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ID 1660 | CHALLENGES AND TRICKY WORDS. A STRONGER ROLE FOR PLANNERS

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ABSTRACT: In the last 20 years, a deliberate strategy of impoverishment of local governments argued the imperative need of: a) involving at all (public) costs, the private sector through the “trojan horse” of governance (Miraftab 2004); b) designing big and shortsighted urban projects (frequently destroying public resources and ignoring public needs) through the mantra of the urban and territorial competition. As it has been already noted, “by elevating Governance above Government, and Economics above Politics, the globalpolicy undermined nation- and state-building capacities in many Countries” (Demmers, Jilberto, Hogenboom, 2004). Moreover, through the rhetoric on pluralism, the neo-liberal governance has contributed to shrink and destroy the relevance of public interest. In fact, behind the 'screen' of governance and the representation of an amorphous citizenship and a notqualified of diffuse interests, the deployment of capitalism has prevailed. This legitimized the partial and strongest interests into shaping the public agenda within the polarized inequalities. In this framework, the paper will give some suggestions and advices for rethinking current problems, and trying to deal with them, by starting by the critical evaluation of some words we use. Moreover, by focusing on the ethic of responsibility and accountability of planners (and for most of us as planning scholars), the paper argues that a stronger role for planners and planning scholars has to do with our own field of responsibility (such as professionals/practitioners/scholars), and moreover with our commitment in building and using new theories and research approaches at least to: a) incorporate the 'others'/minorities by considering furthermore the interaction between capitalism accumulation in space and the minorities (Yiftachel 2013); b) improve critical urban theories mixing with place-based planning and research practices (Campbell 2012; 2014), by applying different approaches; c) co-produce (Watson 2014) a public model of development, being aware of the oligopolistic elites and extractive institutions (Acemoglu, Robinson, 2012).

1 INTRODUCTION

The paper discusses critical perspectives on contemporary urban planning from a sort of Southern-European point of view focused on:

- a. Challenges/a model of social regulation under discussions.
- b. Tricky words/suggestions and advices for re-thinking and re-setting problems by definition;
- c. Role of planners & planning scholars/implications for planners and planning theories and practices.

The first point regards the evidence that all around Europe there is a model of social regulation under discussions. In fact, behind the question of public debt, there is the question of change of model of social regulation there are the needs to underline in which condition we can think about critical perspectives in urban planning that are connected with this request of changing (urban) development model.

For this reason, the paper will underline some concepts (behind some tricky words we used for decades) trying to give some suggestions and advices for rethinking and re-setting current problems and try to deal with them, starting by the words we use.

Then, some directions and perspectives for planning theories and practices will be discussed by focusing on their responsibility and accountability for planners and for most of us as planning scholars to change our tools and way to do in a changing world.

2 MAIN CHALLENGES AND STARTING POINT

In the last 20 years, a deliberate strategy of impoverishment of local governments emphasized the imperative need for:

- involve at all (public) expenses, the private sector through the Trojan horse of governance;
- big and shortsighted urban projects (destroying public resources and ignoring public needs) through real estate speculations & big events "to make cash" (you are experts about it!), but cash for developers, not for people...

By elevating governance above government, and economics above politics, this global policy undermined national and state-building capacities in many Countries... (J. Demmers)

Cities have become powerful machines of suspension of the rights of individuals and groups with important effects on security, socio-spatial segregation, and moreover the citizenship rights, by shaping, day-by-day the SO CALLED "dualistic city- scape" characterized by at least four factors:

- brutal inequality,
- neoliberal roll-back of the State,
- formation of a "vicious circle of exclusion, insecurity and violence" (reviewed by Koonings and Kruijt, 2007, p. 4).

In few words, we can say that especially in the last few years, Market organizes more and more urban spaces than we are able to do....But spaces are our domain as public planners and PLANNING SCHOLARS!!!

The paper would like to emphasize here the role of PLANNING SCHOLARS also because our role has been underestimated by literature and research, even if we play many roles as participant in practices, as community based researchers, activists but also as instructors or thesis/PhD Thesis supervisors...and all this implies a special RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY especially within THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES...

So, according with this responsibility and accountability we have to redefine aims and tools of our every-day practices and research practices...

Moreover we have to redefine aims and tools of our every-day work and orientation.



In this scheme, from one side, there are efficacy & consensus, and on the other the equity & justice...the first are under the mainstream umbrella of governance, and the sphere of interests, in which conflicts are considered as obstacles, as incident for the efficient action...

The second – in a frame of citizenship rights – regards values and within this aims – in which most of us are operating – conflicts are considered as (important) opportunities...

Equity and Justice and moreover “Citizenship rights” are the key issues in the effort of moving from a professional-technical knowledge to a socio-political and ethical dimension of planning knowledge.

