategies, excessive complexity of certain aspects (or leastways the way they are presented), etc. Nonetheless, once a matter had been identified as either already or potentially altering their livelihood, local residents would swiftly change their attitude towards the plan—even to the point of opposing it altogether. Amid the topics that were usually addressed during focus groups, zoning schemes, due to their 'irrational' level of specificity and, prominently, their inherent prescriptive character, were the foremost polemic and debated. More specifically, the problem arose when the zoning map of a rural community was presented to the focus group discussing the risk of natural disasters. Participants were markedly surprised when they comprehended, not without certain difficulty (the ability to read maps should never be taken for granted!), that almost the whole town was within a zone labelled as 'high flood threat'. This classification, as they were explained, derived from accurate mathematical models used to determine the probabilities of flood. Needless to say, this explanation did not suffice to calm them down and, from that moment on, the supposed river flood became the major concern playing any other issue down that the *plan regulador*

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could bring about. The topic, furthermore, spread among residents by word of mouth: 'Have you heard? Just the other day there was a bunch of "experts" saying that we all have to go elsewhere because the river will inevitably flood!'

This reaction was, by far, unexpected, for technocratic(ized) planning practitioners transmitted the vast scientific reasoning, underlying the *plan regulador*, through the university's discourse to preempt animadversion. Hydrologists that ran the prediction models, in the light of such startling response by local residents, conducted more analyses and, eventually, revealed an even more complicated fact: the river was about to finish a cycle— that is, the flood, besides imminent, could happen a lot sooner. Hydrologists, furthermore, hardly ever set foot in communities to present their findings and, given that professionals not as skilled in the subject had to tell the 'awful truth', communication and understanding were hampered. That being so, as soon as the latest results were disseminated, the notion of risk as 'something that can be measured, observed, mapped and generally controlled' (put forward by the planning team) ranged from fairly general acceptance (by 'the public supposed to know') to increasing defiance (by 'the public supposed to believe'), given that 'once risk is socially recognized, it becomes politically explosive' (Gunder, 2008, p.187/191).

Due to this reduction of scope, people hardly had a chance to assimilate that they needed be relocated and correspondingly leave their homes—both a material and an emotional loss. Actions, too, were to be taken urgently—event prior to the completion of the *plan regulador*— because waiting could have been ostensibly fatal. Such haste was, moreover, the very thing that triggered scepticism amid a sector of the community that started to question, drawing on the discourse of the hysteric, the veracity of the facts. Their incredulity, as I was later on able to grasp, was based on a criticism leveled at 'the attempt to assert control over the environment or society' (Gunder, 2008, p.197) that transforms 'danger' into 'risk', because 'we can talk of risk only when the occurrence of an event is linked to a decision; otherwise we talk of danger' (Pellizzoni, 2004, p.545). Residents unwilling to accept the scientific arguments were, perhaps without being fully aware of it, revealing a conceptual and discursive contradiction we, as planning experts, were exposing. Chiefly, when the flood was asserted, based on careful retrodiction (which is nothing but illusory and certainly perilous), our mistakenness became most evident, for 'the experience of the past, encourages anticipation of the wrong kind of risk, the one we believe we can calculate and control, whereas the disaster arises from what we do not know and cannot calculate' (Beck, 2006, p.330). Should we have said: 'Look, we have a hunch the river may flood and it would be best to move permanently families that may potentially be affected', local residents perhaps would have accepted the idea a lot better (or, at least, with less mistrust)—who knows? However, we resorted, instead, to the recalcitrant discourse of the master, when deliberation was predictably reaching a deadlock, and sought to lessen controversy by subjecting it to the master's formula par excellence: 'I AM = I AM KNOWLEDGE = I AM THE ONE WHO KNOWS' (Ragland, 1996, p.134; capitals in the original).

Opting for such an extreme position kept us from recognizing that people refusing the flood as a given were authentic in their hysterical claims, because a 'party's unwillingness to present rational argument or documentation may quite simply indicate its freedom to act and its freedom to define reality' (Flyvbjerg, 2003, p.321); not to mention that their 'commitment values [...] [were] a matter of identity and historical contingency rather than rationality' (Hillier, 2003, p.39). This was clearly seen during the last meeting prior to the whole planning decision-making process getting bogged down: a few moments before the meeting ended, residents leading 'the opposition' brought in a ninety-something-years-old man and asked if he could say a few words. Once he was holding a microphone, the old guy stood up and

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said: 'As you all know I was born here a long time ago. All my life I have lived here. Here I got married and had my children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. All my life, I repeat, all my life I have been here and not once has the river flooded!'

A statement like this, one is tempted to, could be equated with another one declaring to have seen a 'Beast of Bodmin'. But the same pretty much goes for the scientific claim advancing the flood's imminence. In either case, the split between the subject of the enunciated and the subject of the enunciation can be recognized, which brings to the fore the ulterior character of the Lacanian agent. Every time planners exposed truth-bearing reasons (myself included) wherefore the river was thought to flood, though they were the ones speaking, they were in fact reproducing (or actually trying to fill) the empty speech of an undisclosed subject, i.e., the hydrologists that remained distant from the conflict. Additionally, advocating that people actually had to be displaced, while responding to a honest care for safeguarding, above all, human life, the burden of being held responsible, had a flood actually happened, may well be the subjacent drive of the planning team's masterly and inflexible position. By the same token, the way local residents defended their position not to be relocated—and, thus, disobeyed the technical-scientific expertise—had a similar discursive structure. Whereas some of the arguments given, such as 'sense of belonging', 'inheritance', 'social bonds', amid others uttered by the subject of the enunciated ('I have lived all my life here…') are legitimate, an unconscious push can nevertheless be read between the lines: the highly valued pride of land ownership. Even in the Costa Rican Constitution the inviolability of the dwelling (with few exceptions, being the threat of natural disasters *not* one of them) is granted. In consequence, the sovereignty over private property is what the subject of the enunciation seems to have meant every time a reason not to evacuate was proffered.

To put it differently, the planning practitioners, with their inauthenticity and (in)consistency (master's and university's discourse) could not quite get their ideas through, and local residents, impaired by their inconsistency, were not able to make better use of their authentic hysterical discourse. Amid this clash of discourses, at any rate, a point is to be stressed: although no concrete measures were taken and only contending intentions were shared, the cranny between thought and action is not as apparent as one may believe, because

Thought is no longer theoretical. As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites or reunites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave. Even before prescribing, suggesting a future, saying what must be done, even before exhorting or merely sounding an alarm thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action—a perilous act (Foucault, 1977, p.5).

God works in mysterious ways

> Nothing is so alien to the human mind as the idea of randomness (John Cohen, 1960, p.42).

A few days after deliberation had become no longer viable and consensus hence untenable, a (back then) working peer of mine approached me and said: —'Do you know what could settle, once and for all, the river flood dispute?' —'I have no clue', replied I. —'An actual river flood!' Within a week or so, the unthinkable almost happened: a tropical storm caused flash floods producing severe material damages and several casualties throughout the canton. Many people had to be evacuated, but none from the rural community with which we had the disagreement, for it was left completely intact. Any given day, in an unrelated situation, I ran into a resident who was very active enthralling antagonism towards the planning team 'allegations'. After having recognized me, we engaged in a short conversation and, at some point, he condescendingly told me: —'Do you know why we were, as it is now clear, all along

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right?' I remained silent. —'Because God was always on our side'. Having heard that I could not help asking: —'What about all those other people who were seriously affected? Some of them even died' —'Well, you see', retorted he, 'God sometimes works in mysterious ways'.

Planning, as I understood it then, was 'pure' reason embodied by the plan. However, by worshipping (the method to create) the *plan regulador* we had failed to see that 'secular idolatry is no easier to maintain than a religious one' (Wildavsky, 1973, p.152). The very dictum, underpinning rational-comprehensive planning and uttered by the 'master-planner', of '[p]lanning is good if it succeeds and society is bad if it fails' (Wildavsky, 1973, p.151) had been, at once, knocked down.

In-conclusion: what's the difference, what's the connection?

There are always loose ends within any one reflection on any given subject. It is therefore not my intention to come up, at this point, with a planning axiom, because, as John Friedmann (1998, p.253) sharply writes, '[t]here can be no conclusions. We are, after all, engaged in continuing search to improve the practice of planning through the power of theory. And that is an ongoing effort that must remain open to the future'. Such unflagging quest, moreover, ought to incorporate a two-way lens that operate inward as well as outward from the planning phenomenon being scrutinized. By combining external explanation (based, for example, on observation) with internal critical reflection (e.g., insightful practice stories), one could not only grasp the causes of behavior, but also (try to) deconstruct the meaning of action of the miscellaneous actors (planners, politicians, citizens, etc.) involved. That is, to a greater or lesser extent, what I have propounded in this paper—perhaps with a stronger accent on the latter and with a bit of self-criticism (for I was, first, 'on stage' and I am now seated in the grandstand).

Finding out why planners go about in *this* or *that* manner and what that means, though it may seem ostensibly easy (say, all they do is what they are trained/instructed to do: apply rational common sense!), is a quite tricky task, given that 'actions derive their meaning from [...] shared ideas and rules of social life' and meaning, in turn, 'range from what is consciously and individually intended to what is communally and often unintendedly' (Hollis, 2003 [1994], p.17). In other words, there is no certainty—and we must not unproductively pursue it. We, instead, need embrace uncertainty and fully integrate it into our symbolic resources to move beyond 'modern's planning epistemic goals of truth, or agreed consensus, predicated *on a priori* reasoned knowledge—universal theory of what is, or has been—that unsuccessfully seeks to project into the future an ideal of factual-certainty derived from the past' (Gunder, 2003b, p.236).

Thus, this paper is a contribution to debates on how the supremacy of epistemological (scientific knowledge) and technical (know-how) stances may be 'phronetically' superseded to apply 'the art of judgement' (Vickers, 1995), inasmuch as 'attempts to reduce planning research to *episteme* or *techne* or to comprehend planning practices in those terms are misguided' (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p.285; italics in the original). Furthermore, when delving *critically* and *hysterically*, through storytelling, into local-specific political planning processes, a phronetic take allows insightful reflection, because '*phronesis* is [an] intellectual activity most relevant to praxis [...] [that] requires an interaction between the general and the concrete; it requires deliberation, judgement, and choice [...] [but] [m]ore than anything else, *phronesis* requires *experience*' (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p.288; italics in the original). *Phronesis* also exposes the need to make room, within the 'rationality' of planning decision-making processes, for a wider array of rationalities as well as 'the reasonable' and 'the plausible' (Mouffe, 1993, p.14).

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In short, *phronesis*, 'while not without identified flaws[10], might form part of an alternative framework of agonistic debate for planning and decision-making' (Gunder, 2003b, p.253), in which 'the art of judgment' is to be radically reconceived avoiding 'false dilemmas between [...] the existence of some universal criterion and [...] the rule of arbitrariness' (Mouffe, 1993, p.14).

In essence: it is in planners' self-criticism—which is the mode of planning critical-hysterical research here developed—that storytelling, Lacanian theory and phronetic planning research could come across, encouraging thereby a more pragmatic and dynamic co-constitution of planning theory, research and practice. Moreover, if theory, research and practice are to relate to one another more effectively, without ever becoming one unrecognizable unity, the balance between action and reaction has to be as well permanently sought—without the conviction of ever reaching a perfect equilibrium. To that end, Slavoj Žižek's (2006a) proposition of reframing problems may well lead the way: for instance, rather than questioning why planners fail to persuade people to accept their technical-scientific solutions, the question should be why people have to be persuaded in the first place (and not, as it is so outspokenly said, because 'common' people just don't get it!). Likewise, as Jean Hillier (2003, p.54), following Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2002), suggests, the consecution of rational agreement in the frame of democratic planning decision-making is to be brought out, since, though it might be a bit of a pipe dream, it will always be pertinent and desirable.

Finally, and returning to the general topic of this issue, the *difference*, in the light of the still-in-vogue Western-centric, modernist planning mainstreams, critical-hysterical debates have to underscore is that planning is not a linear, smooth, systematic process, in which all previously stated objectives are easily attained. It is, on the contrary, messy, full of uncertainties and pitfalls, frustrating and exhausting, time-consuming and conflict-ridden—and as such must be recognized and embraced. The *connection*, furthermore, between planning critical-hysterical research and analytical practice (which are actually two sides of the same coin) is the acknowledgment that theorizing, analyzing or practicing planning, as if it were a truism, is not only futile but also boring. It is, then, the challenge of seeing planning as a Derridean 'aporia of undeciderability'[11] (Gunder, 2008, p.196)—i.e., as something that, though it may look implausible, may be attainable—what animates incessant efforts to re-think, re-analyze and re-practice, co-constitutively, planning. Chances are that, in time, this *difference* and this *connection* make delusion as revelation to fade away and enable to realize that decision-making consensus is the very fundamental impossibility that underpins an epiphanic co-constitution of planning theory-research-practice as well as a more pragmatic (responding better to regional and local contextual characteristics) and dynamic (avoiding to 'fix' socio-spatial reality) imaginations of the future and remembrances of the past.

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[10] *Phronesis* 'can be misapplied when the definition of "good and effective" are themselves ideologically misconstrued via the asymmetrical application of power; or through simply historical contingency that produces our present values towards what is contestably "good"' (Gunder, 2003b, p.255).
[11] Though Derrida's formulation is 'undecidability', it is not entirely clear if this is either a typo or a custom-made variation of the concept.

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Hernando de Soto on Land Titling: Consensus and Criticism

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The proliferation of informal settlements is one of the most relevant consequences of the urbanization process that has been affecting most of the cities in the Global South. Among the different ways to cope with this issue, the regularization of informal settlements through land titling has been one of the main shared strategies that scholars and policy makers have focused on for the last twenty years. A relevant and well-known contribution concerning this issue is the one provided by the Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto. Defined together, one of the best economists in the world, and the 'guru of neo-liberal populism', de Soto attracts both important endorsements and harsh criticisms for his theories. The contribution of this paper is to provide a detailed framework of de Soto main achievements, in terms of his current institutional influence and the international impact of his ideas, in contraposition with an analysis of the most relevant critiques developed against his theories.

Keywords: informality; property rights; extra-legality; poverty reduction.

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Introduction

According to UN-Habitat (2012), 33% of the urban population of the Global South – more than 862 million people – lives in informal settlements.

In order to slow down the process of the formation of informal settlements, policy makers and international organizations have been working – for the last fifty years – on programs and strategies for the regularization of informality. Since the 1950s, given the proliferation of informal urban settlements, the issue of urban poverty and informal housing in the Global South became a matter of public international debate. On this topic, one of the relevant contributions of the last twenty years has been the one provided by the Peruvian economist, Hernando de Soto (Varley, 2002; Fernandes, 2002). His theories – which arose during a season of turmoil for informal housing policies and in which Peru was experiencing a critical political phase – gained a large consensus, at both the national and international levels. The founder of the research group ILD[1] and author of two well-known books, *The Other Path* (1986) and *The Mystery of Capital* (2000), de Soto has, since the 1980s, been investigating the informal economy of Peru and other countries of the Global South, such as the Philippines, Egypt, Mexico, and Haiti. However, his theory, based on the idea that giving property titles to poor could be a strategy to diminish urban poverty, led to harsh criticism, mainly within the international academic community.

The following article, which consists of a literature review of de Soto's theory, focuses on this dualistic division of consensus and criticisms that he inspired during the past twenty years, mainly after the publication, in 2000, of *The Mystery of Capital*. The paper comprises four sections: after providing a review of de Soto's theory, section 3 will offer an overview of the achievements and international impact of de Soto, and the influences that his ideas had in making public housing policies in the Global South; section 4 will summarize the main critiques of de Soto's theories and work; while section 5 will discuss the previous sections, providing some conclusions to the article.

Hernando de Soto's theory

The establishment of *Instituto Libertad y Democracia* (1979) and the further publication of *El Otro Sendero* (1986) took place during a crucial period for the political history of Peru. In the early 1980s, the country was marked by the terrorist actions of the revolutionary movements of *Sendero Luminoso* and *Tupac Amaru*, which under the leadership of by Alan García Pérez (1985-1990, 2006-2011), struggled against the State. Pérez first presidential term, in part because of unpopular political and economic choices, and in part because of repeated terrorist attacks, was declared one of the bloodiest periods for the country and for the violation of civil rights. In the elections of 1990, the favourite candidate, Mario Vargas Llosa, was overwhelmed by Alberto Fujimori, president from 1990 to 2000, leader of the centre-right wing party, *Cambio 90*. Only a few months after Fujimori's win – helped by a general economic crisis and the votes of the poorest strata of the population frightened by the austerity regime proposed by Vargas Llosa – the totalitarian character of the new president became apparent when he decided to readopt the anti-subversive military regime that characterized the government during the 1980s. The 'self-coup' of 1992 heralded the collapse of democracy and the fragility of political parties (CVR, 2003, p. 16).

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[1] The *Instituto Libertad y Democracia* is a Peruvian NGO founded by Hernando de Soto in 1979. For more information see the official website: www.ild.org.pe/index.php/en/.

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The theories that were developed by de Soto and his research group arose in this uncertain national panorama. The publication of *El Otro Sendero*, whose title refers to the terrorist movement of *Sendero Luminoso*, was embraced by various strata of Peruvian society as a purposeful message of change for the country, change that would lead to the country's development and counteract the forces of terrorism. The work, promoted by ILD, showed that the intent of *Sendero* did not correspond to the needs of the 'poor' and that if the Peruvian government wanted its citizens to avoid the temptation of terrorism and lawlessness, it had to show that to work within the law was in the interest both of the entire population, and of individual citizens. To make this possible, the government had to reform its legal system (de Soto, 2000, p. xxii).

Hernando de Soto, the founder of the ILD research team in 1979, published in 1986 his first work, *El Otro Sendero*, a detailed analysis of the Peruvian informal economy. Already popular in Peru, the book was translated into English in 1989 with the title *The Other Path*. The translation gave it the opportunity to spread beyond Latin American boundaries, mainly in the USA. *The Mystery of Capital* was published in 2000. The book, translated into more than twenty different languages, gave rise to the popularity of the author and the ILD team.

As Vargas Llosa expresses (1986) in the prologue for *El Otro Sendero*, the analysis of the Peruvian informal economy conducted by de Soto and his research team proposes a new interpretation of poverty in the Global South. Following several studies in Lima's area, de Soto claims that the causes of urban informality and the economic decline of the country depend on the national legal system. The lack of an efficient low and the high cost of formal economy fostered the exclusion of some social groups from the formal market, constraining them to alternative economic systems, which found their representation in the informal market, defined by de Soto as the extra-legal market. Thus, the origins of the extra-legal economy could be attributed to the lack of a good legal system and the impossibility for the poor to have easy and free access to justice (de Soto, 2002a, p. xxiv).

To better explain the previous assumption and to report the high costs of the formal market, the ILD team documented the bureaucratic procedures that a small Peruvian entrepreneur should follow in setting up a one-employee garment factory on the outskirts of Lima. The conclusion was that legally setting up a small enterprise or obtaining permission to build a house are economic operations that just half of Peru's citizens could afford. Consequently, for the other half, extra-legality was the only possible solution (*ibid.*, pp.135-158). According to the ILD statistics, in 1984 83% of Lima's markets, as much as 95% of the city public transport system, worked thanks to extra-legal mechanisms; while half of the population of the city lived in houses that were built informally, for a value of 8.319,8 millions of dollars (*ibid.*, pp. 13-19). Analysing these data, de Soto concluded that the poor are not really poor, but small informal entrepreneurs, who, inserted in extra-legal economic circles, managed to hold and hoard a certain amount of capital. The issue is to understand why these informal economic circles are not able to produce 'active' capital (*ibid.*, p. xviii). The answer, according to de Soto, is that as extra-legality is excluded from the formal legal system, whoever lives in informality cannot take advantage of the rights, primarily the property rights, that the system guarantees (*ibid.*, p. 180). Thus, the poor suffer not only from illegality, but also from the absence of a legal system that guarantee and promotes their economic efficiency (*ibid.*, p. 158).

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> […] it becomes obvious that the most significant cost of the absence of a good law is the absence of secure, reliable property rights. We shall, therefore, explain the three main conclusions we have been able to reach and which will enable us to identify more readily the costs of informals must assume because they do not have these rights:
> 1. Informals do not use or preserve the resources available to them as efficiently as they might if they were sure of their rights […] secure property rights encourage holders to invest in their property because of their certainty that their property will not be usurped.
> 2. Informals cannot transfer their property easily. This limits their property's mobility as a factor of production and reduces its productivity.
> 3. Informals incur substantial costs in defending their possessions and satisfying the need for public property by establishing and operating thousand of different organizations (*ibid.*, pp. 159-160).

If, in The Other Path, the conclusion reached by de Soto is that extra-legality is not a problem generated by informality itself, but by the weakness of the state legal structure, in The Mystery of Capital: Why Capitalism Triumphs in the West and Fails Everywhere Else, his next work (de Soto, 2001; 2002b; 2004), the Peruvian economist reaches the maturity of his thought. As the subtitle says, in the book, de Soto discusses his theory about why capitalism triumphs just in the West and fails in all the other parts of the world. If, in the past, the explanations given for the failure of capitalism pertained to cultural, religious, geographic, and political factors, de Soto searched for the causes of capitalism's failures elsewhere. As the book says, 'the idea that is culture that explains the big success of countries like Japan, Switzerland and California and that justify the relative poverty of others like, China, Estonia, and Baja California, is worse than inhuman: it's simply not convincing. The disparity of wealth between the West and the rest of the world is too big to be explained by culture alone'(de Soto, 2000, p.4). de Soto claims that most of the poor in the countries of the Global South already possess the necessary assets to start a capitalistic process. According to ILD estimations, the total value of assets held but not legally owned by the poor of Peru, Mexico, Philippines, Haiti, and Egypt would be 9.3 billion dollars (ibid., p. 32). If it is true that the poor possess such a large amount of capital, why has capitalism managed to develop just in Western countries as though it were confined inside a 'bell jar'? This issue has to be researched using the inadequate documentation concerning the rights that the poor possess with regard to the goods they own, such as the houses they build on lands without recorded property rights, or informal commercial activities. Given the omission of formal and legal property recognition, all these potential resources cannot be transformed into 'active' capital; thus, they are useless, 'dead capital'(ibid., pp. 27-32). Unlike what happens in the United States, where a small entrepreneur can manage to easily start his/her own economic activity, using his/her property as credit to get loan and mortgages from banks, in the countries of the Global South, this does not happen. The lack of an efficient legal property system discriminates non-Western countries and insulates them from that capitalistic world of the economic and social wealth of the West. Although almost every government in non-Western countries already possesses its own formal property system; the problem is that this facility is not available for the majority but just for the elite that live inside the bell jar. Those excluded from this 'property apartheid' are forced to live in poverty and in extra-legality, committing themselves to informal rules, unable to spread outside their territorial boundaries, and without the security of a formal legislation (ibid., p. 191). According to de Soto, the biggest difference between developed countries and non-developed ones stays in the division between those countries that possess a good formal property rights system and the ones that do not (ibid., p. 225). Property rights, de Soto claims, are not just a matter of titles and contracts, but an instrument of thinking: they represent the resources that the human mind needs to generate added value. For this reason, it is important that they be universally accessible (ibid., p. 231). According to de Soto, the West allows every citizen to activate his/her own individual capital, starting in this way a capitalistic process that has driven the wealth of every nation.

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Marginalization of the poor, mainly caused by the lack of an efficient system of property rights, shows itself in the impossibility of the poor benefiting from their assets. Upgrading the property rights system, giving property titles to the poor, are a means to encourage them to invest economically in their goods. This process could activate their 'dead capital', allowing them to enter the capitalistic circle, the only one, according to de Soto, that is useful for the development of countries and for diminishing urban poverty.

> I am not a diehard capitalist. I do not view capitalism as a credo. Much more important for me are freedom, compassion for the poor, respect for the social contract and equal opportunity. But for the moment, to achieve those goals, capitalism is the only game in town. It is the only system we know that provides us with the tools required to create massive surplus value (*ibid.*, p. 242).

To sum up, de Soto assumes that poor people are rich in assets but remain poor in capital because they do not really own the real estates that they possess, since they obtained them through the informal market. de Soto also argues that poor are obliged to live and work in informality because they lack easy access to property mechanisms. Because of this lack, they cannot turn their assets into capital. However, assets without property titles are just 'dead capital'. Moreover, people without titles cannot invest and negotiate their assets, and without these conditions, the formal market is restricted, a fact that leads to direct consequences for the socio-economic development of the entire country. In these conditions, 'informals' remain poor and the country cannot start a real capitalistic process. The only possible solution to change the situation is to improve the national legal system, guaranteeing to everyone access to justice and regulating the property rights system. In fact, according to de Soto, giving property titles to everyone is the only way to convert the informal system to a formal one, reducing urban poverty and increasing the national wealth.

