

THE DILEMMA OF PLANNING

(New Final version)

By

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Generic background

Urban and Regional planning has been with us for a long time. Starting as response to ills of private land ownership, widespread demands for financing public goods and services from national revenues became prevalent and added to the strongest influence of all- the need to respond to the massive wartime urban destruction from two world wars, thus planning became gradually rationalized and institutionalized. However, planning from its very beginning was shadowed by a dilemma: a double conundrum of birth and upbringings :**solutions that became problems**; Land use controls that created “windfalls or wipeouts” at the stroke of a pen, “dark sides” of population management policies, And often, when private land use initiatives were adopted and proved economical, political structures followed and the institution thus came to be widely adopted in the western world (Walker,1941), planning became part of governmentality and the rise of bi-politics.

Accompanied by the wave of colonialization that followed upon the world wars, and the realization that urban slums did not produce good soldiers this scientific/technological and quasi-governmental mechanism came to be widely adopted for the control of urban space in the West and its colonies. Concurrently the spread of the Welfare state caused planning to become an important part of hegemonic scientific ideology with strong academisation and professional backing (Lal, 2002)

In other words planning became a culturally “normal” accepted method for state control of space (Ravetz); The outcomes of this control are usually presented as “the best of all possible worlds”. Almost always the assumption is that planning is the best alternative that modernism offers. The literature on planning was never very critical to start with. Now it became mostly concerned with **formal** practice, less with theory. True, there were academic “Theories” floating about (dealing less with the “What” and the “Why” but mostly on the “How to ”). So called Critical Planning became directed to technological and methodological “approaches”, never to planning itself which was mysteriously sacrosanct (Law-Yone,2007) This ontological vagueness surrounding the formation and consolidation of global Empire is best described in the Hardt and Negri trilogy of Empire, Multitude, and Commonwealth.(Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri 2002) Whereby Empire does not follow imperialism but the opposite!!.

There are as yet no excuses for why most of the proponents and teachers of the planning profession itself have remained silent on the strange phenomenon of what exactly this weird profession professes! Wildavsky(1973) has raised some very basic questions and Carmona and Sieh(2008) have struggled with attempts to measure very real criteria. The big questions remain. **To what exactly are we aiming for in planning? Are the tools we have appropriate to the job? Where's the proof of the pudding? How rigorous are our evaluations of success or failure? Are there alternatives to planning?** As we approach these formidable questions the first pitfall that must be faced is the danger of oversimplification

.Although it is typical of the Empire of Western Science in which the hegemony of Western scientific rationality is often absolute. it becomes imperative to look critically at how the essential features of planning discourse undergo changes under different times, places and cultures. In this way we can examine how planners look at themselves in the mirror by a sort of comparative discourse analysis. In this way we may get closer to what maintains its ongoing self esteem. We can ask therefore what are then the basic **crises of identity** .

Crises of Identity

Three identity crises can be identified: First we should look at the losing of confidence in the basic foundational myths of the planning enterprise. The empiricism of scientific rationality that runs through all the so-called “methodologies” of planning has been under attack from several quarters. After several powerful shake-ups in the economic sector the lack of confidence in rational quantitative predictions of state decision making Taleb warns us of “Black Swans” seriously questioning the basic quantitative turn in algorithmic “artificial intelligence” measures. The Situationist critique of the representation of the spectacle in urban planning (Debord 1993). has also led to severe public outcries. The foundational myth of Development has also been severely questioned especially in Latin America and the Third World (Escobar,1992). Foundational myths are also easily evident in critical discourse analysis of governmentality and subjectification vis-à-vis approaches to planning concerning programmatic outlines , James C.Scott (1999) for example has given us examples of over-ambitious Logos of bombastic programmes such as “New Towns” etc.Schmitt(1950) has added a more detailed Nomos to a powerful repertoire.

The second identity crisis refers to the **loss of epistemic coherence of planning**. The spread of Non-Planned urban “spatialities” and/or “Informal” communities raises several basic questions of planning under patterns of globalization where the political hegemony of the nation state gives way to improvisational ventures.(Roy) After years of Peace of Westphalia following 30 years of warfare, it seems that the nation-state apparatus of the Westphalian model was rather over ambitious. Strange bravely points out the weaknesses in the literature surrounding The Peace of WestFailure !

This brings us to the third crisis of identity located in a state of confusion in a **system of morality underlying the legal issues of the discourse of planning**. First, the

replacement of the Welfare state with the neo-liberal capitalist version put a question mark around the “Public” in whose name planning has traditionally operated. Planning discourse has shown that Public=Private partnerships have made a mockery of **privatization** with serious doubts as to its advantages. Today it is the **commons** discourse that proposes a serious alternative to state and/or market **spatialities**. (Bollier & Helfrich ,2012) Furthermore the whole novelty of resulting bio-politics has not as yet been fleshed out (Hamann). Overall one can say that planning efforts all over the world have become more and more sporadic and controversial!

Zionism and Israeli Planning:

The Zionist project for creating the nation-state of Israel adopted very early the tool of planning as a modernistic device for control. Already in 1930 Ben Gurion assembled a high powered commission of professionals; architects, agronomes, engineers, surveyors etc. to compose the Jewish Agency’s answer to the Peel Commission’s question concerning the partition proposal of the United Nations, BG however rejected very firmly the Israel Agency teams’ proposed plan, insisting that he wanted surveys not plans inasmuch as planning involved bargaining which only Ben Gurion as elected political representative was legally entitled to carry out. He therefore created one of the first characteristics of Israeli planning- a centralized, top down, ad-hoc mode. In fact this duality of a **proactive** top-down system operating in parallel with a bureaucratic **reactive** colonialistic system coexists to this day. The colonial aspect of planning of course has its roots in the historical background of state formation. These were land laws and surveys of the Ottoman period; the adaptation of the British Mandate to these laws and the creation of Zionist “**law-fare**” tactics(Forman &Kedar,2003) formed techniques of settlement control. Finally the subsequent national adoption of a detailed land use physical plan from the Mandate period with many amendments and additions (Sharon).constituted the basis for statutory planning whenever legally convenient.