But in a conflictive dimension of opposing interests the role of values is fundamental!!!

3 SOME “TRICKY WORDS”

Here the some tricky words for resetting problems emerged. First of all, the Governance. Governance has been used as an assignment of sovereignty not to the people/citizens/weak and poor, but to the private sector (strong and bearers of particular interests). Thus, in the framework of the substantial impoverishment and weakening of public institutions, in the negotiations/mediation it means public costs for private profits; This is the problem or as MirafTab called “symbolic inclusion for material exclusion”.

Another tricky word is Mediation. The awareness about the limits of Mediation underline that obviously is not neutral about values. Thinking about mediation is clear that the argumentative turn fails if the discursive approach is not based on a truthful and open level of confrontation/especially when the asymmetries of power are strong. Hillier (2003) analyses the Habermasian concept of rational consensus formation and its fallibility, describing the possibilities of the permanence of conflict, non-reciprocity, domination and the related power-games which are inherent in planning decision-making.

Thus, by reducing notions of empowerment and participation to individualized and economic change, neo-liberal governance depoliticizes the emancipatory concepts; Meanwhile, to seek legitimacy for its acts, it adopts a socially concerned posture of social upliftment that politicizes decisions that government technocrats, policy makers and planners have traditionally claimed as mundane and technical.

These sorts of double move – depoliticization/politicization; inclusion/exclusion – are an important feature of neo-liberalism, highlighting the paradox of its policy processes and framework.

Empowerment, MirafTab, again/but also the relevance of agonism (Hillier)...An exemplum to be clearer: market for everything, there is not alternative TINA of 80s and the citizens as technicians for green area that is a standard...or it is supposed to be a standard...

Moreover, it is on the principle of efficiency that the major criticism to the “agonistic” approach in the ambit of public decisions is built.

Costs/Benefits: analytical techniques apparently 'neutral' can facilitate a potential unequal distribution of benefits and costs; Public-Private Partnerships: can be reconsidered only by a renewed idea of public interest.

Then the two aspects (interests and values) often overlap in the plan of action, almost always confused for dialectic and rhetoric reasons. However, they do not coincide on the level of theoretical analysis, and results of their reciprocal opposition may vary.

In planning practices, the "revelation" of the values at stake (in opposition and sometimes irreconcilable), must be placed before the interests. Highlighting the values at stake appears to be ethically imperative and operationally necessary...

Moreover, in the last few years, the rhetoric on pluralism (far away from Davidoff, Advocacy and pluralism) by legitimizing the (strong) interests, neo-liberal governance has contributed to shrink and destroy the relevance of public interest.

In fact, under the umbrella of pluralism and behind the representation of citizenship amorphous and not qualified of diffuse interests, in the crisis of a definition of the general interest, behind the screen of governance, the deployment of capitalism has prevailed.

So, it legitimized the partial and strongest interests into shaping the public agenda within the polarized inequalities.

Territorial competition/according to Neil Brenner and David Wachsmuth, beginning in the 1980s TC has gradually become one of the dominant idea in main stream approaches to the local dev. >> the neoliberal preoccupation with competitiveness followed closely the transition from Keynesian "welfare state" to the post-Keynesian "competition states: instead of initiating local economic development it obfuscates the capitalist restructuring process. So it is necessary to escape from this "competitiveness trap". ((As you know better than me, all the GREAT EVENTS are based on this traps...))

4 A STRONGER ROLE OF PLANNER AND PLANNING SCHOLARS

Finally, to conclude, the perspective, not in general, as I said at the beginning, but starting from us and regarding a stronger role of planner and planning scholars. It has to do with the field of responsibility and the role of the planner (professional/practitioner/scholar) and with our commitment in building and using new theories and research approaches:

- Incorporate 'others'/minorities by considering furthermore the interaction between capitalism accumulation in space and the minorities;
- Improve theories CUT-Critical Urban Theory mixing with place-based planning and research practices
- Co-produce a public model of development.

The strong focus of the dominant development recipe on rapid free market reforms, efficient governance and the decline of state formation as a political project produced a loss of legitimacy of political and technical classes with important effects on planners and planning scholars roles.

- - build and use new theories (((Dall'advocacy to radical planning what to save what you can not more 'use)))
- a. Incorporate 'others'/minorities by considering the interaction between capitalism accumulation in space and the minorities /

"The idea of identity should be governed in space" (Yiftachel) we cannot ignore minorities, we can't ignore capitalism and accumulation we need to look at them in interaction.

And we need to also think about justice that is a very important element in planning theorizing in more complex ways.

Here the old but increasable relevant idea of how resources are distributed, distributional justice on this axes and between on most conceptual idea of the market logic should determine how city is developed and between the idea that there is intervention, the most socialist perspective, on a just society.

But interacting with it in a more complex way means the idea of identity and how it should be governed in space.