Consensus

If, with the translation in English of *The Other Path*, the success of de Soto reached an international level, in 2000, with the publication of *The Mystery of Capital*, he reached a level of popularity that allowed him to win several prizes, get a Nobel Prize nomination, and gain the support of politicians, policy makers, and international organizations all over the world (Gilbert, 2002; 2012; Bromley, 2004; Gravois, 2005; Sjaastad & Cousins, 2008; Otto, 2009; Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi, 2009; Obeng-Odoom, 2013). The publication of *The Mystery of Capital* stimulated a significant wave of recognitions, appreciations, and a relevant media echo. From various government presidents to national politicians, the success of de Soto spread to a global level. Among the most prestigious awards, there were those by some US presidents. George Bush Sr., for instance, declared in 1989 that 'the economist Hernando de Soto helped us to understand a global economic phenomenon […]', while Bill Clinton in 2002 claimed that 'the most promising anti-poverty initiative is the one promoted by the great economist, Hernando de Soto'. *Time Magazine* placed de Soto in the top five in their rankings of *Leaders of the New Millennium* in 1999, and in 2004, the magazine positioned him among the *Hundred Most Influential Personalities of the Year* rank. *Cato Institute* awarded him the *Milton Friedman Prize for Advancing Liberty* in 2004 and the *Economist* the *Innovation Award* in 2006.

According to several scholars, the success of de Soto's ideas could be attributed mainly to two factors: (1) that de Soto, better than anyone before, managed to emphasize the economic aspect of informality (Varley, 2002; Fernandes, 2002; 2003; Cousins *et al.*, 2005; Sjaastad and Cousins, 2008); and (2) that de Soto saw a possible causal connection

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between a functioning and accessible legal system and poverty reduction (Bruce, 2006; Otto, 2009).

Influences and achievements

In the last 20 years, several national governments – Egypt, Peru, Tanzania, and Philippines among them – ran titling programs inspired by de Soto's ideas and the work of ILD (Panaritis, 2001; Fernandes, 2002; CLEP, 2008; Gilbert, 2012). Additionally, some big organizations, like the United Stated Agency for International Development (USAID), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and World Bank revived their interest in land titling programs, clearly declaring the influence of de Soto on some of their projects (Rossini and Thomas, 1990; Panaritis, 2001; Gilbert, 2002; Bruce, 2006; Payne, 2008; Rutten, 2009; Payne, Durand- Lasserve and Rakodi, 2009; McFarlane, 2012; Earle, 2014). Among the different programs influenced by de Soto's theory, Building Opportunity for the Majority – an initiative launched by IDB in 2006 – and Peruvian property rights reforms, such as the Urban Property Right Program, are the most relevant ones (Panaritis, 2001; IDB, 2006; Gilbert, 2002; 2012). The World Bank was already dealing with legalization issues as part of its upgrading programs from the 1970s. During the 1980s, shifting from an upgrading to enabling approach – an approach that was partially influenced by de Soto's theory – the property right paradigm became one of the main concern about housing policies for the Global South. As the document Housing: Enabling Markets to Work (1993) states,

> The registration of property rights in squatter settlements is […] important in making land and house transactions possible and giving occupants legal protection. It encourages the buying and selling of housing and makes it possible for households to move to a dwelling that suits their needs and their budgets. It also increases the choice of tenure available to households, allowing them to own or rent as they see fit (World Bank, 1993, p. 117)

Moreover, since 2004, the World Bank has been conducting a yearly project called *Doing Business*. This project aims to foster small medium-sized enterprise and reduce social gaps. The project is explicitly inspired by de Soto and ILD's work:

> Here, Doing Business builds on Hernando de Soto's pioneering work in applying the time and motion approach first used by Frederick Taylor to revolutionize the production of the Model T Ford. De Soto used the approach in the 1980s to show the obstacles to setting up a garment factory on the outskirts of Lima (World Bank, 2009, p. v; 2010, p. v; 2011, p. 1; 2012, p.17; 2013a, p. 17; 2013b, p.10; 2014, p. 22).

In 2005, in co-chairmanship with Madeleine Albreight, de Soto launched *The Commission for Legal Empowerment of the Poor* (CLEP), an initiative promoted by the United Nation Development Programme to mobilize the international community through the observation and analysis of poverty from the perspective of the poor themselves and to upgrade their economic conditions, giving them the basic legal tools to gain access to the market (Sjaastad and Cousins, 2008; Payne, 2008; Otto, 2009; Fernandes, 2011; Gilbert, 2012). The final report, published in 2008, *Making the Law Work for Everyone*, is based on four foundational pillars: property rights, access to justice and the role of the law, business rights, and labour rights (CLEP, 2008). Although the organization has not been working as an independent body since 2008, its principles are still part of the UNDP agenda, in UNDP's Legal Empowerment of the Poor programs.

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Critique

Nevertheless the idea of regularising informal settlements through land titling is not a de Soto invention (Gilbert, 2001; Varley 2002; Fernandes, 2002; Calderon, 2007). The origins of international housing policies for the poor can be attributed to the 1960s, a period in which the issue of urban poverty and informal housing in the Global South started to be considered a structural question and not a temporary phenomenon. Since the growth of informal settlements in urban areas was rapidly increasing and since there was an evident shortage of public housing policies at the national level, international researchers and organizations began to work on strategies that aimed at regularizing informal settlements instead of demolish them. Thanks to the pioneering work of John Turner (1968; 1972; 1976), based on the *(aided) self-help* paradigm, international organizations – UN-Habitat and World Bank to start with – started to promote policies that had the purpose of fostering a self-help building process for informal inhabitants, mainly through two different types of approaches: *site and service* and *upgrading*. With the goal being to improve the conditions of existing informal settlements, the first approach aimed at increasing the quality of the physical assets, while the second approach included some legal issues in the program, such as security land tenure and access to credit (Davis, 2006; Fernandes, 2002; Gilbert, 2002; Rutten, 2009; McFarlane, 2012). However, the contextual limits and small scale of these policies soon became apparent, and from the 1980s, big international organizations started to work on a broader and more holistic approach, capable of having an impact on the national governments of the Global South. This approach was expressed in the concept of *enabling*: a strategy that started a shift from doing something for the poor to enabling them to do something for themselves (Helmsing, 2002). This approach not only looked at the spatial dimension but also sought innovation at the institutional level. During this new international public housing season, Hernando de Soto's theories were prominently discussed, and as we saw in the previous section, they even inspired and designed some features of the *enabling* approach (Woodruff, 2001; Varley, 2002; Fernandes, 2002; Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi, 2009; Otto, 2009). However, beyond the endorsements, de Soto's theory attracted harsh critiques from the international academic community. Below are presented the arguments that aroused the most criticism and that warmed up the debate on the effectiveness of land titling programmes.

The criticisms are subdivided into three categories: methodological and theoretical- historical ones (sections 4.1; 4.2); those related to poverty issues (sections 4.3; 4.4); and those concerning the role of property and the effectiveness of land titling as a strategy for poverty reduction (sections 4.5; 4.6; 4.7).

Doubts concerning methodological approach and data

The Other Path and *The Mystery of Capital* report the results of the research carried out by de Soto and his research team of the ILD in the urban areas of Lima, Manila, Cairo, Mexico City, and Port-au- Prince. These studies raised a lot of doubts on the methodological approach used to extract the data and calculate the amount of 'dead capital' theoretically owned by the poor in the analysed cities. According to Woodruff (2001), Gilbert (2012), and Bromley (2004), the calculation of 9.3 billion dollars saved by the poor seems difficult to interpret and is not so reliable. Moreover, as much of the data collected by de Soto were quoted in international publications, several economists like Rossini and Thomas (1990) and Woodruff (2001) had analysed their statistic effectiveness, looking for mistakes and weakness.

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Superficial and confused historical and economic evidence

The interpretation of U.S. and European history, conducted by de Soto in *The Mystery of Capital*, concerned many scholars (Fernandes, 2002; Kinsella, 2002; Obeng-Odoom, 2013). In the fifth chapter of the book, 'The Missing Lessons of U.S. History' (de Soto, 2000, pp. 115-159), the author argues how U.S. history has been based on private property regulation and property rights, and how these aspects contributed in the economic development of the whole country. Bromley (2004) criticises this historical interpretation of de Soto, mainly for two reasons: (1) the omission of the negative aspects of American history, such as social exclusion of black people, land conquests and land speculation and (2) the risks of comparing American history and its complex constitutional system with the history of the countries of the Global South, like Peru, Egypt, and the Philippines. Additionally, Payne (2008) does not hesitate to show his doubts about the weak and inappropriate comparison between the U.S. experience and the one of Global South countries. He underlines the importance and the meaning that colonialism and slavery had in the construction of Western economies, that the success of capitalism was more related to these factors instead of real estate property. Moreover, Sjaastad and Cousins (2008) remark how property rights cannot explain the growth of the U.S. economy. According to them, the growth finds its origins in other factors, such as available natural resources, trade culture, high literacy rates, and several policies in favour of 'the small American businessman'. Finally, according to Benda-Beckmann (2003), the reconstruction provided by de Soto of European history is not impressive. Indeed, if it is true that an efficient property legal system helped in the development of capitalism, it is unclear if that was the factor, among others, that changed the economic status of the poorest people.

Stereotypes and generalization

Categorization and stereotyping of concepts and terms represent is another critique of de Soto's work. He seems to consider the poor as an undifferentiated class, and to merge the different types of property rights into a unique category (Fernandes, 2002; Benda-Beckmann, 2003; Bromley, 2004; Cousins *et al.*, 2005; Sjaastad and Cousins, 2008; Obeng-Odoom, 2013). As Benda-Beckmann (2003) states, when de Soto speaks about the poor, he refers to them as all living in the extra-legal sector accumulating capital when they can. But it is necessary to make some distinctions within the extra-legal realm based on the degree of wellbeing or exploitation of every inhabitant or his/her type of job. Additionally, it seems appropriate to underline that many poor do not work in the extra-legal sector, and many of them do not own anything. Thus, in these cases, the concession of property titles would not help them to upgrade their social and economic conditions.

Concerning property rights, writes Fernandes (2002), it seems that de Soto speaks about them as though there exists a unique and universal category that defines them. This category seems to belong just to the land sector and does not take into account neither the differences among different types of property rights – financial, industrial, or intellectual – nor the endogenous features that they own (Galiani and Schargrodsky, 2010).

Cementing inequality

According to Gilbert (2002) and Sjaastad and Cousins (2008), big land titling programs are implemented for goals that are different from the goal of reduction of social inequality. Besides, the economic profit that comes from the costs of the implementation of the programs is lower in comparison with the ones of other housing policies – upgrading for

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instance. Land titling represents a good economic entrance for the State. This aspect could affect the poorest strata of society, increasing the social gap. Considering the profits generated by giving property titles is not so unusual that governments manipulate the programs for the economic benefits of a small élite (Gilbert, 2002; Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi, 2009; Balbo, 2014). According to Fernandes (2003), this model of legalization helps not the poor but the old and new élite of power, who benefit from the enrichment of the urban areas thanks to the new market value assigned by the titling.

Weak link between tenure security and land titling

de Soto emphasises the importance of tenure security as the answer to eviction, endorsing the statement that the higher the perceived security, the strongest will be the economic investment of the poor in his/her house, and vice versa. The total guarantee of rights on a property is possible only through the formalization of the titles on that property (de Soto, 2002a, p. 252). On the contrary, several studies on the topic of tenure security have shown that although property titles facilitate tenure security within informal settlements, land titling does not need to be considered a necessary and sufficient condition in order to guarantee to the poor the maximum protection from eviction (Fernandes, 2002; Gilbert, 2002; 2012; Payne, 2008; Calderon, 2007; 2011; Ward, 2012).

No certain relationship between property titles and access to credit

According to de Soto, land titling helps the poor to get credits and loans from banks and credit institutions. Property titles, in fact, would be a guarantee for creditors in case of lack of payment by debtors. According to Fernandes (2002), de Soto failed to show that banks and other credit institutions would be prepared to give loans to the poor, when there is much evidence of the opposite. As Calderon (2007; 2010) argues, after the implementation of several titling programs in Peru promoted by national organizations like *Comision de formalizacion de la proprietad informal* (COPROFI) and *Politica Nacional de Formalizacion* (PNF), only a few families managed to gain access to formal credit. Additionally, in other countries of Latin America and Africa, as shown by the research provided by Gilbert (2002), Durand-Lasserve, Fernandes, Payne and Rakodi (2007), Fernandes (2002), and Woodruff (2001), the ownership of a legal title on a property does not change the possibilities for the poor to have access to credit.

Together with the weak availability of the poor to give loans to the poor, there is a lack of will by the poor themselves to ask for loans and credit from banks and credit institutions. In fact, it seems that the poor prefer to ask for informal loans from friends and family or other informal circles (Fernandes, 2002; Calderon, 2007; 2010; Woodruff, 2001; Gilbert, 2002; Durand-Lasserve and Selod, 2007; P&DM, 2007; Ward *et al.*, 2011; Ward, 2012).

Doubts about the relation between land titling and poverty reduction

de Soto claims that one of the main aims of land titling consists of the reduction of urban poverty in the countries of the Global South. If it is true that the concession of titles promotes the tenure security and personal wellbeing of some people, this does not necessarily mean that this operation activates a general process of socio-spatial integration (Gilbert, 2002; Fernandes, 2002; Sjaastad and Cousins, 2008; Otto, 2009). Moreover, regularization programs, if isolated from broader and more structured public policies, have no significant impact on poverty. According to Bromley (2008) and Payne, Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi (2009), property titles could even have negative effects in the long term and reduce the

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security of tenure, both for new owners and tenants, because of the increased value of the 'new' legal properties. Moreover, as Gilbert (2002) and Siaastad and Cousins (2008) write, de Soto does not take into account the costs and the economic effects that land titling would have on the inhabitants, the beneficiaries of the new property titles. Unexpected additional costs – property taxes and increased land and building market value for instance – could in fact raise housing rent, a factor that would force some residents to leave their homes, losing the security of tenure that property titles should ensure (Varley, 2002).

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to provide a framework of de Soto's theory and the reasons of its influence at the national and international level. Why is it so important for the informal housing policy debate? Why has it gained as much success as criticism? As this article has shown, Hernando de Soto has been depicted as 'the best economist ever' by Bill Clinton and as 'the guru of neo-liberal populism […] Messiah of people's capitalism' by Mike Davis (2006, pp.79-80). Alan Gilbert (2002, p. 3) refers to *The Mystery of Capital* as a book 'clearly populist in tone and [not hesitant] to attack neo-liberalism and conditionality'. Benda-Beckmann (2003, pp.187-190) defined the book as 'a visionary plea to governments in the Third Word and the former Soviet Union […], a mystification of property law'. Despite the critiques de Soto has also been a candidate for the economic Nobel Prize. If on the one hand, his theories have attracted the enthusiasm of some international organizations like the World Bank and IDB, who have promoted titling programs inspired by him, *The Other Path* and *The Mystery of Capital* have disappointed scholars and researchers around the world. As Varley (2002), Gilbert (2002) and Fernandes (2003) underlined, de Soto did not invent anything new, and *The Mystery of Capital* seems a superficial attempt to solve an economic world problem in a few pages (Gilbert, 2002; Bromley, 2004) that misinterprets the meaning of capital and the works of thinkers that came before de Soto (Kinsella, 2002; Bromley, 2004; Obeng- Odoom, 2013). Moreover, analyses conducted on some titling programs in countries of the Global South by experts like Fernandes (2002; 2003), Calderon (2007; 2010; 2011), Gilbert (2002), Ward (2012), Varley (2002), Durand-Lasserve and Rakodi (2008; 2009) show that titling is not a good strategy for poverty reduction or for guaranteeing tenure security to the poor. A study of the World Bank in countries like Morocco, Ethiopia, and India has demonstrated that titling, even if relevant, does not seem the first crucial step for upgrading the quality of life of the inhabitants of those countries (Buckley and Kalarickal, 2006). At any rate, the general failure of titling experiences so far could be a signal that the assignment of land titling does not represent the most efficient strategy to tackle the informality phenomenon. However, this article is not the place to discuss this issue.

As explained in the first section, during the last few decades, the regularization of informal settlements became an issue that attacked increasing attention from international organizations and researchers who, interested in urban poverty, were looking for strategies to cope with the urban crisis that involved a lot of cities in the Global South. Nevertheless, if in the past, regularization of informality was considered as a part of broader programs, like upgrading for instance, de Soto's point of view changed this perspective. He stated that poor are not really poor, but they are obliged to live in informality because of the lack of a good legal system, inverting the way of thinking about both informal housing policies and the concept of poverty itself.

If the poor are poor because of an inappropriate and inaccessible legal system wherein the state forces them to live and work in extra-legal conditions, giving the poor the right tools –

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that according to de Soto are property rights and land titles – would allow poor people to enter in the formal market and consequently escape from their poverty conditions.

This perspective, at the time of its publication, appeared quite innovative and fomented political and institutional enthusiasm, both at the national and international levels. As explained in the second section of this paper, the establishment of ILD and the publication of *The Other Path* arrived at a difficult moment for Peru; the country was dominated by a terrorist movement from one side and the authoritarian regime of Fujimori from the other. The work of de Soto and his research group appeared to be the answer to solve both the unrestrained illegality that was spreading because of the terrorism and the bureaucratic gaps in the national legal system. At the international level, de Soto's theories were largely supported by big Western organizations – the World Bank firstly – and political characters, above all within the US society. The reasons for de Soto's influence could be identified in the potential advantages, in terms of time and costs, that his way of thinking about informal housing regulation implied. Titling programs, as written in section four, are cheaper and require less effort compared to more complex programs such as upgrading programs, with which big international organizations were trying to cope. Moreover, by giving titles, there was an advantage for all the actors involved in the process: citizens would have a guarantee on their property, and the state would benefit from the cost of having a title and maintaining a property. The reason that de Soto became so famous and acclaimed within the US political realm could be that *The Mystery of Capital* is a sort of apologia for capitalism and a paean to Western economy, and that de Soto saw the US system as a viable model of development for the Global South countries, a message that was reasonably appreciated by the Western society in general. At any rate, whether one agrees or not with de Soto's ideas – which in some cases seem to be misinterpreted by the critics – he deserves credit for triggering international debate on land titling and on informal housing policies and regulation in general, and for achieving all this by putting forth a different point of view that remarked on the importance of a reliable and open legal system.

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The Views of Neighbourhood Associations on Collaborative Urban Governance in Tallinn, Estonia

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Throughout the 21st century a clear shift from hierarchical government towards network-like governance is evident in Europe and countries of the former Soviet Union. A door has been opened for citizens to assert their social and political citizenship and for the public sector to systematically search for novel ways to improve and expand representative practices. Estonia may be considered a post-socialist 'market-experiment', as almost no urban land belongs to the public sector. Thus, all decisions related to urban spatial changes are strongly influenced by private interests. The situation of ad-hoc planning, which intensified during the real-estate boom of the mid-2000s, evoked the mushrooming of civil activism, mostly in the form of neighbourhood associations. Current research investigates the roles and efficiency of neighbourhood associations in the collaborative urban governance of Tallinn. The study shows that neighbourhood associations help to reinforce people's social and political citizenship; however, there are still insufficiencies regarding their ability to represent different interests in Tallinn and in their own neighbourhood. We also discovered that Tallinn, as a post-socialist city, is currently in an experimental phase of learning how to efficiently gain from collaborative networks in the urban governance processes.

Keywords: neighbourhood associations; urban governance; collaboration; post-socialist city, Estonia

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Introduction

Recent years have shown a growing interest in the intersection of social justice and urban diversity and developing innovative approaches to urban governance and planning (Taşan-Kok et al, 2013). Boundaries between public policies, market actors' activities, and the activism of civil society organisations are increasingly becoming restructured towards close cooperation between entities. This is consistent with the wider shift in all governmental levels from hierarchical government models towards horizontal network-like governance practices (Gaventa, 2004; García, 2006; Häikiö, 2007; Martínez, 2011).

In this article we focus on one particular type of entity in urban governance—the neighbourhood association (henceforward NA)—by showing what is and what could potentially be its role in urban governance. NAs as mediators for citizens' voices (Weare et al, 2009; Jun and Musso, 2013) aim to reveal public interests and communicate them efficiently to an administrative authority (Ansell and Gash, 2008). Such grassroots initiatives, valuable partners for public bodies, have sometimes been nurtured by specific support mechanisms (Jun and Musso, 2013). As urban spatial changes shape immediate urban environments that citizens experience, it seems that cooperation during urban planning processes is especially important. Therefore, NAs often focus their activism towards socio-spatial development related issues like land development and public order in the neighbourhood. It is assumed that a collaborative atmosphere, including a sound cooperation between public bodies, market actors, and citizens' organisations, helps to make sense together through the power of better argument (Healey, 1997). A collaborative atmosphere also increases the democratic legitimacy of sometimes remote and non-transparent decision-making processes related to changes in urban environments (Connelly, 2011).

According to Raagmaa and Stead (2014), post-socialist planning systems hitherto contain some relics of hierarchical (top-down) Soviet planning but despite this, all cities in countries formerly under central planning and communist regimes have gone through an enormous change in their planning and urban governance traditions. We study the role of NAs in urban governance in a post-socialist context in Tallinn, the capital city of Estonia. Collaborative governance and urban planning principles, taken as exemplars from the legislation of Western and Northern European countries, were officially incorporated into Estonia's legislation almost two decades ago. Yet, the institutionalisation of these principles—making collaborative governance and urban planning principles take root—has taken more time.

In our article we are focused on two issues. First, we are interested in what can be learned from the experience of Tallinn regarding the role of NAs in urban governance in general. Initial observations of our study showed that the rise of new NAs in Tallinn coincided with the economic boom years of the mid-2000s (Tammaru et al, 2009; Kährik et al, 2012). It was quite evident that the increasing citizen activism served as a response to the period when larger spatial restructuring in urban areas was expected. We explore, through empirical analysis, the roles of NAs in such situations. The results contribute to theoretical debates of urban governance and planning that focus on the roles of various urban actors in situations of remarkable urban spatial transformations.

Second, neighbourhood activism in urban issues is still a relatively new phenomenon in Estonia as well as in other post-socialist countries (compared to older democracies in Europe). We wish to understand how rather normative principles of collaborative urban governance and planning are translated to a post-socialist context. Although the planning legislation and official legal principles for citizens' rights are quite similar in traditional

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democratic societies and in post-socialist democracies (the legislation is sometimes even adopted verbatim), the wider context for political culture is different. For example, with the ownership reforms of the 1990s, the former full state ownership of urban land and properties was transformed to a full-market situation (Lux et al, 2012). Contemporary Estonia is sometimes considered to be a true 'market-experiment' (Tammaru et al, 2015) in which virtually no urban land is publicly owned. This is not the case in most of the traditional market economy-oriented countries of Europe. In Estonian urban planning, the concurrent phenomenon tends to be ad hoc planning culture dominated by splintered private sector interests in the context of an ultra-liberal economy (Ruoppila, 2007; Leetmaa et al, 2009; Raagmaa and Stead, 2014). In this situation the grassroots reactions seem to be a counterbalance for the weak capacity of the public sector to coordinate the accompanying remarkable spatial effects.

Neighbourhoods and neighbourhoods associations in urban governance

The discussions on collaborative urban governance and planning have lasted for a long time in literature and include many sub-topics (Healey, 1997; Fainstein, 2000; Innes and Booher, 2004; Ansell and Gash, 2008; Healey, 2015). To understand the role of neighbourhood associations in collaborative urban governance, the 'just city' discussions are relevant and informative. For Fainstein (2000), inclusive, empowered and just city means a situation where the inhabitants not only have a formal say in decision-making processes, for example in planning issues, but they indeed have the opportunity to contribute to the real outcome of their immediate living environment.

The obstacles for an inclusive decision-making process mostly originate from two strands. First, the spatial planning process is frequently characterised by the need to have (technical) expert-level knowledge and skills to be able to effectively influence the physical interventions made in the city or also in one's own neighbourhood. Consequently, the decisions related to urban changes are often distant from the residents and other actors who actually live and work in this environment later on. Individual voices working in isolation are usually unable to survive in this complex environment, but citizens gathering in NAs operating as part of a collaborative team could potentially benefit from each other's professionalism and become accountable partners for professional planners and public bodies as well.

Second, a representative democracy in an urban decision-making process is often not combined sufficiently with other supporting participative democratic mechanisms. Although planning procedures initiated and carried out by government bodies might seem distant and too technical, they possess legitimacy and accountability obtained through constitutional elections (Plotke, 1997; Häikiö, 2007; Davoudi and Cowie, 2013). The issue is how representative practices can be improved and expanded. The challenge for collaborative urban governance is to include more interests and voices without losing democracy (Connelly, 2011). Various forms of citizen input to planning discussions regarding their living environment make the discussions often more complex and less direct (Plotke, 1997), but at the same time these discussions inform public decision-makers about the diverse preferences in a complex urban society. The attention or curiosity the civil organisations take notice of in their immediate surroundings potentially brings about improvement in otherwise uniform public services. In some cases, various citizens groups help to innovate in public service delivery by pointing to the needs of specific population groups or to expectations about how something could be better organised for neighbourhoods (García, 2006; Martínez, 2011). However, neighbourhood representatives often have to very thoroughly defend their inherent democracy and representativeness. For example, they need to demonstrate

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transparently who and what interests they actually represent, because in some cases the NAs only extend representational democracy, excluding vulnerable groups who do not gather in organisations so easily or whose voices are weaker. Furthermore, based on Purdue (2001), community activism tends to rely 'on a network structure and often lacks the clearly defined institutions of power and legitimacy of a political party' (p. 2214). Yet, according to Plotke (1997, p. 24), 'rather than opposing participation to representation, we should try to improve and expand representative practices' for recognising innovative solutions to urban issues and for implementing the 'social and political citizenship' (García, 2006, pp. 748, 750) of urban residents.