Critical issues in contemporary planning discourse

The analysis of planning discourse shows many issues within the theoretical context of Israeli planning which could be termed “normal” such as necessitating plan document additions for ecological impact analysis, additions prioritizing sustainability, global warming etc. In terms of universal contemporary planning discourse however. we can identify two major focal issues .The first issue is the nature of the **Legality of, and in, Planning**: It will be recalled that David Harvey was the first to identify Social Justice in the City as constituting a “**revolutionary**” (personal communication) trend in regimes of urban studies.. Another powerful turn in urban studies followed upon Lefebvre’s proposal of the **Right to the City**. It must be admitted that the Legality question continues to occupy a constant fascination among planners and academics even to this day where the search for the **Just** city takes high priority in research. The second area of contemporary planning discourse interest concerns the search **for an entirely new framework approach**. Bypassing the normal (historical) frames of State and market, the **commons**

approach promises a fresh new world of planning ontologies, methodologies, spatialities centered on pre-modern regimes of manifestos of common rights of ordinary people before enclosures created the first cities.(Linebaugh 2008) A new planning approach that seeks to come to terms with the commons approach holds out the challenge of a fundamental breakthrough in our present existing repertoire of tired and confused discourses. Recent attempts to face this challenge is Marcuse's attempt to go from "Justice Planning to Commons Planning"(Marcuse et al,2009). Using an ancient nursery rhyme as basis,

**The Law locks up man or woman
That steals the goose from off the commons
But leaves the larger villan loose
That steals the commons from the goose.**

Marcuse makes some valid points as far as "goose" oriented planning is concerned. However the wider problem of problematizing the commons itself he sees as involving questions necessarily concerning manifestos of the public i.e/ itself, questions beyond their competence to answer lying thus beyond planners professional discourse! Once again one senses a reluctance to forego the hegemonic discourse arena where the planner can brag of his or her monopoly of expertise, exposing the connection between discourse and power!

Morality of the commons (Law-Fare)

It is time for planners to try to go beyond the "Professional" approach. Instead we should look more closely at how we tend to use law-fare in planning practice. A short definition of law-fare could be; the **creation** Of institutions with superior legal standing in any conflict situation. In fact, in a sense, ALL planning involving major legal decisions where the overriding factor is moral or racial or any other communal characteristics is law-fare. Interesting intimations of how this relates to the "common" discourse come from reports of the colonial struggle for land use control in Mandate Palestine. Forman and Kedar(2003) give us detailed examples of Zionist interests using lawfare as the British Colonial authority of the Mandate took precedence over the Ottoman regime. Of particular interest is the case of **Zor-al-Zarka and Barat Quesariya** where early beduin tribes tried to get legal concession rights on swamplands which had become State lands under Ottoman land law. These were not yet formalized under colonial British law hence the changes approved by the sultan of land use classifications from Mawat (dead) land to Matruka (Public) or Miri(State) were considered "**moral**" not "**legal**" rights. Several commissions of high level committees were faced with this legal conundrum. The third committee headed by High Commissioner's Legal Advisor Norman Bentwich, a Zionist Jew, determined that the recommended binding issue was for the Colonial Office to base its judgement on "**the rights of commons**" of **British Law!** Thereby trumping "moral" rights of the beduin tribes by "rights of the commons" It is interesting to speculate what would have happened if there was an equivalent set of beduin "rights of commons". Or, relating more pertinently to the issue of this paper, surely one can take comfort in the fact

that even in critical planning issues the planner can and may override hegemonic planning by preferring the moral to the formal ! Planners then could benefit from a new type of governmentality where the “conduct of conduct” of bio-politics is given a new fusion of energy, by integrating morality with the commons: Giving us the subjectification of governmentality!!

The subjectification of governmentality

Trent Hamann (2009) has shown us how particular forms of behaviour patterns fit the dominant political discourse that Foucault terms as subjectification, which occurs as one conforms to the political exigencies of the dominant ideology. neo-liberalism for example (Hamann.2009).

Now that we are faced with a change of radical proportions in subjectification called “**post politics**” we may ask: what are the determinants of our behaviour patterns? Is Rancierian “partitioning the sensible” going to be determined by “market” values such as rationality, quantification, cost/benefit analysis, large scale simulations etc? Is the new “policing” going to give rise to a governmentality more **liberal** than before? Surely we might be facing a change in **democracy** as identities and communities become more voluble while moral and ethical restraints fall apart. In sum we might be facing a formidable challenge to fundamental planning theories, For example we might foresee a conflict of interests between “rational”, “objective” “quantitative” planning and a “liberal” democracy of the commons? Can we wonder?: Could commonwealth bring forth the “Mass-Man” of Ortega y Gasset? Can we expect the post-political regime of Ranciere to bring forth specters of “**collective mediocrity**” or “**tyranny of the majority**”? If so, a Neo-neo-Liberalism (Ortega y Gasset’s “Magnamity”) might then be called upon to respond (subjectification?), This new cultural governmentality, could then become the basis of a new “politics” of neo-neo liberalism?

OR

Or are we facing a re=mediatory future of **states of exception** and **topologies** of parasites (Crocker) where planning becomes radically redefined and discourse becomes paradox? From all practical evidence at our disposal , states both in the developed as well as underdeveloped world are becoming prime users of racially inspired “legal” constructs of arbitrary exceptions as the new planning Law-Fare!!!

Young Planners, Beware the power of the new discourse !

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