This is more complex because different groups, different minorities, different community have different demands. Usually low income people demands for redistribution and the upper class ask for a state withdraw and let the market decide. It's more complex and here comes the issue of recognition.

Quite often it appears in a negative way, in a situation that I call of "hostile recognition". We have to open up the box of recognition not assume that recognition is necessarily good, because when planners talk about particular groups sometimes it's in order to isolate them, deride them, stigmatize them and this is the way in which grey spaces comes in very much because many planning documents actually mobilize against them, they criminalize them and with this kind of argument you have to look critically at the work of identity and planning even when it is mentioned.

- b. Improve theories: stretch them, the CUT-Critical Urban Theory, Critical Urban Theory ((Beyond the deliberative democracy)) coming from the clear limits of Communicative planning (remember Spivack: subaltern cannot speak...), for example, mixing with place-based planning and research practices...according with Yiftachel, Margo Huxley, Vanessa Watson, again...
 - P/PT needs to re-engage with the city, 'division(s)' and justice, and its ceaseless identity-power-resources conflict;
 - PT theory and research practices – must continue to research and explain the role/impact of planning on cities and their societies;
 - PT theory must improve its theorization including those from north and south, west and east! (Watson, Yiftachel) – gray space, urban citizenship, urban apartheid, insurgent citizenship etc;
 - PT must continue to be critical, as well as creative and positive;
 - PT should politicize the professional planner.

Last but not least,

- c. Co-produce a public model of development and State-society engagement:
 - modifying the forms and possibilities of listening and relationship with the "public demand";
 - structuring a not occasional reflection that also involves the development of new forms of relationship between universities, institutions and people, in order to help guide even the institutions in developing potential models to be tested;
 - overcoming the boundaries of a widespread simplification wanted for a long time, innovation oriented to competition and competition coupled to growth
 - accessing the state (Watson, again)

Be part of a co-productive but still public sector-led, that requires fundamental shift in balance of power in a context of civic or counter-governmentality (Roy) or a governmentality from below (appadurai) able to resist and comply with the top down rules...

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ID 1668 | LEARNING FROM EUROPE?

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The rich history of European planning thought has been radiating out to countries outside of Europe for a long time, either in the form of colonial planning and by providing active guidance and orientation or simply by serving as a model for the look from the outside. Within Europe, the exchange of ideas and practical experience has been continuous from the beginnings of planning and urban design – whether we consider our professional field to have started in the Renaissance and Baroque era or whether we want to restrict our perspective to the discipline of ‘modern planning’ in the 19th century, or, again in a different context, in the 1960s. There is a rich literature dealing with periods and areas of planning in which the international exchange of ideas has been particularly lively and influential, extending from, say, the garden city movement, via the exchange of ideas in classic modernism and the period of post-war reconstruction to the very recent history.

My working experience while straddling two continents, Australia and Europe, in research and teaching for a number of years is the background for the survey in this paper. The paper essentially puts spotlights on the European scene of urban design and planning since the late 20th century and asks for the significance and prospects of the learning experience mainly in Australia.

I want to briefly mention, however, that the stream of ideas has not been a one-way street. There are windows upon the Australian scene that can help Europeans to learn from Australia. Colonel Light’s plan for Adelaide, which served as a model for Ebenezer Howard’s garden city is one example. The amazing practice of the Green Bans in Sydney during the 1970s that stopped the demolition of the atmospherically rich working class district of Woolloomooloo is another; and the visit of German politician Petra Kelly who came to Australia to study the Green movement led to the naming of the German Green Party in Germany is another (Coleman 2016).

Back to the basic theme; drawing inspiration from international models of urban design may conceivably make particular sense for a ‘young’ country with a relatively small population size such as Australia. But even Britain with its long and rich tradition of planning has repeatedly discovered that it may be useful to look for orientation abroad – to ‘Europe’. Saying this, I am obviously accepting a definition of ‘Europe’ which is common in the UK, but is met with a degree of amused bewilderment on ‘the continent’ or the European mainland. If Britain sees itself as a separate continent, then the Brexit decision has certainly underscored that sentiment.

Shortly after the turn of the millennium, the experience that countries can learn from each other was expanded in Britain by another, rather drastic assumption. According to Sir Peter Hall, what Britain needed was much more than simply orientation. ‘...British planners have lost the art of urbanism’ (Hall 2013 p.306) he argued; the UK had ‘gone backwards and the current generation of planners do not possess the breadth of knowledge and skill to develop innovative world-leading places’ (McGuinness 2014).

From the late 1990s on, Sir Peter Hall and the head of URBED, Nicholas Falk as well as the RTPA had gathered groups of British architects in order to (re-)visit a number of European cities. During the first decade of the new millennium, they were working on a book which they thought they might call “Learning From Europe”. Against the background of political economy and planning the book rolls out a broad