Fincher and Iveson (2008) conceptualise social citizenship by tying the goals of urban governance and planning to social aspects of redistribution, recognition, and encounter. They argue that extreme poverty and deprivation also produce extreme exclusion of some population groups from societal life. Redistribution (*ibid.*, pp. 23–30) is always tied to spatial decisions—some planning outcomes reduce disadvantages and inequality and others may reinforce it. A diverse set of ambitions, preferences, and endeavours that meet in the contemporary city require actors to increasingly listen to others while preserving a certain curiosity about various voices. Therefore, Fincher and Iveson (2008) differentiate two approaches for recognition—pragmatic and contextual (p. 104). With the pragmatic approach, an affirmative checklist method is used when recognising certain groups, often disregarding embedded differences. The contextual approach, on the other hand, is more of a relational method, where recognition is strongly entwined with the concept of intersectionality (Valentine, 2007). This more sensitive way of recognising different groups takes into account all social roles people may carry simultaneously and acknowledges that the set of voices in a city is dynamic (since new groups may always emerge). Thirdly, Fincher and Iveson (2008) argue that spatial decisions should provide places of encounter (p. 151–159) for various recognised groups so that people can meet others alike or make contact with the new and different, helping to overcome social distances that threaten contemporary urban life.

To implement political citizenship, an institutional context is needed that acknowledges participative mechanisms side-by-side with representational ones, and also provides respective mechanisms for citizen participation (García, 2006). Furthermore, Gaventa (2004) argues that more empowered forms of participation in local governance can lead to democracy-building and even pro-poor development outcomes. For this reason, it is important to carefully observe 'how the spaces for participatory governance work, for whom, and with what social justice outcomes' (*ibid.*, p. 31), meaning whose voices are really heard and whose are excluded (*ibid.*, pp. 27, 38).

These discussions are worth reconsidering when making arguments about the role of neighbourhood activism. Regarding the issues of participatory democracy in urban governance, neighbourhoods and their representative bodies are in the centre of discussion in a range of research (Purdue, 2001; Häikiö, 2007; Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008; Connelly, 2011; Häikiö, 2012; Pill and Bailey, 2012). According to Lowndes and Sullivan (2008), a neighbourhood is an appropriate unit for urban governance for many reasons. For example, a neighbourhood contains fewer citizens, thus making direct participation feasible; also, neighbourhoods are expected 'to encapsulate homogenous communities with shared values, beliefs and goals' (*ibid.*, p. 57). As such, due to the force of homophily (McPherson et al, 2001; Weare et al, 2009), neighbourhoods bond together certain groups of people based on shared ethnicity, lifestyle, or preferences.

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As a counter-argument, there is rich evidence that more and more people in contemporary cities live in diverse rather than in homogeneous neighbourhoods (Holloway et al, 2012). This again raises the question of appropriate representation. When people with very different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds share the living environment, the visions of these groups concerning the neighbourhood's future are not necessarily similar. Furthermore, neighbourhoods are often in transition rather than socially stable in terms of residential mobility. For example, inner-city neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification attract younger, more active, and often economically better established social groups like young entrepreneurs. These citizens have obtained certain socio-economic status and may be more willing to invest their time in neighbourhood development as well (Jun and Musso, 2013). However, if the neighbourhoods are socially diverse, because the 'old' not-so-active residents still live here as well, but the NAs rather deal with topics important for newcomers, the question whether these NAs are able to represent the whole neighbourhood should be addressed.

Gaining legitimacy is a discursive process dependent on context, shared beliefs, and cultural values, which reflect different positions of stakeholders in governance networks (Häikiö, 2007; Häikiö, 2012). We know that the leaders of NAs often aim to represent the collective interests of a neighbourhood (Purdue, 2001). However, the legitimacy of their positions is related to their track record of delivered outcomes or competence in a given issue, and personal charisma and trustworthiness (Connelly, 2011). Therefore, legitimacy is constructed both through formal and informal processes (*ibid.*; Davoudi and Cowie, 2013). Accordingly, all the abovementioned questions about how NAs are able to reinforce local democracy and support social and political citizenship should be posed if the aim is to understand the potential role of neighbourhood associations in urban governance.

Socio-spatial changes and urban governance practices in post-socialist Tallinn

We study the role of NAs—non-profit organisations driven by citizen initiative and mainly committed to preserving or improving neighbourhood qualities—in a post-socialist European city, Tallinn (approx. 400 000 inhabitants), the capital of Estonia. Much like in other Central and Eastern European countries, the urban planning institution in Estonia has undergone a remarkable transformation in the context of vast socio-spatial changes (Liepa-Zemeša and Hess, 2016). Among other post-socialist European capitals, Tallinn is characterised as a city where social inequalities and the resulting socio-economic segregation have rapidly increased in post-socialist decades (Tammaru et al, 2015).

Tallinn is composed of a mixture of diverse urban districts originating from various historical periods. Half of the city's buildings were demolished in WWII and the remaining historical housing (mostly 1 to 3-storey wooden houses) survived relatively unscathed (Ruoppila, 2007). This is in line with the trajectories of inner cities elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe (Kovacs et al, 2013), where during the socialist years the pre-War residential quarters were left to decay (Hess and Hiob, 2014). The main efforts and investments of housing policies were directed towards the high-rise panel-housing estates (Kährik and Tammaru, 2010). In the context of severe housing shortages in growing socialist industrial cities, an apartment in a panel-housing district was a sought-after residential solution. Today, approximately 2/3 of the population in Tallinn lives in these housing estates.

Over time, a shift in residential preferences has occurred. The apartments in housing estates gradually have lost their prestige and older inner-city districts have become attractive gentrified places (Kährik et al, 2016). Although the panel-housing areas have maintained a

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certain mixed socio-economic status (Kährik and Tammaru, 2010; Temelová et al, 2011; Marcińczak et al, 2015), gradual sorting of high social status people from the socialist modernist housing and into suburbs or gentrifying districts is an ongoing reality. The former inner-city districts have transformed into diverse social environments, where both former residents (often less affluent, older, and with industrial worker background) live alongside newcomers (young households, students or specific lifestyle groups who value culturally attractive historical neighbourhoods near the amenities of the city centre). Interestingly, these hot spots of gentrification also offer fertile ground for local activism (Leetmaa et al, 2015b).

In addition, the socio-spatial transformations in Tallinn contain an ethnic component. Slightly less than half of the population of Tallinn is Russian-speakers, or their descendants, who arrived in the country during the Soviet decades. As a result, Tallinn has a dual ethnic character—ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers live somewhat parallel lives with only limited intergroup communication (Kamenik et al, 2015; Leetmaa et al, 2015a). Russian-speakers, usually skilled-workers with an industrial background, who do not speak Estonian well, have found themselves in a more disadvantaged position in the growing service-oriented labour market (Leping and Toomet, 2008). They change their place of residence less often and if they do, they have a tendency to select destinations where familiar culture networks exist (Mägi et al, 2016). Estonians, on the other hand, are leaving the panel-housing districts for inner-city neighbourhoods more frequently. Therefore, in panel-housing districts, the proportion of Russian-speakers, which in general is 'less connected' with the labour market and with societal life in general, is relatively higher; similarly, in gentrified districts, the long-term population with a relatively lower social status tends to be the Russian-speaking sub-population. Consequently, the ability to perform one's social and political citizenship is higher among ethnic Estonians in Tallinn as they form the majority of inner-city residents where neighbourhood activism is more visible.

Traditionally, in a European city, significant public resources are invested to prevent the market from dictating spatial and social development (Ruoppila, 2007). There are also significant differences in the role of the welfare state among European countries (Kazepov, 2005), which also applies to planning systems: the welfare-systems of Central and Eastern Europe are typically weak. Raagmaa and Stead (2014) argue that 'spatial planning in Central and Eastern Europe differs from Western and Northern Europe in terms of rapidly changing economic, organisational and political landscapes, lower levels of trust in the role of government, and the position of planning in society' (p. 672). Europeanisation—attempts to apply certain elements of western models of planning—has been recognisable but in comparison to the rapid change of other institutions, the replacement of old planning traditions with new practices has been a somewhat slower process (Raagmaa and Kroon, 2005; Raagmaa and Stead, 2014). An explanation for this delay lies in the fact that urban housing stock and land became almost entirely privatised in the 1990s. Consequently, any (urban) planning action today is greatly influenced by the interests of private owners.

Ruoppila (2007) admits that a generally liberal approach towards urban development prevailed in the 1990s (see also Leetmaa et al, 2009). He argues, however, that from the late 1990s onward, the role of planning has gradually strengthened: purposeful steps were taken to integrate physical planning and real-estate regulations, to increase transparency in planning and city management, to achieve greater involvement of the general public in planning processes, and to promote sustainability. Thus, collaborative practices in urban governance also began to become more common only in the 2000s, suggesting that new urban governance practices require time to get rooted.

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An incentive for change in governance practices was also the nascent recovery of the non-governmental sector. According to Ruutsoo (2002), the 1990s did not contribute much to the emergence of Estonian civil society as the state administration had not yet considered civil society as a resource. This very poor understanding of civil society as a potential state partner resulted in an elitist governance orientation (*ibid.*). Based on Rikmann et al. (2010), the state consciously started to shape the operating environment of the NGO sector in the 2000s. In line with the Estonian Ministry of the Interior[1], the recognition that citizens' associations need consistent support was achieved, and many state-budget-funded services began to be provided for NGOs, for example counselling, various mentoring and development programmes, project-based-funding, access to research and analyses, etc. This has resulted in the professionalisation of some of the organisations via recognition and stable funding. Yet, at the same time, this professionalisation has increased the threat that pre-existing collaborations exclude those who do not have personal contacts with decision-makers (*ibid.*), or who just might 'not have the time, the capacity, the know-how, or the political resources to participate' (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013: p. 564; see also Rikmann et al, 2010).

Description of the fieldwork

There were twenty two NAs in Tallinn as of May 2014. We observed that NAs mostly existed in four city districts[2]—Põhja-Tallinn (Northern Tallinn), Nõmme, Kesklinn (City Centre) and Pirita (see Figure 1)—with the exception of one in Haabersti. Most importantly, we observed that NAs are intrinsic to historical inner-city areas (City Centre and Northern Tallinn) and low-rise pre-WWII districts with single-family houses (Pirita and Nõmme). There were, however, no NAs in city districts with socialist-era panel-housing estates.

Due to the relatively low number of NAs we attempted to interview at least one representative from each. We were able to make contact with fourteen NAs out of a total of twenty-two. We asked for a representative of an NA who would be able to discuss the following issues: how and why the association was founded; what the main activities are; who they represent; and how they perceive the collaborative practices in Tallinn. Based on some background information on the recent activities of the NAs, we are able to say that the remaining eight NAs, which did not respond to our endeavours to meet, were also less active or not yet fully established. Therefore, fourteen qualitative expert interviews with founding members and/or current members of the board of directors of NAs were conducted. We must stress that certain views presented in our results may reflect the views of the representatives of the NAs and not the whole association, not to mention the whole neighbourhood. Therefore, we aimed at being as aware and critical as possible: we fully acknowledged that some views or interests of other active NA members might be left out. We also understand that some presented views might be slightly overcritical, as we have not made a specific survey among other urban actors (developers, public representatives, etc.) to reveal how the latter might perceive the activities and the legitimacy of NAs. However, the leaders of NAs are usually in direct contact with the local government and other stakeholders, thus having enough experience and professional expertise to explain from their point of view the power of neighbourhood activism in the city. Table 1 gives an overview of the NAs, their goals and the métier of the interviewees.

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[1] Civil Society Development Plan 2011-2014, 2011.
[2] Districts are official administrative units in the city of Tallinn containing several neighbourhoods.

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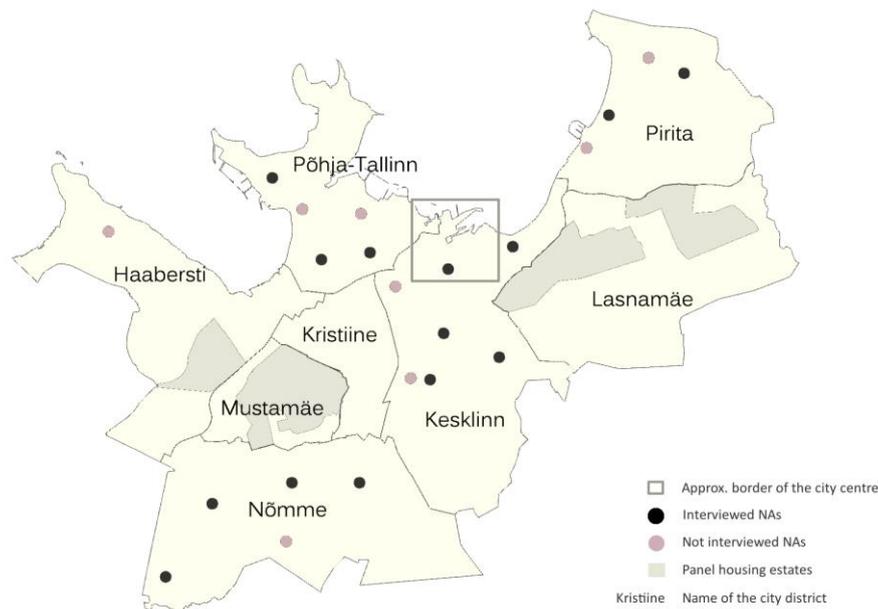
Figure 1. City districts of Tallinn and the location of NAs as of May 2014. Elaboration of the authors; NA locations based on Pehk and Ait, 2014.

The interviews were conducted between February and May 2014. The lengths of the interviews varied from forty-one minutes to one hour and twenty-two minutes. After the first round of analysis we lacked sufficient understanding of why neighbourhood activism is less frequent in panel-housing districts and among Russian-speakers. We therefore conducted an additional interview in June 2015 with the representative of the Lasnaidea initiative (thus, in total we carried out fifteen interviews, see Table 1).

The main interview questions addressed issues of representation, the interest groups in the neighbourhood, the level of competence of various stakeholders, and the overall situation of collaboration in urban governance and planning. Although we followed a semi-structured interview guide, we included additional issues that arose spontaneously during the interview. The empirical analysis followed the principles of directed content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), meaning that the main codes for analysis were drawn from theory. Some coding examples include representation; interest groups in planning and urban governance; and incentive for collaboration. This was supplemented by open coding, meaning codes were also derived from data and the researcher's knowledge of context: the leaders of NA; neighbourhood activities; and concerns and evaluations regarding collaborative practices. The main results—the emergent pattern of NAs, who they represent, and what are their roles in Tallinn's urban governance—are presented in the following section.

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Table 1. Overview of the NAs and their representatives

NAs name / Neighbourhood(s)	Goals of NA (in the neighbourhood)	Profile of interviewee	Date
1. Telliskivi (est. 2009)/ Kalamaja, Pelgulinn	Preservation of milieu and the environment, living environment development, assembling the residents, promoting social networking	Advertising designer	02/2014
2. Professors' Village (2009)/ Kopli	Defending the cultural heritage, preservation of milieu and the environment, living environment development, assembling the residents, promoting social networking	3 interviewees: Stay at home mother, degree in preservation of cultural heritage; human resources manager and specialist, green movement activist; university researcher of combustion	02/2014
3. Pelgulinna (1992)/ Pelgulinn	Social networking between the elderly, preservation of milieu, living environment development, public order	Freelance prop manager, artist assistant, retired	02/2014
4. Creative Nõmme (2011)/Union of various neighbourhoods in Nõmme	Preservation of milieu, maintaining social infrastructure, living environment development, promoting social networking	Accounting, member of electoral alliance "Free Tallinn Citizen"	03/2014
5. Uus Maailm (2006)/ New World	Preservation of milieu and cultural heritage, living environment development, promoting social networking	Project manager, degree in city management	03/2014
6. Pirita (2005)/Pirita	Preservation of milieu, promoting social networking, defending common interests of the community, development of the living environment, maintaining social infrastructure.	Degree in real estate development	03/2014
7. Vanalinna (2010)/ Old Town	Public order, living environment development	Architect	03/2014
8. Kadrioru (2010)/ Kadriorg	Preservation of milieu and cultural heritage, living environment development, promoting social networking	Entrepreneur	03/2014
9. Juhkentali (2013)/ Juhkentali	Assembly of the residents promoting social life, defending common interests of the community	Lawyer, member of electoral alliance "Free Tallinn Citizen"	04/2014
10. Mähe (2007)/Mähe	Preservation of milieu, promoting social life, defending common interests of the community, living environment development, public order	Official of Planning and Land Authority, degree in city management; member of electoral alliance "Free Tallinn Citizen"	04/2014
11. Liiva Village (2011)/ Liiva	Assembly of the residents, promoting social life, defending common interests of the community, living environment development, public order	Nõmme district government council member, degree in business studies; member of political party IRL	04/2014
12. Luite (2012)/ Luite	Assembly of the residents, defending common interests of the community, living environment development	Property management	04/2014
13. Möldre Road (2009)/ Pääsküla	Living environment development, social networking	Information security expert	05/2014
14. Nõmme's Way (1999)/ Vana-Mustamäe	Preservation of milieu and the living environment, protecting of cultural and natural values, helping to create human friendly city environment	Journalist, retired; member of another NA within the Nõmme district	05/2014
15. Lasnaidea (2015)/ Various Lasnamäe neighbourhoods	Activate residents of panel-housing areas, create possibilities for civil activism, informing of civil activism in the area, growing interest in planning activity	Master's student of urban studies	06/2014

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Observations from the fieldwork

The Mosaic of NAs

Altogether an interesting set of NAs was obtained, reflecting the four mentioned districts of Tallinn quite well. For example, there are five rather different NAs within Northern Tallinn, where some neighbourhoods are experiencing a fast residential and commercial gentrification process while others still have a derelict industrial nature with shabby housing. The reasons why a certain NA was founded and the focus they have taken vary. Some were founded to tackle everyday problems like parking, transportation, or neighbourhood security. Others confronted larger issues that influence an entire neighbourhood or district, such as road construction. In some cases, the motivation for founding was specific local identity (see Table 1). Today, in the situation where pressure from the real estate sector has been remarkable since the mid-2000s, all the associations have focused their activities on maintaining and improving the living environment and creating strong networks of neighbourhood activists mainly inside but also across different neighbourhoods as well as city districts, for example the Urban Idea initiative[3].

The NAs in Tallinn reflect the overall resident profile of the neighbourhood they are based in quite well. For example, the Telliskivi and Uus Maailm associations are based in inner-city neighbourhoods that are undergoing fast gentrification and the NA members present a rather good cross-section of newcomers, who tend to be younger, higher educated, and with bohemian urban lifestyles. In addition, Tallinn's inner city, with lots of green space, provides possibilities to follow a certain 'semi-rural' lifestyle (Kährik et al, 2016) while living near the city centre. In comparison a more stable resident profile—households that have lived here for generations—emerges in the Nõmme district, which has historically been a home for intellectuals and more affluent citizens. Nõmme is a garden city-style district that is characterised by large, old villa-like houses. Here there are NAs that were founded at the beginning of the 20th century and reinstated in the 1990s, like Nõmme's Way, whose members' represent the traditional model of Nõmme, whereas Möldre Road on the outskirts of the Nõmme district unites mostly young families. An overview of all neighbourhoods and their characteristics is given in Table 2 below.

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[3] Urban Idea is an initiative that aims at networking all the NAs of Tallinn. See: http://www.linnaidee.ee/en/content/news.

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Table 2. Overview of the neighbourhoods and their residents' characteristics.

Name of neighbourhood and city district	Neighbourhood characteristics	Neighbourhood residents' characteristics
Kalamaja, Põhja-Tallinn Pelgulinn, Põhja-Tallinn Kopli, Põhja-Tallinn	Inner-city wooden housing areas built for industrial workers, gentrifying.	Young families, elderly, Russian-speaking long-term residents; higher education and socio-economic status, hipsters, skilled workers; private owners and tenants; Estonians.
Uus Maailm, Kesklinn	Inner-city wooden housing area built for industrial workers, gentrifying.	Young families, hipsters, elderly; higher education and socio-economic status; private owners and tenants; Estonians.
Kadriorg, Kesklinn	Inner-city wooden housing area, villa-like 1-3-storey wooden houses, gentrified.	Middle-aged families with higher social status, higher income, private owners; Estonians.
Juhkentali, Kesklinn Luite, Kesklinn	Inner-city area with small houses and/or 3-5-storey apartment buildings, mixed use.	Middle-class to higher income families, private owners and tenants; Estonians.
Vanalinn, Kesklinn	Old Medieval town of Tallinn.	Higher income, higher education, private owners; different ethnic groups (Estonians, Russians, Finns, English-speakers).
Vana-Mustamäe, Nõmme Union of various neighbourhoods, Nõmme	Villas and houses with large plots, large green areas.	Families with higher social status, e.g. university professors, long-term residents; Estonians.
Liiva, Nõmme Pääsküla, Nõmme	Houses with large plots and/or terraced houses, large green areas.	Young middle-class to higher income families, house/apartment owners; Estonians and some Russian-speakers.
Pirita, Pirita Mähe, Pirita	Houses with large plots and/or terraced houses, large green areas.	Young middle-class to higher income families, house/apartment owners; Estonians and some Russian-speakers.
Lasnamäe, Lasnamäe	Panel-housing estate.	Mixed population; young middle class families to long-term residents, Estonians and Russian-speakers, ethnic Russians; skilled workers.

Whose voice, whose interest?

According to all of the interviewees, the NAs regard themselves as representatives of local public interest, which is strongly entwined with the legitimacy issue (Plotke, 1997; Purdue, 2001; Häikiö, 2007; Connelly, 2011). The NAs deal with questions such as what their legitimacy stems from, whom they really represent, and what their inherent democracy stands for daily. We observed that NAs believe to have done much already by, for example, holding community meetings where the legitimacy questions are discussed. Consensus regarding these issues, at least among the NAs, has been obtained (Pehk and Ait, 2014). Thus, NAs in Tallinn have come to an understanding that if they do not know how the residents who are not members feel about a certain topic, they might not have the right to say that the association still represents them. Consequently, an important role the NAs have chosen to play in the local community is to be the mediators of information, which helps them to keep contacts with diverse social groups. An interviewee discusses their role as follows:

> The association is like a platform, an information field that allows people to bring forth different ideas. We represent this area and all residents living here purely because our activity is public, transparent, inclusive of as many residents as possible. Of course everybody cannot be

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> included, but if they see that we are doing something they do not agree with then they can say that as well (Uus Maailm). [4]

Overall, the voice that speaks through associations varies according to the neighbourhoods. When considering NAs separately, the force of homophily (McPherson et al, 2001; Weare et al, 2009) can be detected—in each NA certain groups prevail and the challenge to reach other groups with their activities always exists. Certain social groups—poorer and less educated—tend to be left out of the discussion (cf. Ansell and Gash, 2008) and in the case of Tallinn this is definitely an issue in inner-city gentrifying districts, where recently-arrived gentrifiers generally form the NAs. This biased representation causes neighborhoods to develop according to the visions of more active and affluent community members, as they have the capacity in terms of time and willingness to take action, suitable resources, and know-how to be included (Davoudi & Cowie, 2013). We claim that these reasons also explain why there is no apparent civil activism present in such a scope in the panel-housing estates in Tallinn.

On the other hand, when considering Tallinn as a whole, very diverse interests make their voices heard through neighbourhood activism. In some cases, geographically close communities combine their activities. For example, Pelgulinna NA activities are oriented toward the elderly and there are no clear geographical borders where NA's activities end. But regarding the issues related to neighbourhood spatial development they rely more on Telliskivi NA that actively engages with planning problems. Also, there is noticeable cooperation when organising social events such as annual neighbourhood festivities. We also discovered that interviewees see NAs as more legitimate and more influential (Häikiö, 2007) as opposed to taking action individually: 'writing as an individual did not get us anywhere, we needed a representative body. So you might say that a problem in the neighbourhood brought us together' (Liiva Village). Furthermore, they use their own individual professional experience and know-how to tackle a given issue (Häikiö, 2007), which is often influenced by more global values—using examples from western societies when arguing for their position—or seek cooperation from neighbouring NAs.

Due to the concentration of associations in certain types of neighbourhoods where the majority of the population is Estonian, the representation of Estonian and Russian voices through NAs is unbalanced. Therefore, it appears that in the dual ethnic city of Tallinn the NAs make heard primarily the voice of ethnic Estonians. This should be an alarm call for the city government as well—the neighbourhoods where community activism is limited tend to be more disadvantaged districts, lacking community resources. Lasnaidea, on the other hand, is the first neighbourhood initiative of its kind aiming to bring together residents with various ethnic backgrounds in the large minority-rich housing estate district of Lasnamäe (established as an NA in 2015). Based on the interview with the Lasnaidea representative, there are no known NAs in panel-housing estates or among Russian-speakers in general. An equivalent for NAs proposed by the interviewee might be apartment associations[5], which in high-rise panel-housing estates could have hundreds of households. Still, it is noticeable that Russian-speakers, even though not inherently less active, have not yet formed associations similar to NAs present in the inner-city areas. Furthermore, it appears that Russian-speakers do not take part in urban governance and planning discussions as actively as ethnic Estonians, meaning the voices from the Russian-speaking community are insufficient.

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[4] Interviews are referred to by means of the name of the NA
[5] An apartment association is a mandatory NGO comprised of all apartment owners in one building. Its main aim is to manage the common property of the building.

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Connecting the disconnected

The challenge of relating people and institutions highlighted by Gaventa (2004) became apparent from the interviews. Namely, the current institutional arrangement of the Tallinn city government is seen as highly complex and internally disconnected. The interviewees stressed that often the information regarding, for example, urban planning activities is not signalled out properly, informing is just the legally required minimum. Real-life situations, however, require adjustment to particular circumstances, and sometimes special efforts should be taken to ensure that people are truly informed. The interviewees also complained that the (right) information frequently gets lost or delayed when moving between different officials. An interviewee describes the situation colourfully:

> The main problem of municipal offices is that the different domains and functions are so scattered that it seems different offices are like states within a state, they do not work with each other. […] They presume that the citizen goes from office to office with his problem and does the communication for them (Möldre Road).

Additionally, there is insufficient information available for effectively forming decisions, making decisions about what is important and requires addressing that much harder. The interviewees brought out the need to bring a more humane communication manner to the government. To build this relationship, work has to be done 'on both sides of the equation' (Gaventa, 2004, p. 26). When appropriate, the city government must explain the information it gives out in simpler and more understandable terms and the associations in turn should have adequate knowledge to ask the right questions.

In addition, it seems reasonable that as grassroots initiatives the NAs should communicate with the most appropriate level of government power. The district governments have a better overview of undergoing processes in the district, while NAs usually are more informed of the processes in parts thereof. Thus, it is important to facilitate competence of how to better engage civil associations in the district government's activities (Häikiö, 2012). If a united front comprised of local residents and the district government is created, the achieved consensus is believed to be more influential and better represented on the city level as well.

The interviewees stressed that, for NAs to be a significant partner for public bodies, a certain level of competence is essential (Innes and Booher, 2004, Häikiö, 2007; Ansell and Gash, 2008). However, the general experience of NAs regarding urban governance processes is that NAs are considered by public bodies to be annoying, a group whose opinion local government is forced to consider but whose involvement makes the process more complex and time consuming (Plotke, 1997). Thus, according to the interviewees, examples of good collaboration are a rare encounter resulting from generally insufficient informing efforts and only rare incentives from local government to involve NAs in governance processes. Interestingly, as pointed out by Ansell and Gash (2008), even though usually good previous experience encourages and bad past experience discourages collaboration, a conflict *per se* is not necessarily a barrier for collaboration. As the competence and trustworthiness of NAs grows through expertise as well as their self-education on germane matters, NAs consequently gain levels of legitimacy with local governments (Häikiö, 2007). Simultaneously, NAs acquire recognition as local experts or 'indicators'—the ones who provide local input. However, some sensitivity should remain on the government's part in the interest of including other civil associations that might have valuable in put in a less understandable form. By following more contextual approaches for recognition (Valentine, 2007; Fincher and Iveson, 2008), the government is more able to prevent a situation where only politically more 'suitable' associations are included in the discussion (Häikiö, 2012).

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Local expertise in privatised society

According to the interviewees, the task of the city government is to balance business and citizens' interests as well as voices from different neighbourhoods. The NAs understand that the city has knowledge and vision regarding the development of the whole city. However, the interviewees argue that this vision today seems to be 'full of holes' as Tallinn's comprehensive plan is outdated and districts' comprehensive plans also tend to be vague or incomplete. This poses the question of who benefits from such vagueness. An interviewee surmises a kind of indirect conspiracy in this unclear situation:

> The worst problem is that the district's comprehensive plan is still not adopted. I have heard that even though the plan has not been officially approved, the Urban Planning Department has no other official document for reference, thus they act upon the [unapproved] comprehensive plan. [...] I do not understand why this [planning] process has been stopped (Möldre Road).

In general, the NAs perceive that developers win from the unclear spatial visions of the city government, as then the 'vision' can be adjusted according to the ad hoc site-planning projects. As the majority of land in Estonia is privately owned, all planning activity is induced by someone's private interests. Therefore, the NAs feel that strong general visions in urban planning are essential. They would prefer to be involved in the initial vision formation processes, rather than in a situation in which they must oppose potentially inconsistent visions of politically influential private owners. In a 'privatised city' like Tallinn, major urban investments derive from developers. Unfortunately, neither cities nor the state have sufficient resources for large urban renewal projects in Estonia. Thus, the city has the role to set the terms of reference for the detailed plan of every new site for investment. The NAs expect to be involved in urban development projects during initial phases. It is clear that although NAs regard the local government as legitimate deciders, the NAs would prefer to see stronger accountability in the city government's actions.

Conclusions

Considering that NAs have emerged within the last decade in Estonia as neighbourhood representatives participating in urban governance, we began our research with the following assumptions concerning their goals and activities. First, by bringing forth citizen interests as local neighbourhood experts, we presumed NAs help legitimise local decisions regarding neighbourhood development, thus helping to assert citizens' political citizenship. Second, as NAs aim to bring local decisions closer to the general public, NAs' activity also opens opportunities for citizens to partake in other urban governance processes pertaining to socio-urban changes, that is to assert their social citizenship. This led us to our research questions: what can we learn from the experience of Tallinn for urban governance debates in general? What are the views of the NAs on their missions, and how do they engage representation and legitimacy?

In the first phase of our research we found that the NAs did not geographically cover the entire city, meaning that only some Tallinn city districts had the opportunity to gain from neighbourhood activism. This should make the local government more cautious when making urban development decisions that could amplify the already distinctive inequalities between neighbourhoods. As NAs are inherent to gentrifying inner-city and single-family housing areas, where the socio-economic status is higher or rapidly increasing due to selective in-migration and out-migration, the local government should more systematically promote civil activism in areas where it is more demanding for citizens to instigate themselves, for example, in panel-housing estates. Unbalanced representation also causes certain

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neighbourhoods to develop according to the visions of more active and affluent community members, who have the capacity and know-how to be included (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013). The NA representatives stressed that the NAs have done much work in order to create competence, and to shape themselves to be equal partners in discussions. Although expertise is grounds for legitimacy (Häikiö, 2007) it should be noted that it might lead to favouritism (Rikmann et al, 2010; Häikiö, 2012). Therefore, it is important for the public sector to provide a flexible framework for different movements—provide support for already existing forms of civil activism as well as to ensure easy access to new ones (Fincher and Iveson, 2008). In such cases, we stress that the local government should address this more systematically in order to avoid a situation where weaker voices, who might have the moral capacity but not yet the competence, i.e. they are not legitimate or 'suitable' enough (Häikiö, 2012), are restricted from discussions. Therefore, public representatives must ensure equal opportunities for NAs and individual citizens alike to secure a balanced urban governance network and to be able to recognise possible new interests in the urban sociocultural landscape (García, 2006; Valetine, 2007; Fincher and Iveson, 2008; Davoudi and Cowie, 2013).

Based on the fieldwork results, we are able to differentiate three main roles that NAs carry in urban governance in post-socialist Tallinn. These are: *mediator, informant, and indicator*. As NAs aim to provide a platform for fostering various ideas and activities, they are places for social encounter (Fincher and Iveson, 2008). Ideas, questions, and problems are communicated to the members of the NA, neighbourhood residents, or other people who share the ideas of the association via (social) networks that the NAs have initiated and maintained. Thus, NAs have the capacity to mediate information between the members/residents and local government. In addition, with growing competence and know-how in urban governance-related issues, as well as acquired local expertise, the NAs are able to bear the role of indicator. By indicating certain deficiencies or imperfections in the local urban development or social issues, the aim of these activists is not to shed light on maladministration practice in the public sector or to take someone's job (as their activism is sometimes interpreted), but to provide input in constructive discussion (Häikiö, 2012).

As a post-socialist capital with a relatively young and still rather weak civil society, Tallinn shows signs of a growing movement towards becoming a city where policy decisions are made in the mode of collaborative urban governance. We might say that the market-experiment of full private land-ownership (Tammaru et al, 2015) has evolved into a *governance experiment*, as the growing number of interests (namely NAs that have emerged within the last decade) regarding issues pertaining to urban development can be considered as a direct reaction to the real estate boom and fast changes in urban space. These stakeholders have opened the opportunity for public representatives to adjust their practice of governing to be more comparable to Western democracies. They aim to find ways to enrich representative practices (Plotke, 1997; Davoudi and Cowie, 2013) rather than rigidly uphold the relics of Soviet era hierarchical policies—making decisions behind closed doors within a small circle of 'experts'—by excluding public interests presented by a growing number of civil associations.

It seems that the past decade has been a time of learning about how to efficiently root collaborative urban governance practices in Tallinn. As the legislative framework was introduced more than two decades ago, both the public and third sectors have gone through extensive changes. This in turn has created a need for new forms of collaboration, which cannot be introduced overnight. We can conclude that implementing fruitful collaborative governance practices in Tallinn is still in an experimental phase as we are witnessing a

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generation shift in the public as well as in the third sector. Based on empirical evidence, we gather that all the necessary political characteristics of NAs—trustworthiness, accountability, legitimacy—are present or developing but the threats widely discussed in contemporary theoretical debates are noticeable also. To balance these extremes we need more experience in urban governance practices regarding how to learn better from the general public.

Acknowledgements

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Systemic Constellations in Spatial Planning Processes. A Method to Visualise Questions of Power and Cultural Peculiarities?

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Coming from a systemic point of view, systemic constellations focus on the complex interplay of different elements in order to come to a better understanding of the whole system. Spatial planning, which involves complex decision-making in an uncertain environment, is eventually able to profit from such a different methodology. In this context, the aim of the article is to implement systemic constellations as method for spatial research in two different ways: first, to visualise questions of power in planning processes, and, second, to visualise cultural influences in planning processes. The article concludes that the method of systemic constellations serves to visualise questions of power and is able to highlight important differences at a glance, even though this method does not meet all of the scientific requirements academia asks for. The specific contribution is that this method will be able to enrich the dialogue between theory and practice for a daily use, to make complex problems clearly visible and easier to handle.

Keywords: spatial planning; interactions; systemic constellations; questions of power; planning culture.

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Analysing spatial planning processes as planning practices

Defining spatial planning by planning practices is not a very new and innovative approach in planning theory, but, nevertheless, these debates about a practice-oriented perspective on spatial planning is currently being discussed vividly at least in the European scientific community (e.g. Lord, 2014; Alexander, 2016; Davoudi, 2015; *practical turn* in social sciences). Following Campbell's definition – that the 'idea of planning is premised on the expectation that through intervention and action better space and place-based outcomes can be achieved than would otherwise be the case' (Campbell, 2012, p. 393) – the focus of spatial planning processes lays in interventions and actions; that is to say, practices with respect to how planners (and other stakeholders) interact. In a multi-level and multi-stakeholder approach, the coordination and consideration of diverging interests and land-uses are the core tasks of spatial planning, so as to come to an integrated future perspective. So, planning can be seen as a form of complex decision-making in an uncertain environment (Mitchell, 2005). Integrating all spatial demands can be seen as a creative process for structuring a mosaic of different layers for optimum interplay. The challenge is to accept the complexity of these highly polyrational steering processes and unpredictable outcomes for future development. As Rittel and Webber (1973) stated in their theory of wicked problems in spatial planning, policy problems cannot be conclusively described because they refer to public goods that have no objective definition of equity. Therefore, what is called a good-practice-example only fits in one specific context and can become obsolete if applied to other cases. The results are therefore dependent on particular circumstances and interpretations, are specific to certain situations, and don't follow a unique logic (Healey, 2009; Othengrafen & Reimer, 2013; Reimer, 2012, p. 29). The incontestable aspect of this is that planning processes are highly context-bound, to the extent that they call for individual solutions and open process designs; as Driessen et al. (2012; p. 145) claim, the 'extent of multi-actor, multi-level governance determines variation in the perception of problems and solutions'. In this sense, this contribution tries to go beyond universal theories in planning to overcome universalism without falling in the trap of simple particularism. Therefore, with the method of systemic constellations, borders of different disciplines are explored and critical reflections about its implementation in spatial planning are made to rethink of scholarship and practice.

Here, the approach of planning cultures comes into play. The cultural dimension focuses explicitly on these diversified planning practices, putting values and norms and self-perceptions in the foreground of the analyses of spatial planning. From a theoretical point of view, the approach of a cultural perspective on planning represents a shift from focussing on rational aspects of planning (e.g. instruments, legal frameworks) to highlighting cultural influences, underlying assumptions, or the established culture in what and how processes are implemented in practice (Levin-Keitel & Sondermann, 2015). Undoubtedly, theoretical thoughts as well as practical experiences are of mutual benefit for the purposes of reflection, for a deeper understanding of planning processes, for questioning the system itself, or for stating different ways in which to reach the goals. The benefit of their interplay lays in the creation of win-win situations and common issues on which to engage in a mutual reflection that enriches each party. In this article, the approach of planning cultures is used as specific lens, through which planning practices can be seen and analysed. But, planning cultures are complex, omnipresent and, accordingly, hard to identify analytically (for further details on the cultural perspective on planning see Knieling & Othengrafen, 2009; Othengrafen, 2010; Sanyal, 2005). With the background of a cultural understanding of planning processes, new methodological approaches need to be implemented in order to make these more or less underlying influences visible.

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In the fields of psychology, business, and the organisational sciences the method of systemic constellations is used for the analysis and visualisation of highly complex, interacting connections within a system. This systemic approach comes out of a constructivist philosophical attitude (Watzlawick et al., 1974) and requires awareness of and reflection on the perceptions and socially constructed realities of multiple stakeholders (Kopp & Huemann, 2014).

In this article, the method of systemic constellations is introduced in spatial planning in two different areas. On the one hand, to visualise questions of power in every-day planning practices, where formal hierarchies and distributions of power only cover half of the story, and where aspects of informal power and the real use of power characterises planning practices in a crucial way. On the other hand, and here the cultural dimension of planning is more important, the method is used to visualise (cultural) self-perceptions in their specific interplay, the so called process-paradigm (Galler & Levin-Keitel, 2016) with its inherent learning processes. The guiding research questions of the article are:

- Methodological questions: How does the method of systemic constellations work? Which assumptions and procedural steps have to be followed?
- Ways of implementation: To what extent are systemic constellations able to visualise questions of power in planning practice? Or, with another focus, is the method suitable for focusing on cultural peculiarities?
- Benefits: And why is the implementation of the systemic constellation approach interesting for the analysis of spatial planning processes? Where can future fields of application be identified?

To answer these questions, the following section provides a general overview of the understanding of spatial planning as planning practices and presents, by introducing the debate on planning culture, a theoretical concept focussing especially on the high context-bound and case-specific orientations and values of planning practices. Following this concept of planning cultures, it will be evident that a methodology leading to these underlying assumptions, the actors' self-perceptions, or their interactions in terms of power in every day's planning practice is not yet worked-out well. Then, in the second section, the characteristics of the method of systemic constellations are highlighted in order to understand how this method works and what exactly can be shown by this method. Further, the implementation of this method in the field of spatial planning is considered. To what extent is it possible to visualise planning practices, and especially questions of power and the characteristic interplay of cultural peculiarities? Finally, in the last section, the attempt to implement systemic constellations in spatial planning is critically reconsidered.

Characteristics of the systemic constellation approach

Systemic constellations are often described as a psychological method frequently used in consulting activities (e.g. family or institutional constellations) due to its ability to make a system and its single elements (actors) visible and to clarify their position, role and self-perception (von Schlippe & Schweitzer, 2007). The method is able to visualise manifestations and peculiarities of the whole system and its interdependencies between single, highly complex parts. Therefore, it is crucial to understand individual positions and patterns, with all of their abilities, capacities, meanings, assets, and functions (Wade, 2004). Having been used in family therapy for the last 20 years, nowadays constellations are increasingly used by businesses for analysing complex decision situations (Birkenkrahe, 2009, p. 126ff; Whittington, 2012). Following Birkenkrahe (2009), the 'method is used in the sense of relating

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several different empirical observations of phenomena […] to each other, consistent with fundamental theory, but not directly derived from theory' (Birkenkrahe, 2009, p. 126f).

The literature review shows relatively few scientific studies and not much by way of theoretical model building with respect to this method, but many more contributions have been made by practitioners in order to advance further applications of the method – that is to say, it is an approach much more promoted in practice (Stresius, 2006).

Systemic constellations create a spatial representation of an issue and are a practical, reflective way of illuminating dynamics in relational systems (Whittington, 2012; Birkenkrahe, 2009). Organisational constellations are representations of organisational systems of any kind – this includes a company, a country, a government, or even a temporary working group. The term system is used here in the broad sense of the term, even including open systems, where neither the number of the single elements nor their role or function within the system is formalised or enclosed. The system, as a background to the interplay between different elements, is open to new influences, other elements, elementary changes, or abrupt modifications (Schwing & Fryszer, 2010, p. 176; Assländer, 2013). Schwing and Fryszer (2010; p. 22) have pointed out that the term system serves, like every other term, as a construction to aid our ability to orient ourselves in the world. The reasons for implementing systemic perspectives are the urgent need to handle the enormous complexities of today's existence, without continuing the sectionalising and the fragmentising of deeply connected issues. Today's challenges consist of more than just the simple understanding of single parts, disciplines or fields, but require the reintegration of knowledge and detailed information in order to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying complexities. The method of systemic constellations is interpreted as a 'tool for the meta-analysis of a social system' (Birkenkrahe, 2009, p. 127), which is particularly suited for the analysis of complex interactions in the field of management and culture, leading to tailor-made solutions (Birkenkrahe, 2009).

Methodical steps of systemic constellations

The common idea of systemic constellations, in any field of implementation, is the observation and analysis of interactions between the actors and the parts of a system to find out how they are interrelated (Kopp & Huemann, 2015, p. 236). Typically, this is done via a spatial representation of orders, relationships, hierarchies, dependencies, or communication patterns (Kopp & Huemann, 2014). Using representatives serves to visualise these single elements within the system and, additionally, their inter-connectivity. Representatives can either be persons or figurines, the former is more often used in management constellations and the latter is seen as potentially useful for its implementation in spatial planning processes.

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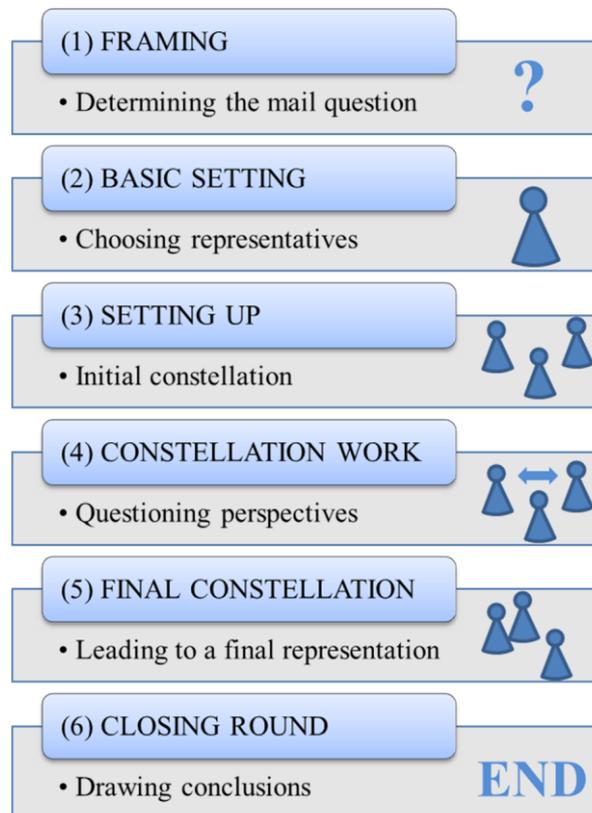
Figure 1: Generalised Steps of a systemic constellation (own illustration, based in parts on Birkenkrahe, 2009; Rosselet et al, 2007; Weber, 2000).

In the following, the different steps of a systemic constellation are explained (see Figure 1, based in parts on Birkenkrahe, 2009; Rosselet et al, 2007; Weber, 2000):

(1) **Framing:** At the very beginning of a systemic constellation, the main question of the constellation has to be defined. The set up question can vary, from being about very precise questions, reflecting, for instance, aspects of the planning process, to questions about more abstract, theoretical-conceptual issues (Whittington, 2012). Systemic constellations of precise planning processes can focus on everything from maps of case studies, to analysing complex interacting systems or planning styles, to understanding the actors' perspectives on conflict situations and dilemmas and their complex interplay. More theoretical issues can be addressed by focussing, for instance, on the most important influences on the organisational culture.

(2) **Basic setting:** Afterwards, adequate types of representatives have to be chosen. As already mentioned, this article focuses on figurines as representatives (e.g. wooden figurines or game chips) to set up a three-dimensional representation (Varga von Kibed & Sparrer, 2000, p. 13).

(3) **Setting up:** Every systemic constellation is set up by a facilitator, a person trained in systemic thinking and who is able to scrutinise the issue-holder (via circularly questions, see Schlippe & von Schweitzer 2007, p. 138). Apart from the facilitator, a client or a person who wants to set up a constellation is needed (further called issue-holder), who contributes with specific knowledge and content with respect to the set up question. The constellation can be done from diverse perspectives: actors and groups of actors set themselves up interactively, single actors set up their (socially constructed) perspective on the process, third party persons (such as a researcher) set up constellations from an outside perspective etc. One of the first considerations is the definition of the boundaries of the system; that is to say, the important factors and elements that characterize the system (Rosselet et al, 2007, p. 194). Then, the

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first representative is placed – on, for instance, the table –, his orientation is reflected on, discussed, and corrected where necessary, and a second representative is placed in relation to the continuously evolving picture. That is how an initial constellation is built.

(4) **Constellation work:** Starting from the initial constellation, the positions and orientations of all representatives are in a constant state of flux, until their positions are justified in a verbal-argumentative way and are made to fit in the overall scene. Having found a position for all the relevant influences, actors and groups of actors, the whole scenery/constellation is interpreted. At that point, it is possible to use the constellation to play out different alternative scenarios or relationships (Birkenkrahe, 2009, p. 131; Rosselet et al, 2007, p. 197f).

(5) **Final constellation:** The series of constellations leads to a final constellation, which either points out the ways the chosen system works with its interconnected parts or, makes visible different scenarios and their main elements for future change. It is important, that the facilitator gives the client enough freedom and structure to develop this final constellation.

(6) **Closing round:** The closing round is important for reflecting on what has been visualised and to return to personal general conclusions.

Implementing systemic constellations in spatial research activities

The implementation of this method in spatial planning can be seen as a manifestation and continuation of the well-established actor-centred perspective of planning processes. It follows the logic of diverse actors and groups of actors being part of the planning process (Nuissl & Heinrichs, 2011). The methodology is inspired by its application in the field of organisational sciences (Birkenkrahe, 2009; Wade, 2004; Burchardt, 2015; Weber, 2000; Müller-Christ, 2013). Particularly in business constellations, the systemic constellation approach is a seen as a 'solution-focused process, which helps leaders of organisations to identify the complex, often informal, relationships and inter-dependencies within their organisation and to develop a deeper understanding about the underlying dynamics in a very time- and cost-efficient manner' (Burchardt, 2015, p. 101). Spatial planning, seen as an attempt to steer complex spatially significant demands and effects, is strongly characterised by uncertainties. So the question arises in what ways spatial planning may profit from a systemic point of view. Systemic constellations, as a constructivist and systemic method, focus on diverse interpretations, socially constructed individual and common patterns, and their interrelations. The implementation of this method in spatial planning could make it possible to indicate these aspects in the planning processes and to visualise them.

Apart from being a method to simply visualise spatial planning processes, systemic constellations can also be used as a method to show individual/organisational patterns and perspectives. The implementation in research activities are able to show, compare and analyse the perceptions of different actors and their unique logics and guiding-principles of their future behaviour.

In spatial research two different methodical applications seem to be promising:

- **As a method in expert interviews:** The interviewees set up a situation or planning process via representatives – for example, along their distribution of power. A facilitator leads the constellation by reflecting the issue-holder. As a result of the many interviews a whole set of constellations can be made, which can be compared, interpreted and analysed by the researcher in order to point out the actors' individual or organisational perceptions (for a research study using this design, see Ruppert, 2000).

- **As a method of the researcher:** The researcher uses this method to structure the results and to get an overview of key components and their interrelations. Here, as well, a facilitator is needed to question the positions and interventions made by the researcher. In this context, systemic constellations aims at the reduction of complexity and can, for instance, be used to create scenarios of future developments.

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In the context of PhD-research about urban riverscapes and their local planning cultures, systemic constellations have been transferred and used for spatial planning research. The method has been used as a method for the researcher, based on previous data collection, in order to visualise and conceptualise the research results. The constellation has been led by Anne Ritzinger, a systemic facilitator and spatial planner. The constellation has been set up in the form of a third party perspective on the planning processes, without continuative feedback from planning practice. Characteristic for planning processes in urban riverscapes are various administrative and political actors, actors from the economic sector and civil society, with their diverging logics of action (e.g. environmental protection, water management, market-oriented interests) and possibilities of exerting influence (e.g. by different instruments or financial funding) (Biswas, 2004; Hartmann & Spit, 2014; Wiering & Immink, 2006). Recognising the city as an expression of the society and its needs, urban riverscapes seem to be nowadays a product of complex societal negotiation processes on the local level. These negotiation processes are crucial for planning and implementation in everyday life and principally determine the local planning culture. Starting from this theoretical-conceptual framework of planning cultures, the difficulty of capturing, analysing and indicating this complexity of cultural imprints, without it becoming a pure analysis of single components, becomes evident. Two constellations have been set up to visualise and check the first results on aspects of power and on local planning culture, for two case studies. One constellation includes the analysis of the actors' interrelations and their division of power in every-day practice. The other constellation served to identify key actors and their self-perceptions and potential role in the process. All constellations have been set up on paper, with quite different representations being used to display blatant differences at a glance.

Visualising questions of power in planning processes

The first constellations targeted questions of power beyond institutionalised claims of power and official hierarchies in two case studies (case study 1 and case study 2). Apart from having (institutionalised) power, the question aims to understand who is using power in a certain planning process and who is not (even if the actor could use his or her power). So, some parallels to the organisational and business sciences can be observed. There, organisations are compared to an iceberg: the tip of the iceberg is called the formal aspects of the organisation – in the case of spatial planning, the official hierarchies and institutionalised power – and the hidden rest of the iceberg, the much bigger part under the water's surface, is seen as the informal aspects of an organisation – in planning processes, the real use of power (Ruppert, 2000, p. 156). But how should one illustrate different aspects of power in a systemic constellation? Here are some basic considerations concerning the representatives' designs and positions:

(1) Single actors, groups of actors, or influencing factors – that is to say, representatives – can vary according to their size. For the following examples the size of the representative symbolises their formal power in the planning process, their quasi-institutionalised power – e.g. through hierarchies, instruments, or financial background. Therefore, the differences in size illustrate relational differentiations, though not based on definitive numbers calculated via statistics.

(2) The representative's position in the constellation symbolises the use of power in planning practice. This means, the more centrally the representatives are situated, the more important they are to the process, the more power they have in the planning process (which they use actively).

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(3) The interrelation of the single representatives stands for their common ground: a small distance stands for close cooperation, a big distance symbolises hardly any cooperation or common interests, fought out with different forms of power.
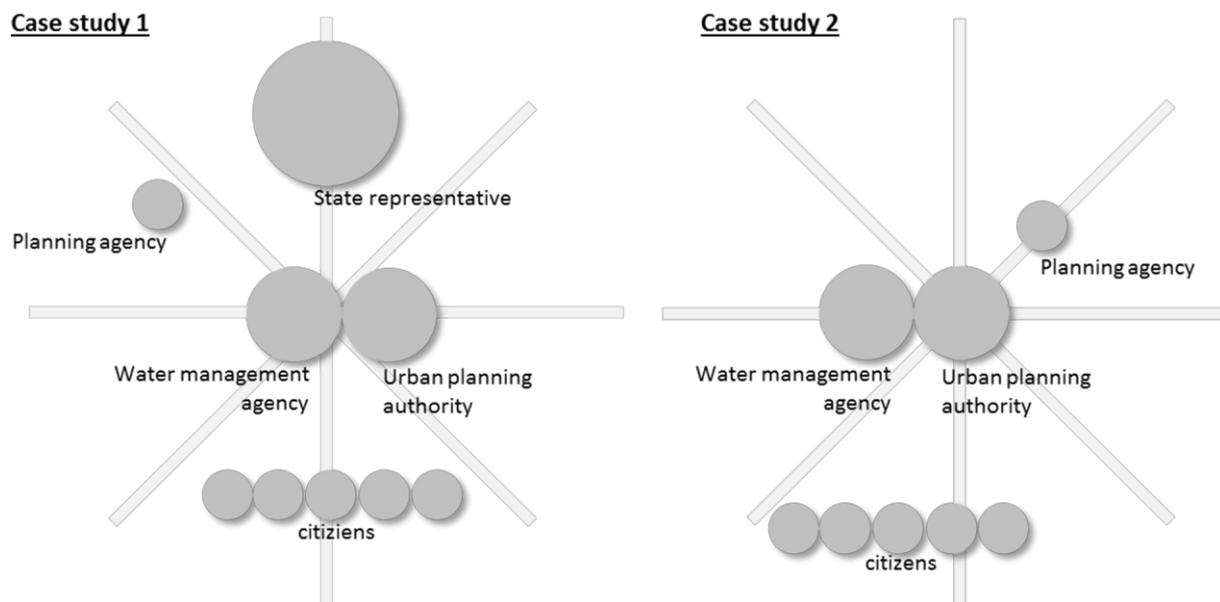

Figure 2: Two systemic constellations (case study 1 and case study 2) visualising formal and informal aspects of power (own illustration).

Analysing both constellations of case study 1 and case study 2 from a comparative perspective, a few thoughts on how the constellations has been set up can be drawn:

(1) All representatives in the two case studies are identical in size; the water management agency as well as the urban planning department, the citizens and the planning agency involved; all are shown in the same diameter. This is based on the identical legal framework, as the water management agency and the urban planning authority are equipped with similar legal competencies in developing urban riverscapes in both case studies. All of them possess formal power through procedural guidelines and legal frameworks. Analogously, in both case studies the involved planning agencies possess less influence and power, as they are simply instructed to realise tasks from one of the major players. In case study one?, another actor appears, the state representative, officially leading the whole planning process equipped with very powerful instruments, and therefore has the biggest circle diameter.

(2) The position of the single actors and groups of actors within the constellation represents their use of power in planning practices, the more centrally the representatives are placed, the more power and influence they have:
In case study 1 it becomes apparent, that the water management agency has a strong influence on the process, as its position is quite central, because all the planning activities are coordinated there. The urban planning authority is quite near to the centre of the constellation as well and participates in a lot of decisions and discussions. The real distribution of power between planning agencies and citizens ought to be considered as equal, both are integrated in the planning process, both use their strategic orientation to influence decisions and discussions, and both are integrated in the process at an early stage. The state representative is quite far off the centre, because they hardly use their formal power, only in cases of severe conflicts.
In case study 2, the lead management is in the hand of the urban planning authority, and they indeed use this power to steer the process (this explains its central position). The water

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management agency is much less involved than in the first case study, but is actively engaged in their core competencies and a strong partner in the process (they realise their own measures in the urban riverscape). The involved planning agency has comparatively much influence and power, because certain (strategic) decisions were transferred to them (by the urban planning authority).

(3) Their position vis-à-vis each other, and therefore the interrelations and constellations of the single actors, groups of actors and organisations, also varies in both representations. Both systemic constellations are pretty much the same in terms of the interrelation between the water management agency and the urban planning authority: they stand next to each other in close solidarity at the centre of the processes.

In case study 1, the state representative is placed exactly above the two organisations, as umbrella of their cooperation. As already mentioned, the state representatives are formally given a lot of power, which is not used in every-days planning practice. The planning agency is placed at a half-distance to the state representative, a bit more oriented to the water management agency. The reasons for that lay in the administrative organisation, as the water management agency is the main contact person for them and defines the content of their contract.

In case study 2, the planning agency works in closer cooperation with the urban planning authority, basically steering their integration. This is the reason why their position is closer to the urban planning authority than to the water management agency.

Visualising cultural peculiarities like a (cultural) process paradigm

The second field of implementation in spatial planning is tied to the before-mentioned cultural perspective of planning practices. The aim, which is to identify and visualise the local specific planning cultures of a planning process via the actors' self-perceptions and their specific interplay, seems to be much more demanding, as it is based on much 'softer' indicators. With strong bonds to the cultural sciences, the theory is based on a change of perspective with regards to (planning) practice (Othengrafen, 2012). The focus is on the structural interrelations – for instance, how settings, values, interpretations and ways of thoughts and behaviours or procedures are constituted. The differences and cultural diversity demonstrate the wealth of interpretations, the influence of traditions, the range of self-perceptions and their consequences for a collaborative planning process (Ernste, 2012; Reimer & Blotevogel, 2012). The debates within planning culture theory are quite heterogeneous, based on the idea of including cultural impact factors in analytical frameworks, with the aim of coming closer to everyday planning practices (Ernste, 2012, Reimer & Blotevogel, 2012, Sanyal, 2005, Levin-Keitel & Sondermann, 2014).

But how can these cultural influences be visualised in systemic constellations? Two principles for implement the technique have been determined:

(1) Representatives' sizes and fragmentations symbolise the different self-perceptions of each actor, group of actors or organisation. The specific cultural aspect of these interactions and constellations is to regard different actor groups as organisations with an explicit organisational culture. The term 'organisation' is used here in a very broad sense – an organisation is a group of actors more or less institutionalised, ranging from the local planning authority or water management agencies to single-purpose citizens' initiatives or clubs and associations. Organisational culture denotes an organisation's values and norms, its specific processes of learning and socialisation as inter-individual patterns, its self-conception and game rules. These are based on invisible concepts, such as values and norms, and lead to the formation of common patterns of orientation that end up in the central premises of action, the development of shared informal rules, and the characterisation of the self-conception of an organisation (Schein 1999).

(2) Visualising and analysing the interrelations between the single actors in terms of learning processes and a common process paradigm seems to be even more complicated. The so-

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called process-paradigm is the way different actors and their specific perceptions, values, and assumptions come together in different timelines, with diverse outputs and established routines, as well as the formation of common learning processes (see Galler & Levin-Keitel, 2016). The weaker this planning paradigm is built, the weaker will be the shared mental model of cooperation that is developed and the bigger will be the representative's distance in the constellation. A strong process-paradigm is then visualised by hardly any distance between the representatives.
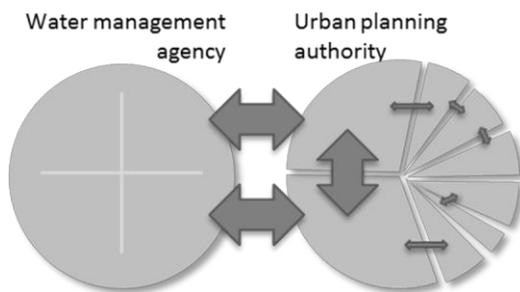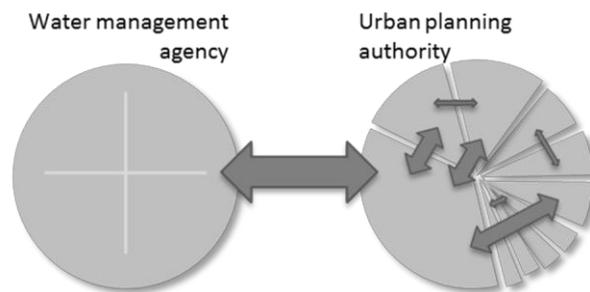
Figure 3: Two systemic constellations visualising the self-perceptions in their interplay, forming the process-paradigm (own illustration).

Using the above principles to set up constellations of the two case studies, some explications and information are needed:

(1) Regarding the actors' self-conception, the researcher choses representatives with identical sizes. Both institutions involved – the water management agencies and the urban planning authorities – are characterised as strong organisations with large influence on the planning processes.
The water management agencies, as sectoral planning agencies in both case studies, possess high self-confidence, further strengthened by numerous developments and its versatile competence on all levels. This importance was reinforced by additional tasks – e.g. by the water framework directive and the national/federal implementation (Moss, 2009). The reorganisation of the water management agencies led to a very modern, open-minded and innovation-friendly authority; on the one hand, acting in area-based teams on all levels and scales and, on the other hand, in thematic expert teams transferring new knowledge and experiences directly at all levels. This is symbolised by the cross in the representation, standing for an organisation divided in different sectors with a big emphasis on bringing the issues together again.
The urban planning authorities involved are much more fragmented and usually do not speak with one voice. As the authorities are not acting like one organisation with one organisational culture and one obvious target to implement, the self-perceptions varied significantly (as they also do in the two case studies). The urban planning authorities were characterised by a hybrid situation between high claims of coordination, the evaluation of different demands in a cultural context of more than one organisation (department), paired with weak instruments and no implementation possibilities. Their self-confidence depends very much on the organisational leadership, the functions and tasks they occupy, as well as their freedom of decision-making and their willingness to be involved. The differences with respect to the urban planning authorities' representatives in the two case studies are based on the inter-cooperation of their departments. In case study 1 there were two departments involved in the development of urban riverscapes, and they were in communication with the water management agency. Other departments were involved to the extent that this had to happen,

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In case study 2, a lot of other departments were involved in the whole process; it was even crucially influenced by political statements, positioning and strategies. Therefore, the inner structure of the urban planning department is highly fragmented and communication is one of the major tasks. This is symbolised by the circle consisting of a lot of pieces in the inner structure, tied up with the communication structures (arrows).

(2) The last explanations concerning the self-conception of the urban planning authorities already led over to the analysis of the process-paradigm. To simplify the constellations, in both case studies, only the most important key actors are chosen for the visualisation of how they work and learn during the process. In a first conclusion, the process-paradigm varied significantly in both case studies. While in case study 1 the common learning processes led to routinized cooperation, in case study 2 the process and the establishment of a joint cooperation was an important first step.

In case study 1 the planning culture or the joint process-paradigm was developed on a high level, there were strong connections between the single actors, even if they did not agree on one opinion. This is demonstrated by the diverse characteristics of the system: the design of the interfaces within the system, the joint learning processes being initiated and supported, as well as the evolving benefits of the entire cooperation. In the constellation, this is demonstrated by big arrows between the most important actors and a high proximity between the water management agency and the urban planning authority.

In case study 2 the urban planning authority was much more occupied by inner-administrative cooperation, shown by the quantity and thickness of the arrows in the circle. For the process-paradigm this means that the involved actors are less able to refer to traditions and routines of cooperation and the aim is to sensitise all of them in order to come to a joint vision of how the urban riverscapes can be developed. Here it is important to know about the different assumptions, values and wishes and to accept the characteristics and specifics needed to create a joint organisation. Here, the relatively weak process paradigm becomes obvious, with a less defined joint perspective on the cooperation. The interfaces between the urban planning authority and the water management agency are to be developed in detail before every joint action or implementation.

Systemic constellations and what they are able to do – conclusions

What conclusions can be drawn from the implementing of systemic constellations in spatial planning? How fruitful is its implementation in the field of spatial planning and where does it lead? The key question is whether the implementation of this methodological approach can lead to a different understanding of planning processes and their systemic background. The two cases of implementation allow us to draw some conclusions.

It is a very adaptable method.

First, the method is very adaptable in the application field. The first constellation, visualising questions of power in planning processes, stands for a more structured and, what one might call, well comprehensible approach. The second example, with much softer influence factors and a more interpretational scope, is, admittedly, a bit trickier to follow. But, nevertheless, both implementations succeeded in presenting a scheme of the involved system. Reflecting on these two examples, the limits and shortcomings of systemic constellations become visible: Apparently, the interrelations of actors are not accurately calculated, so the distance of the actors to each other is not measurable in figures, the size of the circles is not corresponding to a calculated result and so on. In consequence, systemic constellations have to be considered as soft method to visualise interplays and networks within a group of actors in a relational way, not in absolute figures. In contrast to e.g. the method of actor-network-methodology, where absolute figures are calculated, systemic constellations don't build up apparent precision about how to calculate human interrelations.

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Conclusions regarding the first implementation.

The constellations made to visualise questions of power highlight important differences at a glance. Especially comparing both case studies, it becomes immediately clear that there seems to be a big difference in the actors' possessing power and how the actors are using their possessed power. Of course, the issue-holder has to be aware of these differences in advance (as the issue-holder formulates the constellation question), but in fact it seems to be a useful method for transporting and communicating the results.

Conclusions regarding the second implementation.

The implementation of the effort to visualise cultural aspects the planning processes seems to be more imprecise than the first example. Due to the subject of culture, no definitive categories, indicators or outputs can be defined and declined. Both constellations need a lot of data collection and analysing to be done beforehand, the constellations still need a high level of interpretation, and there will always be critiques about the relativeness of this approach. Although all of these critiques have their validity, in some fields or disciplines this might be a suitable method for showing, for instance, the cultural influences on planning processes or the important impact of organisational cultures in their interrelations. Perhaps this is also a question of disciplinary cultures, which methods are used in which field of science; but most likely in the academic field of spatial planning this method is not objective enough (although this reflects a broader scientific-theoretical discussion).

Quick diagnostics for complex decision-making.

One benefit of the implementation of the method is to concentrate on the available information in order to come to a reasonable solution. Often, the issue-holder comes to surprising solutions by reflecting and structuring his or her own thoughts in accordance with the facilitator. The visualisation – that is to say the constellation – is an excellent way to reflect the own decision path. As a surplus, the method is easy to handle and the constellation is done in a very short time (compared with other systemic approaches in science).

Two other ways of using these constellations have just been touched on briefly: using constellations for different alternatives or scenarios, as well as using them as a method in expert interviews.

With respect to the former, the work with systemic constellations makes it possible to reflect on alternative scenarios. The direct feedback, together with the opportunity to check the effectiveness of specific scenarios within the system, can lead to further development and understanding of the planning processes. Systemic constellations serve to prove hypotheses and theories, to illustrate the impact of research fields or parameters on complex systems. 'The simulation is then a possibility to play out different alternatives of a scenario, or of relationships. In comparison with other intervention methods used in the change management area, constellations have been shown to yield results faster, and often lead to more sustainable results' (Birkenrahe, 2009, 131).

For the latter, using constellations in expert interviews, Ruppert (2000) has made some notable research results. Using 90 constellations, he stated that constellations of different persons in an organisation are consistent (meaning that they show not only personal perspectives, but a common perspective on the issues) and that underlying organisational

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structures and patterns become visible (proofed by interviews). So, for the field of spatial planning this means, in conclusion, that using constellations as a supporting method in interviews seem to be fruitful. Even if this method does not meet all of the scientific requirements, the potential lays in the implementation with respect to the interplay between academia and planning practices. The expected contribution is that this method will be able to enrich the dialogue between theory and practice for a daily use, to make complex problems clearly visible and easier to handle.

Acknowledgements

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The City as a Witness of Social and Political Changes. Analysis of Post-war Reconstruction of Minsk as a Soviet Urban Model

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In contemporary urban studies, the physical reconstruction of cities is achieving a new dimension, which is reflected in the urban resilience that is expressed as the physical, social, cultural and economic capability of urban structures to respond to anthropogenic or natural catastrophes. In this paper, we study the reconstruction processes of Minsk, Belarus, which was almost completely destroyed and rebuilt as a new city after World War II, in order to understand in which way specific social and political conditions may have influence on the physical rebuilding of urban and architectural form in "devastated" cities. We based our analysis on study of Master Plans from different periods. In particular, we focused on the Master Plan 1946 analysing its specific characteristic and linking them to political and social circumstances of post-war period. We conclude that Minsk was reconstructed as a model for a new Soviet city that brings us to a question: could the Soviet architecture and urbanism fill the void in Minsk's urban heritage?

Keywords: devastation; reconstruction strategies; Minsk; Soviet urban model; Soviet urban heritage.

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Political dimension of urban reconstruction

Devastated cities do not only forfeit their urban structure but also may risk their identity, urban history and collective memory. Regardless of the reasons for devastation, one cannot assume reconstruction is exclusively a recovery of physical structure. Due to the demolition of urban and architectural components, social and cultural aspects lose their physical base, which gives them a scenario to be expressed within and helps them obtain their material form. Thus, the level of urban resilience has a significant weight in the reconstruction process and influences the further development and functioning of cities, which have suffered catastrophes. According to Kates and Pijawaka (1977, pp. 2-3):

> Disaster recovery can be divided into four overlapping periods.
>
> The emergency period is the time in which the community copes with problems caused by the extent of the destruction and the number of dead, injured, homeless and missing. Normal social and economic activities are disrupted […].
>
> The restoration period is marked by the patching up of public utilities, housing, commercial and industrial structures which can be restored, and return to relatively normal social and economic activities […].
>
> During the replacement reconstruction period, the city's capital stock is rebuilt to pre-disaster levels, and social and economic activities return to pre-disaster levels or higher […].
>
> The commemorative, betterment and developmental reconstruction period serves three different, but possibly interrelated functions: to memorialize or commemorate the disaster; to mark the city's post-disaster betterment or improvement; or to serve its future growth and development.

While the first two periods can be characterised as a necessary reaction towards the disaster (war or natural hazard destruction), the third and fourth periods are connected with political and social issues. In other words, the last two periods involve deciding what can be forgotten and what should be recovered. In his PhD thesis Carlos Itriago Pels[1] (2006, p. 60) speaks about the reconstruction period referencing the selectiveness of the post-disaster rebuilding process:

> […] to voluntarily remember or forget, brings us to a field that we call creative memory, which is characterized by the process of selection in a project at the time, which, in turn, leads to old discussions about what needs to be remembered, and therefore what should be forgotten[2].

According to this definition, the reconstruction program does not only propose a simple rebuilding of the former urban structure, but rather undergoes a complex process of selection, which is guided by the political forces at the time. Nevertheless, society also plays an important role in the selection of a reconstruction strategy. As Itriago Pels says: 'after a tragedy a principal need for local communities is to come back to a normal life' (2006, p. 40), which means that the main social and, sometimes even physical needs, are not satisfied (the period of emergency response). The social tension puts political leaders in a challenging

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[1] Independent architect and planner, invited lector at the Graduate School of Design of Harvard University (April, 2011); Department of Landscape Architecture in the Design School of the University of Pennsylvania (April, 2011); the Official Association of Architects of Murcia (November 2011); the Department of Urban and Regional Planning in the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and the UPC Foundation (since 2007).

[2] All non-English quoted texts are translated by the author.

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situation, in which their 'response to an acute crisis' (Vale & Campanella 2005, p. 340) is evaluated by citizens. As Itriago Pels states: 'such events as wars, anthropogenic or natural catastrophes can be significant catalyst for political changes' (2006, p. 37). On the other hand, an appropriate selection of the reconstruction strategy may not only help to rebuild an urban structure and recover the identity of a place, but even cause regional reorganization and a rise in national pride (e.g. Warsaw reconstruction)[3].

In spite of the involvement of all crucial urban aspects (political, economic, social and cultural) into a recovery process, in most cases political regimes play an essential role in the selection and application of a certain reconstructive strategy (ibidem). Independently of their aims, political leaders take responsibility to decide what should be preserved/restored/reconstructed or demolished and built from scratch[4]. Returning to Carlos Itriago Pels' thesis, there are three types of reconstruction strategies (ibidem, p. 57):

> [...] those which aim to be faithful to the legacy of the past (self-referential); those at the opposite end of the spectrum, taking advantage of the destruction to rethink a new city different to its past (refounding) and those strategies which seek a compromise between the obtained inheritance and the desired modernization (emancipatory).

The selection of one regeneration strategy or another depends on the political situation and regime, economic and ideological interests and social influence on the decision making process. At the time, we are aware of the difficulty to relate a particular city to one or another recovery strategy, due to the complexity and local particularities of each place. Even in the case of the refounding strategy, some places, monuments or buildings can be restored from the past.

> It is exceedingly rare that a city is completely relocated in the post-disaster period […]. Buildings, streets, underground utilities, and all manner of social systems (organizations, neighbourhoods, groups, families) are usually patched up or created anew in the previous locale (Haas, Kates & Bowden 1977, xv).

Nevertheless, synthesizing the applied reconstruction methods may help define the recovering strategy and understand their influence on the post-disaster city. In the case of self-referential strategy, we are dealing with the truthful reproduction of a previous urban structure, which in case of successful results, permits to continue a temporarily interrupted urban history and erase a catastrophe from the collective memory. A good example of this strategy are Japanese cities, which during their history have been destroyed numerous times (principally because of natural disasters, except World War II destructions). 'The Japanese rebuilt their cities much the same as they were before (...) this intervention, instead of responding to post-disaster conditions, were often pared-down versions of pre-disaster concepts' (Vale & Campanella 2005, p. 213). Natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunami, typhoons, etc., forced the Japanese population to adapt their reconstruction techniques to the circumstances, which meant raising light constructions, which after a hazard could be easily cleared and reproduced in the same way. Nevertheless, it does not deal only with the truthful physical reproduction of the destroyed urban structure, but also refers to the collective memory recovering the spirit of the place. Furthermore, historically the

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[3] See the explanation of the Warsaw reconstruction process on page 4.
[4] In order to avoid confusion in the words definition we perform their meaning according to the Cambridge dictionary: (i) preservation – the act of keeping something the same or of preventing it from being damaged; (ii) restoration – the act or process of returning something to its earlier good condition or position; (iii) reconstruction – the process of building or creating something again that has been damaged or destroyed.

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reconstruction of Japanese cities was not guided by governance but rather was given to the hands of private sector, who was interested in the speedy reconstruction and functional recovery of their places of residence and recuperation of normal life (Ibidem.). This shows the importance of the issue of who makes the decision on which reconstruction strategy should be applied, and for whom.

Talking about the re-founding strategy, we are referring to a situation in which the entire city structure is rebuilt without references to the previous urban organization. In this case, the devastation could be understood as an opportunity to not only construct a new urban structure but also a new society. As an example, we can mention China's Tangshan city, which after an earthquake in 1976, which destroyed almost 78 per cent industrial and 95 per cent residential buildings, was rebuilt as a new city. As a response to this horrible natural hazard, the Chinese Communist party rejected any foreign assistance and launched a recovery campaign driven by the idea that '...new and modern are always preferable to ideologically discredited past practices' (Vale & Campanella 2005, p. 348). Another example is Chicago's reconstruction after the 1871 Great Fire, which took advantage of the city's devastation in order to regenerate the urban structure according to the technical achievements (use of fireproof materials such as brick, stone, marble, and limestone, etc.). This led to the creation of the city's own Chicago's school of architecture, characterized by its streamlined style (Vale & Campanella 2005). Thus, in the case of Tangshan, the reconstruction policy was addressed to support the ideology of the ruling party via urban and architectural design, whereas in Chicago, the demolition of the previous structure made converting the city into an urban model possible.

The third strategy is the most common way to reconstruct damaged urban structures that is characterized by a selection process of what should be preserved and what could be demolished; what should be reconstructed and what could be forgotten. The phenomenon of creative memory, in most of cases has a strong connection with current political interests. For instance, in the case of Warsaw, recovery of the post-war city was controlled by the soviet authority, which decided what should be reconstructed according to its ideology (Vale & Campanella 2005). The Warsaw reconstruction illustrates how the political regime influences strategy selection utilizing urban and architectural reconstruction as a tool to reach certain ideological aims. Nevertheless, the predominance of political dimension in the process of urban reconstruction does not neglect the relevance of collective memory that has an important weight in the recovery of devastated cities. In the Warsaw case, the almost absolute destruction of the city's structure and intentions of the soviet administration to implement socialist urban ideas in order to construct 'politically correct architecture and urban design' (Vale & Campanella 2005, p. 137), did not stop the ambition of local communities to '…reinforce and recuperate the lost inheritance' (Itriago Pels 2006, p. 79). This led to a struggle between the 'new format of the city', promoted by the communist party, and recuperation of the old city that represented reestablishment of the national identity (Vale & Campanella 2005). Therefore, the Warsaw recovery process presents a combination of the refounding strategy (promoted by the soviet administration) and self-referential approach (defended by the local community). The Warsaw case presents the application of an emancipatory strategy, when the decision on what is restored and what is demolished depends on the political forces and demonstrates that its '… the spatial rebuilding is a critical political, rather than architectural, issue' (Ibídem. 2005, p. 137). It shows that, despite of the intention of the soviet authority to create a new city, completely forgetting big urban patterns (e.g. location of main streets, urban boundaries and natural systems) is not a simple task (Vale & Campanella 2005).

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Nevertheless, a comparative analysis of the pre-war urban structure of Minsk and a proposal for its reconstruction, demonstrates the possibility of (re)building the city in a different way. The study findings show that the post-war recovery of Minsk is related to the refounding strategy (which is not the most common way to rebuild the cities) making it an interesting case. A review of Minsk's reconstruction program after the II World War helps one understand the ideological circumstances that led to the construction of a completely new city and the reasons of an intentional omission of its previous urban structure.

Minsk as an example of the soviet urban model

Minsk is situated in the geographical centre of the country, it has an area of 348,85 sq. km and a population of 1.943.664 inhabitants; currently it is the capital of Belarus and the most important city in the country. Despite having a long urban history, a complex and well-designed city structure, the city of Minsk has not awoken a huge interest from urban point of view. Nevertheless, in this paper we present Minsk as one of the few studied cases of a dominant new Soviet city emerged after the II World War that deserves special attention in order to explain the Soviet (socialist) urban planning tendency.

Minsk had its maximum development in the post-war period that has reflected in the reconstruction of the almost devastated city embodied in the Master Plan of 1946. The current urban structure of Minsk is composed of three ring roads that define the urban zones by establishing a hierarchical order, which, in turn, depends on the location of the fragments from the city centre. At the same time, the continuous green system is configured by the natural fluvial urban corridors. The self-sufficient urban areas (mostly industrial parks and residential developments) are arranged in accordance with the concentric road system and green structures (Комитет архитектуры и градостроительства Минска 2010; see figure. 1).


RESIDENTIAL AREAS   INDUSTRIAL AREAS   URBAN CENTERS   PUBLIC SERVICES   GREEN AREAS   SPECIAL ZONES
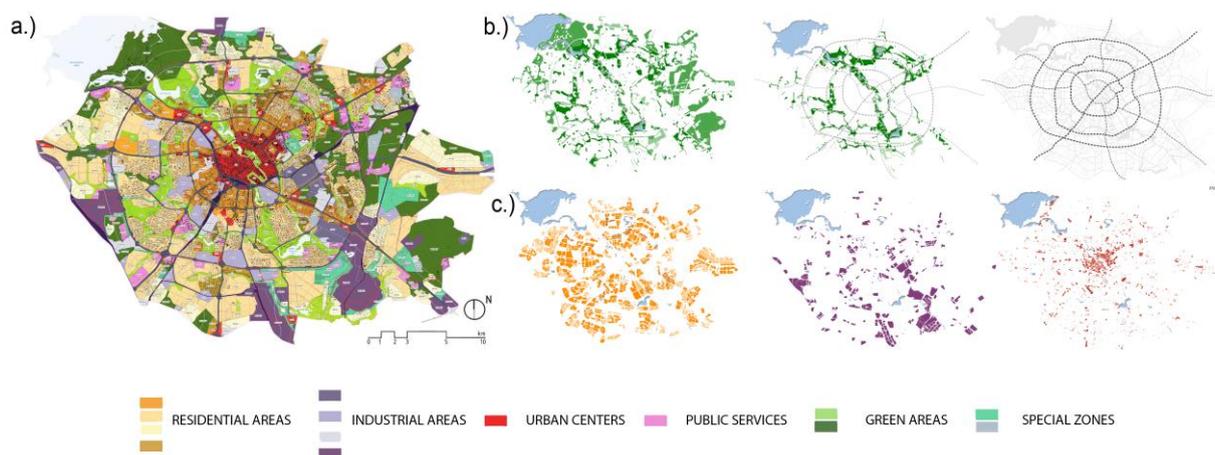
Figure 1. Current urban structure of Minsk: a.) Master Plan 2010; b.) lineal elements: road system and green corridors; c.) functional zoning: residential and industrial fragments and urban centres (Developed by the author on the basis of the Master Plan of Minsk (2010) available at the Institute of Urban Planning of Minsk).

Notwithstanding, the structure of the city has not always had the same character. For this reason, in order to understand the current city, it is necessary to study how this transformation occurred through the analysis of the instruments and processes, which led to

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it. After a brief introduction into the city's growth during the period prior to the II World War, this paper will focuses on the urban programs elaborated after that, which proposed the reconstruction of the city according to the concepts of the Soviet urban planning. Particularly, we will study the Master Plan of 1946, analysing its program and the elements, which radically changed the urban structure and aspect of the city between II World War and today. These elements converted Minsk into an illustrative example of Soviet urban planning, which is captured mostly in its contemporary identity.

Development prior to the II World War

The first notion of Minsk corresponds to the year 1067 in which, Nestor's Primary Chronical[5] described a battle at the Nemiga River after which, the city of Minsk was completely destroyed (Osmolovskiy 1952). Minsk's history begins with the reference to a conflict, which determined the destiny of the city: continuous destructions for reasons of war, trespassing from one country to another, subjugation to different governments and politics. Due to these circumstances, during the pre-war period, the city practically never played an important role, and its cultures and aspect was continuously changing (Klinov 2013). A brief introduction of the city's history will make the conditions under which Minsk was developed before II World War, clear.

By the time Minsk was mentioned for the first time, it found itself caught in a war between two powerful countries of the period: The Principality of Polotsk and the Kievan Rus that continuously fought for the city's control. In the XIII century, during the Mongolian Invasion of Russia[6], the city lost its importance in the development of Slavonic territories and disappeared from historical chronicles. The next mention of Minsk corresponds to its entry into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania[7], which caused an active growth in the city, such that in 1496, it received the Magdeburg rights and in 1565, became the administrative centre of the region. In 1569, due to weak exterior politics, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania arranged a union with the kingdom of Poland. This founded a new country, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth[8]. In this period, there was an intense growth and development within the city, which led to Minsk becoming the economic, cultural and religious centre in the middle of the XVII century. This period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth became the most important steps towards the urban, economic and cultural development of Minsk before the industrial revolution.

However, after a brief peace, a new wave of wars and conquers arrived, moving Minsk to the periphery of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Because of the political and economic

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[5] The Primary Chronicle (often translated into English as Tale of Bygone Years) is a history of Kievan Rus from about 850 to 1110, originally compiled in Kiev about 1113. The work is considered as a fundamental source in the interpretation of the history of the Eastern Slavs.

[6] The Mongol invasion of Russia began in the medieval Rus of Kiev, lasted from 1237 until 1240, precipitated the fragmentation of the principality and influenced the subsequent development of Russian history.

[7] The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a European state from the 12th century until 1795. The duchy later expanded to include large portions of the former Kievan Rus and other Slavic lands, covering the territory of present-day Belarus, Latvia, and Lithuania, and parts of Estonia, Moldova, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine. At its greatest extent in the 15th century, it was the largest state in Europe. It was a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state with great diversity in languages, religion, and cultural heritage

[8] The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, Poland, Kingdom of Poland, after 1791 officially the Commonwealth of Poland, was a dualistic state, a bi-confederation, of Poland and Lithuania ruled by a common monarch, who was both the king of Poland and the grand duke of Lithuania. It was one of the largest and one of the most populous countries of 16th- and 17th-century Europe, with some 1,000,000 km^2 and a multi-ethnic population of 11 million at its peak in the early 17th century.

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crisis within the Commonwealth, the country was divided into the Russian empire and Prussia. It was then, in 1793, that Minsk was placed under Russia's control. From then until the establishment of socialism, the city was part of the Russian empire, developing as a peripheral city in which the only economic activity was artisanal production (Klinov 2013). According to the description of the city in Osmolovskiy's[9] book (1952) practically all buildings were made of wood, the urban structure had no clear character and the organization of urban elements was chaotic. Furthermore, the city did not have sewer or water channelling. There was no existing urban planning; therefore, as with many cities of this time, Minsk grew spontaneously depending on industrial and commercial development (Osmolovskiy 1952). The Russian Revolution led to radical changes in all aspects of life. Urban and architectural practice also suffered revision and restructuring. In addition, important social changes occurred: if in 1897 Minsk had 97 thousand inhabitants, in 1922 the population grew to 102.375 inhabitants, in 1935 it reached about 200.000 and in June 1941 the city had around 300.000 inhabitants. This rapid growth can be explained by rural-urban migration due the industrialization process that led to the increment of the proletariat population. For instance, in 1928 Minsk had 5.000 industrial workers, whereas in 1935 this amount grew to the 20 thousand (Kurkou 2002).

The transformation of Minsk from the peripheral city to the important industrial region in the newly established soviet society is an important point in its urban development. Furthermore, it led to the selection of Minsk in 1921 as a capital of the new BSSR (Belarussian Soviet Socialist Republic) that recurred changes in its urban and architectural aspect (Babkou 2006). However, during the initial period of the establishment of the soviet government, the changes were specific and did not include cities' general structure. In Minsk's case, emblematic buildings[10] were built after the I World War and the restructuring of the city's road system (reorganization of the current urban structure based on orthogonal road network to a concentric system refers to rational and modernist urban concepts) was proposed. In 1926, a draft of the Master Plan was presented, which suggested restructuring the urban system of the city converting it into the concentric model. After this draft, in 1938, the Master Plan was developed and approved, in which emphasis was placed on the road system structure and segregation of the city into new urban zones, which would suit the needs at the time (Linevich 2010). In other words, the objective of Minsk's 1938 reorganization project was to adapt the city to the new soviet society through the establishment of a new urban organization based on modernist ideas and Soviet avant-garde. However, due to the weak economic situation of the Soviet Union, and the start of the II World War, the urban changes were only fulfilled in writing.

In conclusion, in spite of the continuous destructive cycles and the city's reconstruction, Minsk's urban evolution had a lineal and natural character in the pre-war period. That is, the city extended around its historical centre slowly obtaining a traditional urban structure, which represented a system of closed urban blocks configured by an orthogonal road system (figure. 2).

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[9] A Belarusian architect, which in early 50s issued two explicit books about Belarusian architecture and urban planning.
[10] See the Government Palace and the Theatre of Opera and Ballet of the architect Longbard, which until today play a significant role in the urban structure and ideology of the city.
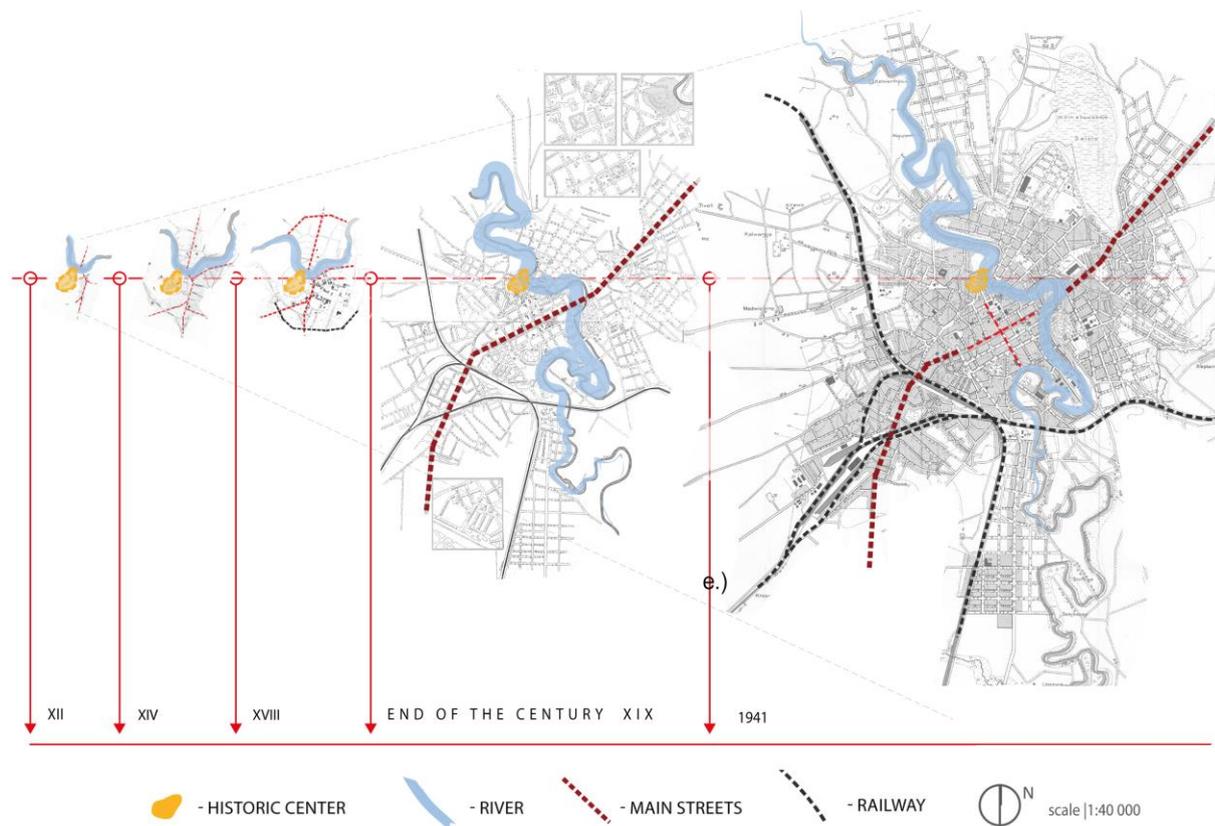
Figure 2. Pre-war (World War II) urban development of the city, from the first mention in the chronicles (XIX c) to the 1941 (developed by the author on the basis of Osmolovskiy 1952).

Devastation during the II World War

During the II World War, many cities were seriously destroyed and in some cases completely devastated. One such case was the city of Minsk, ranked as one of the most devastated cities in Europe (Osmolovskiy 1952). The city suffered most of its destruction during the defensive battles against the German army that started on 25 of June 1941. Nevertheless, on the 28th of June 1941 the German army invaded the city, which led to the four-year occupation of the city's territories. Minsk's liberation by the soviet army started in 1943 and ended in 1944. After the liberation of Minsk, the city was a pile of ruins and rubble. Despite the destruction, because of the city's defence in 1941 during the occupation, there were numerous attacks and bombings in which 5975 residential buildings were destroyed, i.e. 70% of the housing stock, and 80% of the urban infrastructure (Osmolovskiy 1952). The population decreased by 80%. If Minsk had 250-300 thousand inhabitants the pre-war years, in 1944 only 40-50 thousand people survived (mostly because of the population massacre and concentration camps) (Babkou 2006; fig. 3). Destruction data show that the city needed urgent reconstruction. Thus, the work on a recovery plan for the city began. In the year 1944, the Commission for Architecture performed a study on the state of the city and the prospects for recovery. However, due to the numerous demolitions, the decision to build a new city, rather than rebuilding the existing one was made. Some even thought of moving Minsk a couple of miles away to not have to remove the debris of the city (application of the refounding strategy). Relying on the studies performed, and primarily considering ideological

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demands, a sketch master plan (1938), based on proposals made in the early years of the establishment of the Soviet Union, was written. In the sketch plan great intention was set on the construction of a representative city centre, and the following points were made (Linevich 2010):

- Rebuilding of the main pre-war artery of the city, into the main avenue of the post-war city;
- Building of a secondary road, perpendicular to the main avenue as the basic structure of the city centre;
- Building a new central square between the intersections of two main roads, creating a socio-political centre for the city;
- Building of two bypass arteries aimed at turning the city's structure into a concentric urban system;
- Creation of a continuous system of parks along the river Svisloch flood plain, which form a green diameter of the city.

The government approved the project as the starting point for Minsk's reconstruction. In summary, in 1946, a new Master Plan was presented which dramatically transformed Minsk's entire urban structure. The city shifted from having an orthogonal organization into a city with a concentric urban structure.


historical center   river   main street and Lenin square   intact buildings
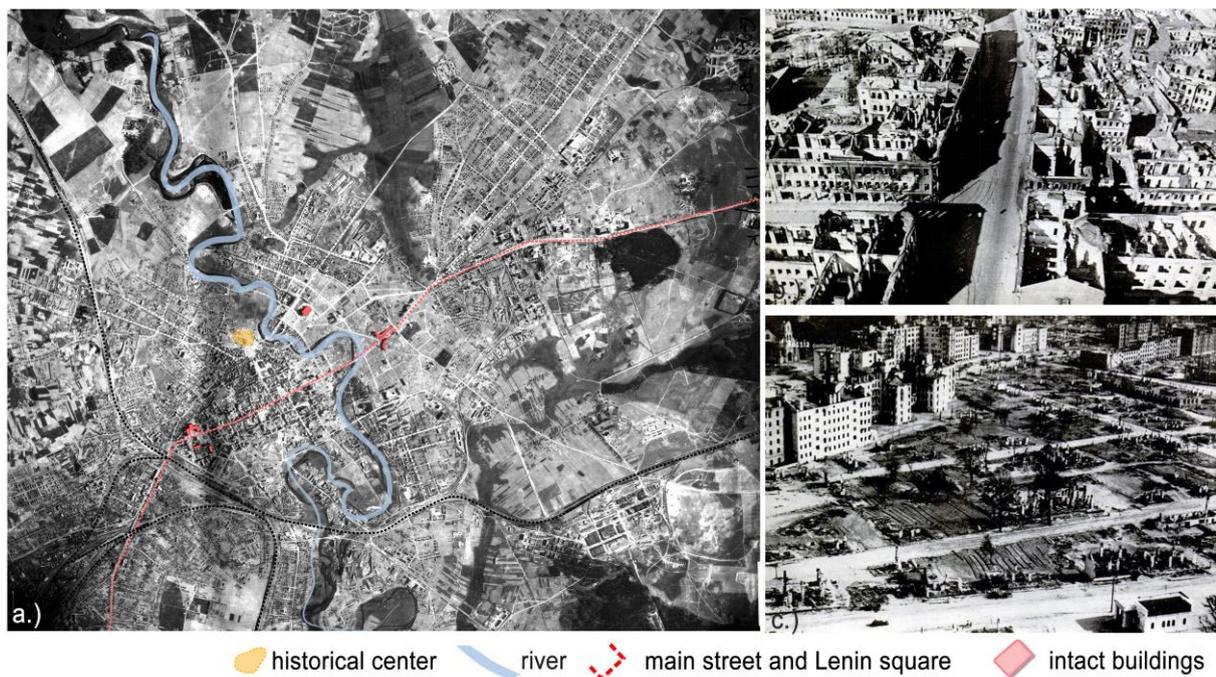
Figure 3. Destruction of Minsk after the II World war; [Available at http://englishrussia.com/, Copyright © 2014 English Russia].

A Modern City

In 1946, the reconstruction plan was an important document in Minsk's urban history. It was a definitive project, which changed the city's image radically, transforming into the *ideal city* from the Soviet urban planning view, which corresponded to that of new cities:

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[…] which were characterized by their extensive arteries, large green areas, the majestic and multiplicity of collective buildings found in central areas, the absence of social segregation and the difference in architecture between the different districts (Fernández 2005).

The urban proposals made in the General Plan have defined the function and development of the city until today. The document established the following points in the city's reconstruction (Borovoy 2004; fig 4):

- Rationalization of the general urban structure, by the conversion of the existing orthogonal system into a concentric system;
- The idea of two perpendicular diameters, the main avenue and the green axis, which would form the architectural and spatial structure of the city;
- The expansion of main radial roads;
- The creation of a system of continuous green corridors;
- Urban zoning of the city: the tertiary uses were located in the centre of the city and the residential and industrial zones were situated in the perimeters;
- Creation and development of the new urban centre.
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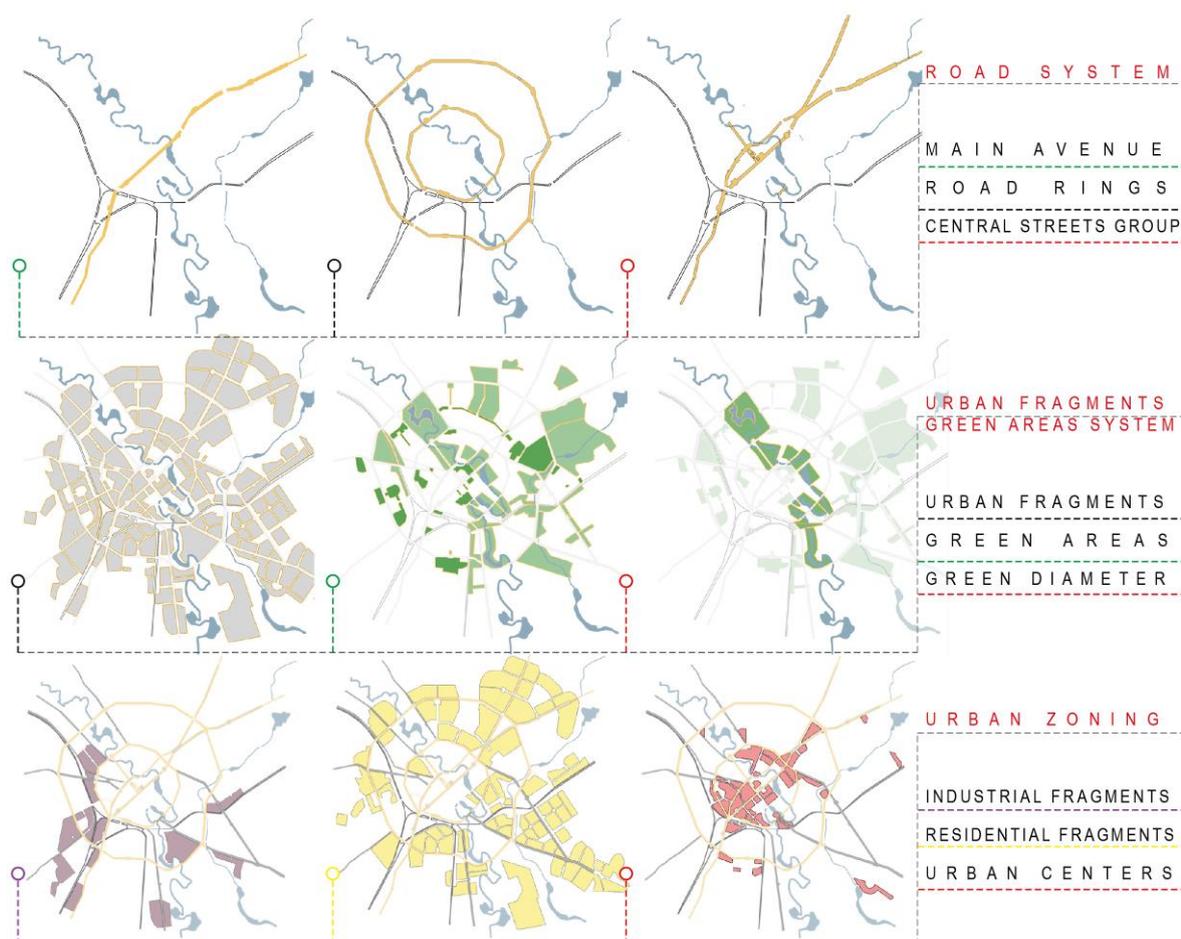
Figure 4. Principal urban elements of the Master Plan for 1946 (developed by the author).

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In other words, these proposals restructured the road system and segregated urban functions. Thus, a concentric urban structure with high road specification and hierarchy and strict zoning by function was set. These features refer to modernist ideas in urban planning, in which the relevance of the rationalization of urban space through the city's division into fragmented urban areas stands out. From the crisis of industrial cities, the primary role of rational urban planning based on the modernist concepts was to improve the quality of urban life through the reorganization of urban structure and creation of universal urban models. The concept of the Modern Movement was an international notion reaching several countries and cultures. In 1925 W. Gropius said: 'Most citizens of a country have the same life and living habits; it is not understood, therefore, why our buildings should not undergo a similar unification to our dresses, shoes, cars…' (in Benevolo 1994, p. 559).

By contrast, post-war soviet urbanism had two primary objectives (Kosenkova 2009):

- Overcoming the economic level of the period prior to the II World War in the first quinquenal plan[11] by reinforcement of the industrial sector, and as a consequence deal with the population increment due to the rural-urban migration;
- Creation of the ideal city, which will hold the socialist ideology through the construction of buildings with a monumental and representative character.

That is, the government's ideology played a key role in socialist urban development. Besides the application of rationalist ideas, the Soviet urbanism paid attention to the development of urban projects according to the policy doctrine, which aimed at raising the population's national identity through the construction of 'palaces for people' (as numerous Sport, Youth and Cultural Palaces, etc.), sports arenas, wide avenues, etc. (Klinov 2013). In other words, it aimed to create a city at a monumental scale, which should have represented the autocratic power of the time.

The combination of the urban planning objectives of the Soviet Union and the concepts of rationalist planning created a new soviet urbanism. Attributing the properties of this type of urban development to the specific characteristics of the Minsk's Master Plan for 1946, we can see that the main reconstruction program was based on the idea to regenerate economic potential, by developing an industrial sector in the peripheral areas of the city, and create an ideologically *correct city.*

Therefore, the urban structure reorganization and functional zoning of Minsk refers to the Modern Movement concepts established in the Athens Charter. In turn, the land uses distribution, the prevalence if the residential and industrial sectors were based on the economic and ideological system of the Soviet Union. The expansion of the industrial sector in the South-West part of the city, reflecting the need to reinforce the economy; however, the location of the formal uses in the geographical centre demonstrates the idea of creating a monumental architectural ensemble, accompanied by emblematic architecture. That is, the overall organization of the city is based on the functional aims, whereas the new edification of the city's central area corresponds to the Soviet ideology.

Soviet urban design/planning may be considered as a product of the Modern Movement; therefore, it has a similar goal to rationalize the city structure. However, the way in which the concepts are expressed is different: if in the case of the Modern Movement it is rational

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[11] The five-year plans for the development of the national economy were a series of nation-wide centralized economic plans in the Soviet Union.

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organization in both urban planning and architectural representation, in Soviet urban planning an ideological side is presented, which requires the construction of a monumental and decorative architecture. The features of both ideas are markedly reflected in the reconstruction of Minsk. On the one hand, at the time of the Minsk post-war reconstruction, the government had an autocratic character, which was reflected in the architectural decisions made; on the other hand, the fast transformation of former city into a city based on the soviet urban model expresses the ideas of rational planning.

Totalitarian Architecture[12]

Beside the coupling of economic and social needs through Minsk's urban structural reorganization, the reconstruction program included the creation of a new symbolic city centre that might reflect the idea of a *new soviet society*. Therefore, a new post-war structure of Minsk could be expressed in a scheme *city within the city:* the first is the *ideal city,* played by the arrangement of the centre of Minsk, which was subordinated to ideological interests; the second corresponds to the new residential and industrial areas.

The construction of the city centre coincided with the time of the overall city's reorganization. By contrast, in terms of its concept, it represents different ideas compared to the rest of the city. If the periphery of Minsk is composed by urban (residential, industrial) fragments, the centre presents the traditional city with an orthogonal structure built by the totalitarian *style architecture* reflected in the monumental buildings. In other words:

> The totalitarian style reflects ideas of Soviet realism which was an accepted standard and officially promoted by a regime which searched the definition of an image, which: 'made each building a monument of its period, monument to victory and triumph (…) a sincere style as the Pompeian buildings or like the harmony of classic architecture' (Itriago Pels 2006, p. 55).

The centre of Minsk is made up of a main road and three governmental squares that establish the central area structure. The central area has symbolic weight, interpreting utopic ideas of the socialist ideology (collective activities, demonstration and parades, etc.) (Klinov 2013). In 1945 a design competition for the central ensemble of Minsk was organized. At this time the importance to create a representative centre, which would emphasize the governmental ideology, was already recognized. Precisely for this reason, the eleven projects submitted to the competition, despite belonging to different authors, had similar programs and concepts: (I) transformation of the existing street over a representative axis accompanied by architecture of imperial character; (II) the creation of hard squares to contain military parades and show soviet autocratic power. The winning project for the central plaza proposed the construction of a large open space with the monument in Stalin's honour in the middle of the square and galleries off the main street to watch the military parades (fig. 5).
In terms of its structure, the new axis mimics the route of the pre-existing road from the pre-war period. However, its appearance changes dramatically. In fig. 6 the difference between the existing street and the avenue that was created can be clearly seen. Apart from expanding the street, its scale was changed from the urban and architectural point of view. The building typology was modified, traditional blocks became *kvartales*[13] with garden interiors and architecture achieved monumental character.

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[12] With the term totalitarian architecture, we refer to the socialist realism style.
[13] The idea of *kvartal* or superblock, which develops a scheme already used in nineteenth-century projects for gardened blocks, in the same time *kvartal* shows some overlap with rationalist blocks.

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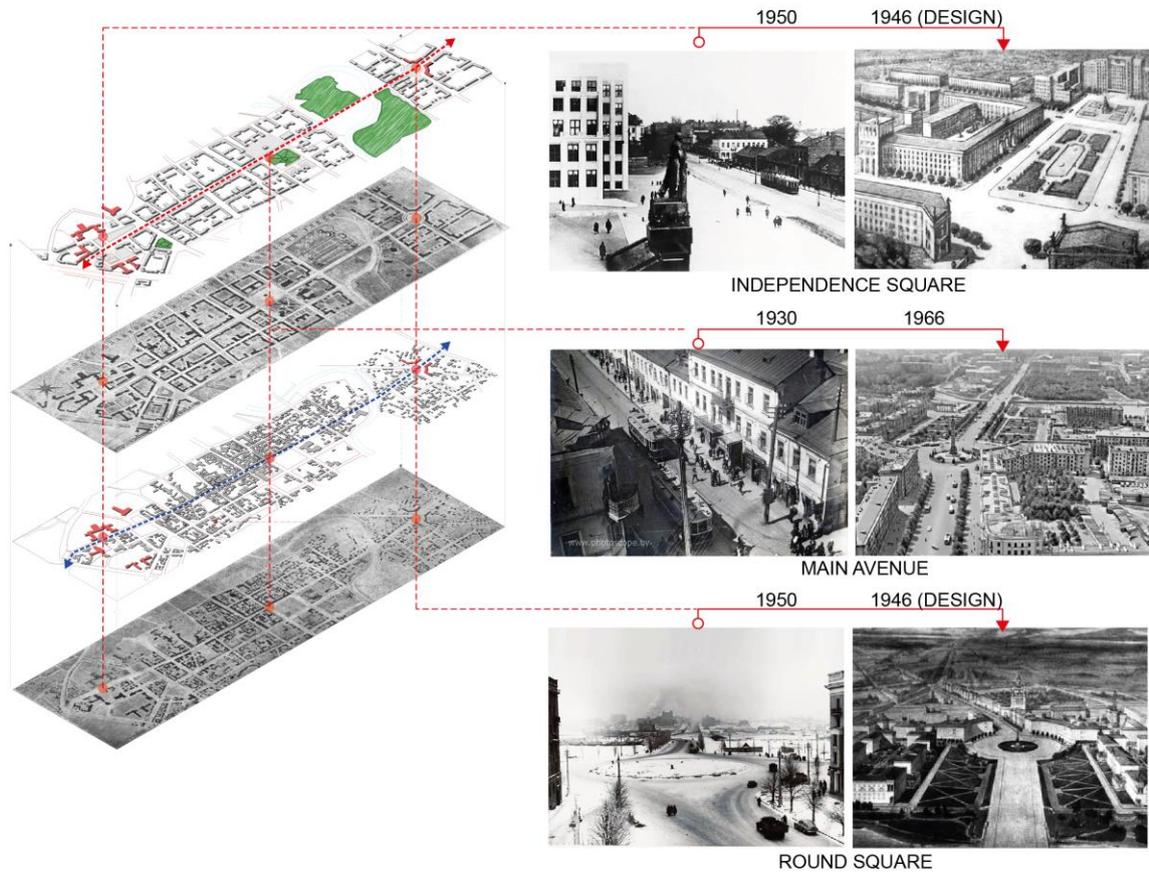
Figure 5. Project of transformation of the main street of the pre-war city to a representative central avenue (developed by the author on the basis of Osmolovskiy 1952).
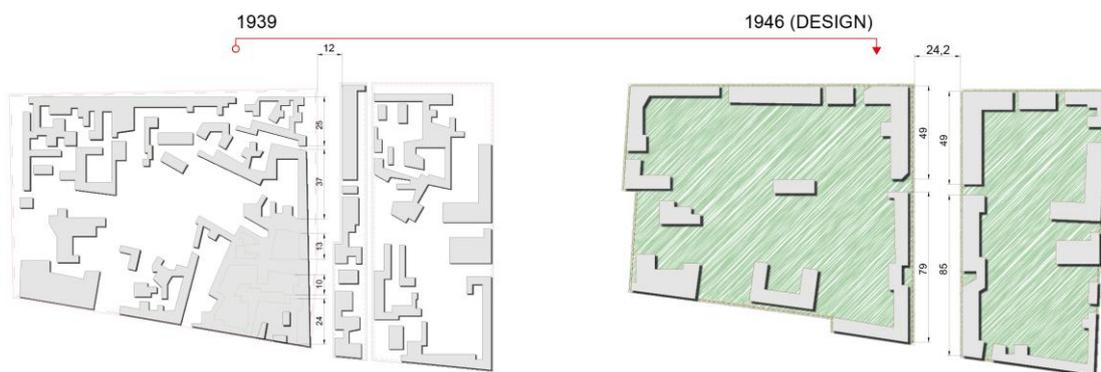

Figure 6. Structural and morphological changes of urban blocks in the transformed main street (developed by the author on the basis of Osmolovskiy 1952).

Therefore, from the figures above we can see that the project for the centre of Minsk deserves special attention because it represents the idea of a utopian socialist city, the

construction of which, for various reasons[14], was not possible in other cities within the Soviet Union.

Devastation as an urban transformation engine

According to Itrago Pels' definition of reconstructive strategies, Minsk's reconstruction was carried out under the '*refounding strategy*': the omission of the city's past in favour of its new development.

Analysing three plans of Minsk: the plan of the pre-war period (1941), the sketch of the Master Plan (1944) and the Master Plan (1946), one can observe the transformation of the urban structure since 1941 until 1946. If the plan of 1941 represents the city with an orthogonal structure, then, in the 1944 proposal, a few attributes of the concentric model are highlighted. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the sketch plan focuses on the development of the central part of the city and on the recovery of important governmental buildings (Linevich 2010) some characteristics of the orthogonal structure, such as street network, are conserved. On the other hand, in the Master Plan for 1946, the concentric model comes into force without leaving any features belonging to the previous structure. Therefore, the sketch plan was an intermediate stage between the historical city and the urban model of the Soviet city (fig. 7).
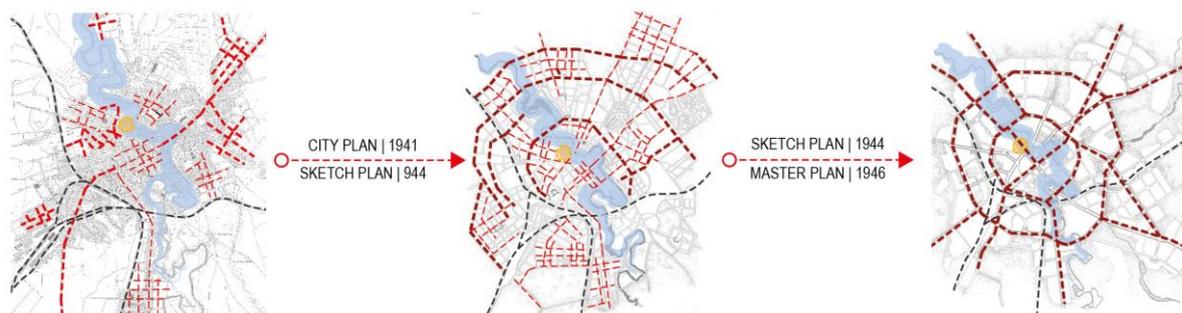
Figure 7. Transitional process from the historical urban structure to the Soviet Urban model (developed by the author on the basis of Plans for 1938, 1944 and 1946 available at the archives of the Institute of Urban Planning of Minsk).

The existence of the intermediate design clearly explains the reconstruction program that was accepted for Minsk's rebuilding: forgetting the pre-existing city and creating a new one that should represent the soviet urban model. Precisely the application of the omission strategy turned Minsk into an interesting case and put it in the line with other new soviet cities. Certainly, the model of the Soviet city would have had to be developed in Moscow, in the capital of the country. In 1935 there was even a proposal for the new Master Plan of Moscow which later was taken as an example for the redevelopment of Minsk:

> […] out of the detailed study of 16 Principles of Socialistic Urbanism the ideological dimension of the urban transformation company in which Stalin threw himself into, was established. The height of this company began with the reconstruction plan of Moscow, to turn it into the symbolic capital of Socialist Realism (Quilici 1978, p. 54).

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[14] These reasons will be discussed in the next section.

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The plan was based on the proposals of previous years (New Moscow Plan and the Great Moscow Plan developed during 1918-1925, fig 8), which respected the pre-existing structure of the city. In the sketch plan of 1935, with the idea of constructing a new city and leaving the former one as an outdoor museum, the designers came to the conclusion to preserve the ancient city, but with a radical reorganization of its urban structure. Nevertheless, because of the presence of a rich urban history and with a lower destruction index during the II World War, the proposals made for the reconstruction of Moscow were not achieved. In the same way, in the case of Minsk, due to the constant devastations, cultural changes and the almost total destruction of the city after the II World War, the image of the city could be radically changed, achieving the social and urban changes which could not have been possible under other circumstances (Klinov 2013).
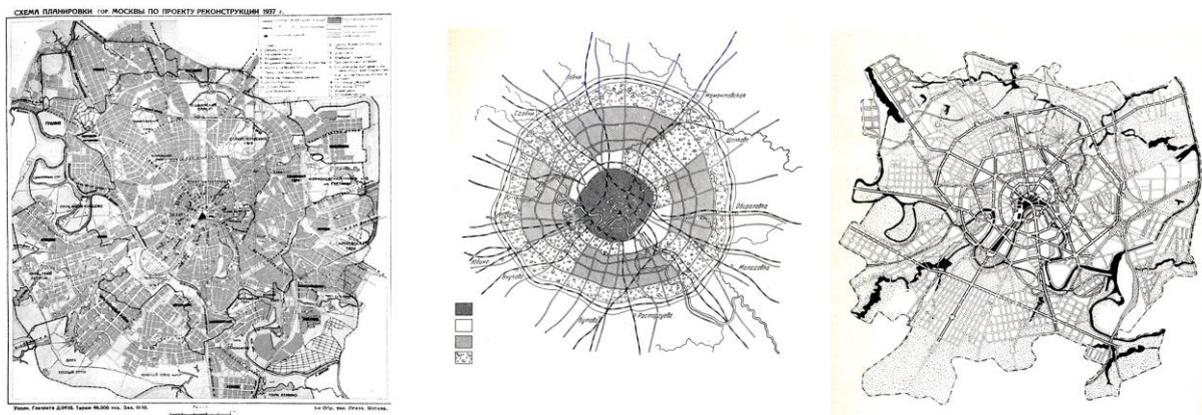

Figure 8. Moscow Plan (late XIX century); Scheme for the Great Moscow Plan (1925); Moscow's Master Plan for 1938 (Quilici 1978, p. 19, 169, 262).

Therefore, we assume that a huge grade of the physical and cultural deterioration may cause a selection of a tabula-rasa reconstruction program and lead to a rapid and total urban transformation (Itriago Pels 2006; Vale & Campanella 2005).

The Soviet City

The urban change led by the massive deterioration of Minsk is a key point in its development. Due to the almost complete devastation of the city, the material capturing of the soviet urban model, which was established in the Master Plan of Moscow of 1935, was possible. Thus, the analysis of Minsk's Master Plan of 1946 helps to define typical characteristics of the soviet city:

- Rationalization of the urban structure reflected in the hierarchical structuring and road network specialization, urban zoning and functional segregation.
- Establishment of complex road categories, which defined the configuration of urban fragments, which at the same time are divided in functional zones depending on their use (residential, industrial, formal).
- Designing of each fragment as a self-sufficient and separate unit.
- Creation of an urban centre with formal and representative character, accompanied by totalitarian style architecture and emblematic buildings.

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In many aspects, the characteristics mentioned, coincide with the urban concepts of rationalist planning modified depending on the socialist ideology. The division of the city into two parts, a central part with a formal use and another functional part with residential and industrial character, had the aim to fulfil the main tasks of the soviet urbanism development of the period: (i) an increase in the economic level of the country through the promotion of the industrial sector; (ii) supply of housing for the population and (iii) reinforcement of the ideological influence via the construction of an *ideal city.*

In summary, the Soviet city represents a combination of urban concepts and architectural styles: 'Forced by the circumstances, the USSR constructed a hybrid, empirical and changeable urbanism, whose foundations would come about by the forefront culture and the proposals of western rationalism' (Quilici 1978, p. 56). In other words, double eclecticism is present, which is reflected in the monumental architecture, which appropriates elements from different architectural styles (socialist realism) and a mixture of two urban concepts: the first one based on the rationalist ideas and the second one linked with the governmental ideology.

The composition of these two elements can be observed in case of the city of Minsk, where the periphery corresponds to the rational city and the centre represents the Ideal City constructed through totalitarian architecture.

Reconstruction, memory and heritage

The materialization of new urban design, proposed in the Master Plan of Moscow for 1935 for the first time, was punctual and did not bring radical changes in the city structure to life. In Moscow's case, due to the presence of a valuable old centre, it was impossible to erase the urban layers that have accumulated during the city's history. Another example, which corresponds to the same period, is the reconstruction of Warsaw that shows that the complete devastation of the material urban structure does not necessarily lead to the construction of a new city. In the case of Warsaw, the reconstruction process became a struggle against the soviet ideologies in order to re-establish national identity.

By contrast, in Minsk's case, we are dealing with a total redefinition of the city via new urban planning according to the soviet doctrine. The building of a new city was taken as an opportunity to embody a model of soviet urban planning that might conjure a feeling of pride in citizens' minds. From its origins and during its history, Minsk was destroyed and reconstructed numerous times changing its appearance constantly; furthermore, due to the location between two cultures (eastern and western Europe), the city has never had the opportunity to create its own identity and specific urban culture. Therefore, the destruction during World War II was not the only reason for the total rebuilding of the city but rather a catalyst for new urban development that could create a new identity without losing the historical traits of the previous city.

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union was a political regime or ideology rather than a country with a strong national identity or a civilisation with a long cultural history[15]. After its dissolution, in

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[15] See the case of Jerusalem, which during its history was constantly destroyed and conquered but has never lost its identity because of ideas and practices to promote individual and social resilience that helps to remain the previous urban structure as a representation of the national identity; and the case of China's cities, in which the rebuilding of urban structure is understood as a progress that shows their technical excellence that coexists with the age-old traditions (in Vale & Campanella 2005).

1991, the architecture, which was once created in order to popularize the soviet doctrine, lost its value and the influence that it had during the socialist period. Assuming that Minsk's reconstruction was based on the soviet urban model and has not changed its structure until today, it is important to comprehend what meaning the Soviet architecture has for citizens and whether it has the potential to be converted into soviet urban heritage.

According to a list of historical and cultural sites in the territory of Minsk[16], priority is given to single buildings and not to architectural or urban complexes, which does not permit the establishment of a structured program that should not only deal with material components of national heritage but also preserve, or in the case of Minsk even create, urban history and memory. The absence of valuable historical architecture that can be found in most capitals leads to the reproduction of a 'careful copy of its [valued piece of an old environment] original state' (Lynch 2007, p. 294)[17] or even a construction of a fake heritage in order to create historical sites that have never existed and cannot substitute the authentic inheritance. As Lynch states: '[Preservation policies] correspond to our wish to arrest the past - but we cannot easily reproduce the circumstances that created it' (2007, p. 294). Nevertheless, there are examples of reproduction (or creation) of a fictitious heritage that mimics the characteristics of the truthful historical patrimony. The transformation of Barcelona's downtown in a Barri Gòtic (Gothic Quarter) is a good example of accurate management that led not only to the attraction of numerous tourists but also shaped national and citizen identity (Garcia-Fuentes 2010).

Notwithstanding, we argue that in the case of Minsk, the reproduction of historical monuments[18] or preservation of a few existing ones, would not reach the same success than in Barcelona's case. The continuous material destruction and cultural devastation, trespassing from one country to another during its history did not allow for an uninterrupted urban memory, which has great value in order to create the identity of a place. Therefore, the Master Plan for 1946 can be considered as a starting point in the creation of Minsk's new urban history promoting it as a representative case of soviet urban planning and architecture. According to Sircus there are some principles to follow to create a 'successful place (...) weather it's created over centuries, or created instantly': a story such as a 'strong metaphor for a place'; a sequential experience that permits 'experiencing a place as much like following a river'; visual communication that means that the place should be readable; and an interaction between the user and the place (2007, pp. 127-128). Connecting these principles to Minsk's urban structure and architecture, we assume, that in order to convert the currently unappreciated by most of the local people Soviet architecture (Klinov 2013) into the heritage, the main aim should be to ascribe the characteristics and qualities of a place of pride to the central city, by promoting it as a Soviet urban model. We assume, that the attribution of these characteristics to Minsk's urban centre may help (i) to create an identity that is 'a basic feature of our experience of places' (Relph 2007, p. 104), (ii) to fill in voids in the collective memory and (ii) to awake an interest in society, changing their perception towards their home town. At the same time, we are aware that inheritance is a delicate process that is closely connected to collective and individual memory. In some cases, the generations that experienced ideologically and economically difficult soviet reality also ascribe negative feelings to the soviet urban and architectural culture. Thus, before promoting the centre of

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[16] This information was obtained from the open sources of the Ministry of Culture of Republic of Belarus.

[17] See a project of a 'historical' Town Hall constructed in 2009.

[18] For example, a City Hall building that was constructed in 2003 as an identical copy of the original one that was destroyed in 1857 by the ordinance of Nicolay I.

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Minsk as soviet heritage it is important to study narratives regarding its soviet past in order to avoid the creation of an *undesirable heritage*[19].

As we can see from the analysis of different cases, the reconstruction process in most cases needs an contextual approach due to the huge variety in cultural, economic and political aspects. Warsaw's, Berlin's and Minsk's reconstructions, which despite of being destroyed because of the similar reasons, in the same period and with similar destruction indexes, were not executed in the same way. In the case of Minsk, the Soviet architecture and urban planning received complete citizens' approval that permitted building a new city in accordance with wishes of the ruling elite. In Warsaw's reconstruction, the intrusion of soviet urban concepts led to complete rejection of these ideas; whereas, in Berlin we can observe the presence of both strategies: the Eastern part was decided upon by the Soviet authority, while the Western sector was developed discarding any urban ideas from the socialist East.
The reconstruction process and heritage issues are connected with one another, presenting two sides of the same coin. The selection of one or another reconstructive strategy and posterior preservation of urban structure and architecture is an expression of political, economic and social situation in a city's structure. Nevertheless, architects and urban planners who are faced with the rebuilding of devastated cities frequently do not have sufficient knowledge or experience in urban reconstruction in an emergency situation (Itriago Pels 2006). Taking into account that the selection of a reconstructive strategy and heritage policy not only encompass recuperation or preservation of material form but also involves a social and political process, a multidisciplinary approach becomes relevant in order to meet the challenge to restore and maintain the urban form and memory.

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Operationalising Resilience within Urban Planning – Bridging Theory and Practice

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Over the past two decades, the concept of 'urban resilience' has gained increasing attention within the field of urban planning. More recently, interest in the concept can be partly linked to the recent global economic crisis, which has stimulated much debate around pre-crisis urban development models, and more broadly around the ability of modern planning systems to adequately adapt and respond to changing circumstances. This paper reviews the scholarly literature on urban resilience and concludes that despite its increasing ubiquity, the concept still lacks precise definition, and operationalising the concept within the planning domain remains a challenge. Specifically, the paper highlights the importance of distinguishing between 'equilibrium' and 'evolutionary' understandings of resilience, with particular focus on the potential of the evolutionary perspective to aid analysis of local planning responses to the recent global economic crisis. In doing so, the paper also queries the potential contribution of new institutionalism, and discursive institutionalism in particular, in enhancing our understanding of the resilience concept in this context, and in addressing some of the common critiques attached to it.

Keywords: urban resilience; adaptive capacity; new institutionalism; crisis; austerity.

Introduction

Over the past two decades the concept 'resilience', and more specifically '*urban* resilience', has gained increasing attention within urban planning research, policy and practice; particularly in the context of the global financial crisis of the late 2000s, and continuing forms of social, political, economic and financial crises in a number of European countries (Lang, 2012). The concept is typically presented as the capacity of cities to 'bounce back' or even 'bounce forward' from a disturbance or crisis event – and thus is often considered to be, superficially at least, an agreeable and almost 'incontestable' concept (White & O'Hare, 2014).

Yet despite the increasing ubiquity of the resilience concept, particularly within an Anglo-American context, its exact meaning and measurement remains contested. Indeed, Davidson (2010) asserts that 'It is far from clear whether the term resilience enjoys a shared understanding within academic disciplines and policy areas and also between them'*.* In particular, White and O'Hare (2014) point to contrasting academic understandings of 'equilibrium resilience' and 'evolutionary resilience' and emphasise the need for greater deconstruction and analysis of the concept from a planning perspective. In this case, the authors argue that opaque political treatment of the concept has, in many cases, impacted planning practice by privileging an equilibrist interpretation over a more transformative, evolutionary understanding (White and O'Hare, 2014) – an issue which has potentially significant ramifications, given how notions of 'urban resilience' are emerging in debates around the urban response to the recent global economic crisis.

When applying the concept to cities, many scholars argue that the evolutionary (also known as socio-ecological) side of the concept is the most appropriate when using the concept in an urban planning / management context (including Davoudi et al., 2012; Majoor, 2015; White and O'Hare, 2014) – whereby resilience is understood as the ability of a city to adapt, change and transform in the face of crisis or disturbance. This paper is particularly concerned with the applicability of this evolutionary resilience perspective within planning; seeking to investigate how such a perspective may aid analysis of local planning responses to the recent global economic crisis in particular. In doing so, the paper also queries the potential contribution of new institutionalism in enhancing our understanding of resilience – a proposition supported by scholars including Lang (2011; 2012) who argues that resilience must be conceptualised in such a way that processes of and (institutional) frameworks for decision making are recognised. This paper argues that such a perspective can be useful when applying the (evolutionary) resilience concept within urban planning, as it seeks to highlight dominant norms, perceptions and paradigms which can lead to particular forms of action (or lack thereof) in the face of a crisis (Lang, 2012).

In order to address these key questions, this paper reviews the scholarly literature around 'urban resilience'. In doing so, the paper first briefly charts the evolution of the resilience concept in order to contextualise its modern application in the planning domain; it then examines some of the key constraints impacting its translation from theory to practice; and finally it explores the recent global economic crisis and the potential contribution of new institutionalism in expanding our understanding of both the resilience concept – and crisis response at city level across Europe.

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The Emergence and Evolution of the Resilience Concept

In recent decades, the concept of resilience has proliferated as a policy metaphor for embedding foresight, robustness and adaptability into a variety of place-making and increasingly local planning activities (Coaffee, 2013); particularly as cities are increasingly seen to amplify global urban trends of enhanced risk (Simpson and Stoffregen, 2011). However, despite 'resilience' progressively becoming part of the urban planning lexicon, the concept risks being reduced to a 'buzzword' or an 'empty signifier', with little practical relevance.

The term 'resilience' has a long history, which, according to Pizzo (2014) can be traced back to the 1st Century B.C. Yet, it is the work of C.S Holling, a theoretical ecologist, which brought the term to prominence in 1973. Holling utilises 'resilience' to examine the behaviour of ecological systems that are exposed to unexpected external changes and disruptions, defining resilience as

> A measure of the persistence of systems and of their ability to absorb change and disturbance and still maintain the same relationships between populations or state variables (Holling, 1973: 14).

However, since then resilience has been explored in a variety of different research areas including environmental studies, disaster prevention and climate change reduction strategies. It has also continued to expand as an adapted research concept within social and human geography studies (Kärrholm et al., 2014) and more recently, applied specifically within the urban context – where it can be broadly understood as the capacity of a city or urban system to withstand a wide array of shocks and stresses (Agudelo-Vero et al, 2012: 3). This process, according to Eryadin (2013) can be described as a 'four stage path'. The fourth stage, Eraydin (2013) asserts, has been the use of the term within urban planning literature, where 'planning *for* resilience' has become a critical concern. This section briefly charts the development of these stages.

In the 1960s, along with the rise of systems thinking, resilience entered the field of ecology where multiple meanings of the concept have since emerged, with each being rooted in different world views and scientific traditions. Within this field, it was Holling's (1973) seminal paper which brought the concept to prominence and ignited further inquiries on how systems respond to disturbances. Within his work, Holling drew an important distinction between engineering and ecological resilience – with engineering resilience defined as the ability of a system to return to an equilibrium or steady-state after a disturbance (Holling, 1973; 1996). This engineering perspective understands resilience as a measure of the 'speed of return' to equilibrium (Pimm, 1991). In essence, the quicker the system 'bounces back', the more resilient it is. In contrast, Holling (1996: 33) asserts that ecological resilience is concerned with the 'magnitude of the disturbance that can be absorbed before the system changes its structure'. Thus, rather than speed being a defining feature, here 'resilience' is understood as how much disturbance a system can undergo while remaining within critical thresholds – how it can persist and adapt in the face of disturbance (Adger, 2000). Ecological resilience rejects the existence of a single, stable equilibrium and instead recognises the existence of multiple equilibria, and the possibility of systems to flip into alternative stability domains. Yet, despite this core difference in understanding, both perspectives recognise the existence of equilibrium in systems, be it a pre-existing one to which a resilient system bounces back (engineering) or a new one to which it bounces forth (ecological) (Davoudi et al., 2012).

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The equilibristic view of resilience has since become highly influential in a range of social science disciplines such as psychology, disaster studies, economic geography and environmental planning. For example, within the field of disaster risk reduction, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR, 2009: 24) defines resilience as

> The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions

Within this definition, various prior meanings of the term can be seen – rebounding, adapting, overcoming, and maintaining integrity. Yet, as Alexander (2013) argues, some of these typically cited meanings, such as restoring equilibrium and getting away from it by moving to a new system state, are potentially contradictory, and somewhat problematic when applied to the urban context. Indeed, Dudley (2010) emphasises the importance of distinguishing the system equilibrium idea from concepts of *urban* resilience; a resilient system may experience fluctuations or changes in conditions or structures, and these changes may provide the very basis for an urban systems persistence over time. Such equilibristic views too easily assume that there is some future steady-state (or a return to a past one).

Davoudi and colleagues (2012), after noting the varied meanings that have been attached to resilience, attempts to address the issues associated with the equilibristic view. In doing so, the authors argue for an 'evolutionary' understanding of resilience – whereby resilience requires continuous adaptation rather than a return to a previous equilibrium. This view of resilience purports that the very nature of systems may change over time without an external disturbance. This perspective is also often referred to as socio-ecological resilience (Folke et al., 2010). Here, resilience is not understood as 'bouncing back' to normality, but as the ability of complex socio-ecological systems to change, adapt, and, crucially, transform in response to stresses and strains (Carpenter et al., 2005).

If, as Friedmann (2008) states, we are to assume that 'translation' is one of planning theory's tasks, one of the prime tasks for resilience research in the planning domain is establishing which 'root' of the resilience concept fits better with the planning discipline. Since cities can be interpreted as complex adaptive systems whose organisation and behaviour are comparable to ecosystems, most scholars agree that the ecological / social or evolutionary side of the concept is the most appropriate when using the concept in an urban planning / management context (Davoudi et al., 2012; Majoor 2015). Yet despite the well-recognised distinctions between differing conceptual understandings of resilience in academic spheres (Davoudi et al., 2012; Brand and Jax, 2007), the impact of the concept on planning practice, according to White and O'Hare (2014) continues to be hampered by fragmentary applications and opaque definitions.

'Translating' Resilience – Key Challenges

Interest and concern for *urban* resilience, according to Coaffee and Clarke (2015), has been stimulated by the perception that cities are particularly vulnerable to shocks and disturbances – due to their status as densely populated political, economic and cultural centres; the interdependencies of their networked infrastructures; and as a result of continued and rapid urbanisation. Indeed, growing interest in the concept has led to a recent array of philanthropic and commercial attempts to develop strategic evaluation frameworks to assess urban resilience. For example, the UNISDR launched the 'How to Make Cities More Resilient' campaign in 2012; and in 2013 the Rockefeller Foundation launched '100 Resilient Cities', a campaign dedicated to helping cities around the world 'become more resilient to the physical,

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social and economic challenges that are a growing part of the 21st century'. Moreover, in 2014, two large multinational corporations, ARUP and Siemens, produced city resilience 'toolkits' which highlight factors that city leaders should consider when making decisions about resilience interventions.

However, the rapid political ascent of the concept also raises important questions around how resilience is understood, what it is designed to achieve, and how this may translate into practice. This becomes all the more pertinent given how notions of 'urban resilience' are emerging in debates around local government responses to the recent global economic crisis – particularly within the Anglo American context. Indeed, in the early 2000's a particular catalyst for an upsurge of interest in 'resilience' - from a policy perspective - was the terrorist attacks in New York in September 2001. Coaffee (2013) argues that following this event, security, and increasingly resilience, gradually became a central organising metaphor and concept within the (urban) policymaking process and in the expanding institutional framework of national security and emergency preparedness (Coaffee et al. 2008). This has been underpinned by a related increase in the political prioritisation of the safety and security of communities against an array of perceived hazards and threats, including terrorism, climate change, and extreme weather events (Coaffee, 2013).

Within this security driven context, resilience is most often deployed to link concerns about urban development and disaster risk reduction. However, there is a danger in inheriting understandings of 'resilience' from disaster studies alone – where resilience is often limited to describing the ability of a system to absorb or offset damage and to recover to pre-disaster status - an equilibristic perspective. Indeed, Pelling and Zaidi (2013) argue that current conceptual, analytical and policy approaches in urban disaster management combine to perpetuate a vision of resilience that is defined by a responsibility to support post disaster recovery and maintenance of 'normalcy'. White and O'Hare (2014) are also highly critical of such equilibrist interpretations, referring to this perspective as 'both simplistic and fatalistic – accepting the status quo, leaving unchallenged current norms of behaviour that drive risky behaviour, and privileging reactive responses to risk'.

The move towards resilience is often justified through the argument of an increasing level of uncertainty in an increasing complex world (Berkes and Folke, 1998). Resilience is presented as a fundamental improvement in *managing* uncertainty - specifically through the shift from 'risk mitigation' to 'risk adaptation' mindset. Yet, as Lang (2011) purports, it is not the 'city' that acts in the face of crisis but individual or collective actors. Resilience is shaped by laws, policies, and human institutions and ecological models of resilience tend to ignore the ways that the central government shapes markets, local governments, and even cultural values. Indeed, a number of theorists, when discussing the concept of resilience and the paradigm of social ecology, critique it for inadequately addressing the questions of political power, the role of the state, conflict and culture (Wilkinson, 2011; Fainstein, 2013). According to Swanstrom (2008: 16):

> Rejecting both the state and the market, ecological thinkers embrace social processes of consensual decision making and network governance ...[But] the diminishment of the role of the state and political conflict in favour of consensual social networks ends up being profoundly conservative, reinforcing the status quo.

Furthermore, Joseph (2013) also argues that such equilibristic interpretations of the concept 'resilience' fits well within a wider embedding of neoliberal forms of governance. This is due to its emphasis on the 'responsibilisation' of the individual to govern themselves and their preparedness – whether in the face of natural disasters or crisis induced austerity measures.

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Joseph (2013) asserts that this is not to say that the idea of resilience is reducible to neoliberal policy and governance, but it is does fit neatly with what it is trying to do and say – depending on how 'resilience' is interpreted.

This potential alignment with neoliberal ideology has also drawn criticism from a number of other scholars, who suggest that the meaning of resilience within urban policy is distorted by its neoliberal reworking for governance purposes. For example, Handmer and Dovers (1996) draw a distinction between resilience as found in the ecology literature and resilience as it appears in risk management, which is more concerned with the preservation of day-to-day activities of individuals and communities, and a return to 'normalcy'. The latter usage is predominant in urban policy, they assert, because it better fits with neoliberal governmentality – and in fitting into this discourse, the term becomes little more than a buzzword that might easily be exchanged for some other term.

UK policy statements in particular are highlighted by Joseph (2013) as placing much greater emphasis on individual responsibility. This point is also highlighted in Coaffee's (2013) account of resilience policy in the UK, where he documents the emergence and progression of different 'waves' of resilience policy. He highlights the shift in recent years to a more trans-disciplinary concept of resilience that integrates the physical (both the built and natural) and socio-economic aspects of resilience. This new governance approach to enhancing urban resilience in the UK emphasises joined up thinking and the 'responsibilising' of a greater range of individuals and organisations for preventing and preparing for disruptive challenges. As such, it is argued that the resilience 'turn' (aligning with UK drivers such as austerity and a move towards localism) has influenced a move away from the traditional relationship between the state and the individual with 'governing from a distance' through decentralised decision making (Foucault, 2007).

Indeed, Coaffee and Clarke (2015) argue that the behaviour of planners towards the goals of enhancing resilience is, like all planning operations, highly related to organisational context and can have a huge effect on the ability of the planning system, or individual planners to act effectively to mitigate or respond to a disruptive challenge. Where planners are seen not to act or not to adapt to changing circumstances, this can often be considered maladaption – which, in the context of resilience, highlights sub-optimal decision making which can lead to increases in vulnerability and a decrease in adaptive capacity (Coaffee and Clarke, 2015). In examining such issues, it is proposed that applying an evolutionary perspective of resilience is necessary.

Evolutionary Resilience and the Economic Crisis

Since 2007, global housing and financial markets have experienced an intense period of volatility and uncertainty. At first, the crisis was centred on the banking sector (the so called 'credit crunch'), with its roots in sub-prime mortgage lending practices in the US, leading to bank failures and falling stock markets. This was quickly followed by a sovereign debt crisis in Europe (with Ireland, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy among the most heavily impacted). Within Ireland, for example, the fall-out of the crisis has been severe. Throughout the 'Celtic Tiger' boom era, the Irish economy became increasingly reliant on property, facilitated by neoliberal tendencies within the deregulation and re-regulation of the financial and banking sectors and within the planning system (Murphy and Scott, 2013). However, the transformation of Irish planning during this period was not an isolated event. In fact, the institutional and political contexts for such changes were associated with the growing penetration of political strategies, throughout Europe, by a neoliberal agenda.

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In both Ireland and Spain, for example, residential property price inflation increased dramatically from the late 1990s driven by increased availability of cheap mortgages. Yet this was unusually also accompanied by marked growth in the construction of new houses. Norris and Byrne (2015) argue that in both countries the housing boom / bust cycle was underpinned by a suite of macro-economic policies which aimed to use asset price growth to underpin rising demand and economic growth. This, they assert, was particularly attractive to the Irish and Spanish governments because it enabled them to resolve historical legacies of industrial underdevelopment and regional imbalances by generating construction jobs in underdeveloped areas. As a result, local governments in both Ireland and Spain played a key role in the implementation of this policy.

However, between 2008 and 2010, Ireland's GDP contracted by 15.6%, with Spanish GDP contracting by 5.3% (Norris and Byrne, 2015). In 2009, the Irish banking industry was almost fully nationalised, and by the end of the following year, Ireland was forced to negotiate an emergency loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the EU, and an associated four-year austerity programme, in order to fund public funding and bank recapitalisation. Indeed, Portugal, Italy, Spain and Greece were each compelled to implement similar austerity reforms, yet today exhibit divergent recovery pathways.

The depth, duration and global reach of the recent economic crisis, together with the severity of its impacts on cities, have raised numerous questions around existing institutional and decision making structures, regulatory arrangements and pre-crisis development models (Knieling and Othengrafen, 2015) – questions which have major implications for planning. In particular, Knieling and Othengrafen (2015) question whether, and to what extent, the crisis can be seen as a catalyst for paradigmatic, institutional and behavioural change in cities – and query the role of urban planning in contributing to necessary or possible transformations.

At the same time, many scholars are sceptical about this potential to induce change including Meegan and colleagues (2014), who argues that while the global economic crisis revealed the unstable nature of the neoliberal growth model, neoliberalisatrion and financialisation remain deeply embedded in the global economic and political order. This can be seen in the UK for example, where Lovering (2010) suggests that there is a prevailing assumption that the economic crisis has merely 'interrupted' processes of urban development and regeneration and 'business as usual' will return sooner or later. Lovering further argues that the post crisis landscape will see more intense competition to secure a share of the reduced flow of investment, with the familiar 'competitiveness' based arguments given even more insistence.

In addition, Crouch (2011) refers to the 'strange non death' of neoliberalism post crisis, stating 'Whereas the financial crisis concerned banks and their behaviour, resolution of the crisis has been redefined as a need to cut back, once and for all, the welfare state and public spending'. He proposes that pre crisis politics of the 21st century was accentuated rather than weakened by the crisis, a proposition supported by Tulumello (2016), who argues that current austerity-policy responses to the crisis can be understood as a renewed and coherent deployment of neoliberal stances.

New Institutionalism and Understanding Crisis Response

In attempting to understand change, and to specify how and why planning practices are changing (or not), Taylor (2009) proposes that new institutionalism is a useful analytical framework for exploring these questions, which he defines as 'a diverse family of approaches

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to understanding stability, change and causal processes in social and economic systems'. According to Lang (2011), combining new institutionalist positions with those from the resilience debate, means that we can understand resilience as a systematic 'capacity', closely related to an institutional environment which is supportive of the constant advancement and adaptation of the system, favouring experimentation, risk and innovation in responding to external challenges and threats.

First, it is important to define what is meant by 'institutions'. Institutions may be broadly understood as 'the rules and norms that govern human interaction' (Herrfahrdt-Pähle and Pahl-Wostl, 2012) or 'rules, structures and norms that create and enforce cooperative behaviour among individuals and groups' (Davies and Trounstine, 2012). While formal institutions are legally binding norms such as constitutions, laws and policies in the political system (e.g. the governance structure), the economic system (e.g. property rights) and the enforcement system (e.g. the judiciary); informal institutions include cultural norms, such as customs, moral values or traditions (socially shared rules which are enforced outside the formal governance structures). Both formal and informal institutions provide the context for urban planning (Verma, 2007), and can impact the resilience of a system. Although institutions are not unalterable, Davies and Trounstine (2012) asserts, they are difficult to change and embody power; so understanding an institution necessitates an examination of its origin and how (and whether) it has been altered over time.

While some studies on institutional change focus on rules and structures, others focus on norms. However, Hall and Taylor (1996) identify three primary 'schools of thought' in this arena – rational choice institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and historical institutionalism. Rational choice institutionalism presents institutions as limitations on the choices of rational actors. By analysing the incentive structures that institutions create, theorists in this area seek to make 'testable' predictions regarding individual behaviour and aggregate political outcomes. Some rational choice theorists understand institutions as pre-determined constraints that shape preferences, behaviour, action and ultimately outcomes. Other scholars study institutions as creations of the actors themselves; as collectively agreed upon ways of acting (Shepsle, 2006). The rational choice perspective often views institutions as having arisen as solutions to particular collective action problems and as generating and maintaining equilibrium outcomes.

Sociological institutionalism, is often referred to as normative institutionalism, as shared norms are seen as the source of institutional stability. This school of thought focuses on how institutional forms and practices can be culturally explained. It is grounded in culture-oriented organisational theory, in which norms, rituals, models and conventions establish what is appropriate (Meyer, 2000). From this viewpoint, state actors are motivated by status concerns, adopting and maintaining the characteristics of those peers they perceive as being legitimate (Amenta and Ramsey, 2010).

Finally, historical institutionalism views institutions as the 'legacy of concrete historical processes', (Davies and Troustine, 2012) outlining the development of political institutions over time, described as patterns and routine practices, subject to a logic of path-dependence. The historical institutional approach to policy is, as many have noted, especially useful in explaining broad patterns of continuity and in accounting for persistent variations across different political systems. It is less helpful when we seek to explain discontinuities or search for tools to analyse possibilities for new policy directions (Weir, 2003).

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However, this paper proposes that a fourth institutional approach, referred to as 'discursive institutionalism' by Schmidt (2010) is particularly useful in terms of understanding various responses to the crisis, through its use of ideas and discourse to explain political change (and continuity) in institutional contexts. Indeed, as Petry (2013) argues, it is the discursive construction of crises – how we make sense of failures – that ultimately shapes how we respond to it. For instance, in the context of a crisis, urban decision makers (including planners) must diagnose, and impose on others, their notion or understanding of a crisis before collective action to address perceived problems or challenges with existing policies or mechanisms can be taken. Thus the framing of a crisis event is important - in terms of perceived forms of vulnerability and crisis, related to normative perceptions and considerations of desirable and undesirable social and economic conditions (Lang, 2012).

As Schmidt (2012) asserts, the economic crisis has generated a wide range of ideas and discourse that come in many forms – frames, narratives, stories, memories and practices; two types of arguments – cognitive and normative; and three levels of generality – policies, programmes and philosophies. All of these may have different rates and mechanisms of change (or persistence). Differentiating the different levels of ideas and discourse, Schmidt argues, along with the likely rates and mechanisms of change can help us understand in particular where some of the problems are with regard to the negotiation of solutions to the crisis. For example, there are conflicting frames around the causes of the crisis – with Petry (2013) referring, for example, to narratives around the acronym 'PIIGS' (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain) and the construction the Eurozone crisis as solely one of public debt, which enabled and justified austerity based solutions. Indeed, Petry further points to media representations of a crisis 'born of certain states and certain people', where much of Northern Europe were portrayed as the 'victims' of economically irresponsible 'others' who brought the crisis upon them. As Sommer (2014) notes, such discourse fuelled opposition to further bail outs and debt cuts – measures which were seen to be 'wrong incentives' for 'irresponsible' states. Austerity was thus portrayed as the only logical and possible consequence both in politics and the public sphere (Sommer, 2014).

There is an extensive amount of research debating how and why the global financial crisis has evolved since 2007. However, although there have been studies on responses to the crisis, these have typically been conducted at the national or international level. Far less attention has been given to how municipalities and cities have responded to the crisis, or how international crisis discourse impacts planning policy and practice at the local level. However, this paper proposes that an institutionalist research perspective (and discursive institutionalism in particular) could help to illuminate these processes. For example, the Eurozone crisis stems not just from problems with the substantive content of ideas and discourse. It also concerns their discursive interactions, which occur in different spheres – and across different scales (Schmidt, 2012). These interactions, between European and national, and national and city conceptualisations of the crisis (and crisis response), for example, are important to understand in the context of evolutionary resilience, and could be understood as part of the 'inherent controlling processes' of complex adaptive systems (ie. elements which constrain or enable institutional change or adaptation).

This is particularly important in light of numerous commentaries alluding to a 'non death' of neoliberalism and neoliberal urban policy post crisis (Eraydin, 2013; Tulumello, 2016; Crouch, 2011). Indeed, Lovering (2010) argues that while the global economic crisis exposed the many failures of 'neoliberal urban planning', it will not lead to any significant improvement so long as the planning institutions and habits of thought developed before the recession period remain hegemonic. As Oosterlynck (2013) asserts, we must ask whether

local responses to the crisis serve to reinforce ongoing neoliberal urban restructuring or effectively produce new, post-neoliberal urban governance rationalities.

Indeed, this paper proposes that a deeper understanding of the (context specific) practical realities around the application and implementation of 'urban resilience' policies and mechanisms at local level is required. Such an understanding can be fostered through more detailed examination of, for example, institutional change trajectories (including the politics of institutional change) and the dynamics of path dependence. Acknowledging the politics of institutional change can help to illuminate the varied struggles inherent in attempts to reform or restructure institutions post crisis. The four new institutionalist viewpoints outlined above can thus provide insights in this respect, through capturing social and organisational constraints to institutional evolution.

Concluding Reflections

This paper argues for an evolutionary understanding of resilience when applying the concept to urban planning and decision making processes. In contrast to equilibrist interpretations of resilience, an evolutionary understanding of the concept emphasises the criticality of ongoing institutional and behavioral change. As White and O' Hare (2014) assert, evolutionary perspectives of resilience are perceived as process dominated, in which resilience is considered a broader and more deliberate practice whereby, for example, the adaptive capacity of cities can be augmented with an emphasis on behavioral or institutional change alongside recovery. Such a perspective challenges existing practices and aspires for a new normality – one which is better equipped to avoid and respond to shocks.

As Friedmann (2005: 29) argues, 'planning is in a constant need to reinvent itself as circumstances change'. This perceived need to 'reinvent' in the face of change or crisis aligns with this evolutionary perspective of resilience which purports that the very nature of systems may change over time even without an external disturbance. In considering the 'capacity' of a city – and urban planning - to adapt or respond to change, this paper argues for greater consideration of (institutional) frameworks of decision making – including how ideas (such as resilience) diffuse, are institutionalised, and shape the practices and structures of management organisations. Moreover, this paper proposes that new institutionalism can be useful when applying the (evolutionary) resilience concept within urban planning particularly, as it seeks to highlight dominant norms, perceptions and paradigms which can lead to particular forms of action (or lack thereof) in the face of a crisis (Lang, 2012).

Indeed, the paper highlighted the potential of discursive institutionalism in particular, in providing insights into the construction of local responses to the recent global economic crisis. This, the paper argues, is especially pertinent given increasing commentary around the apparent sustaining nature of neoliberal ideology and discourse within urban governance post crisis. As Eraydin (2013) argue, urban policy; legislation on urban governance and planning systems; and some institutional changes have emerged post crisis, but they have not been supported by a new planning perspective. Further analysis of this proposition is required at individual city level – an exploration which may benefit from the analytical framework proposed in this paper, combining resilience with new institutionalist theory.

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