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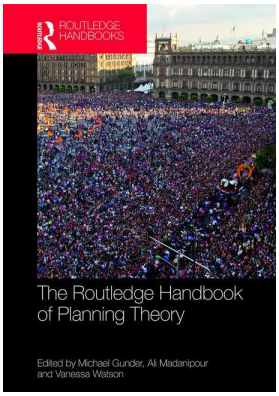

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3

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Ontological and Epistemological Challenges

Louis Albrechts

Introduction

In a surprising number of countries, planning systems have changed little from the traditional models of the 1970s, and even where the nature of plans have changed, the basic principles of the regulatory system tend to remain. This is cause for serious concern given the nature and scale of problems and challenges that places all over the world are now facing: problems involving poverty, persistent inequality, environmental issues (global warming, flooding), the right to mobility and so on. Secchi and Viganó (2011) frame the current condition of cities all over the world as raising new urban questions in connection with globalizing markets and financial systems. They argue that new principles, concepts and theories are required that can act as guides for finding reliable solutions for complex problems. Statutory planning instruments, such as master plans and land-use plans, seem to be ineffective because their focus is often on maintaining the existing social order rather than challenging and transforming it. They are designed for situations of stability, certainty and reasonable clarity of problems to be addressed, traits that are lacking in contemporary cities. In this way, they fail to capture the dynamics and tensions of relations coexisting in particular places (Albrechts and Balducci, 2013). Traditional spatial planning becomes less focused on the visionary and imagining the impossible, and more concerned with pragmatic negotiations around the immediate in a context of the seeming inevitability of market-based forms of political rationality (Haughton et al., 2013: 232). Some urban transformation narratives become hegemonic because they are in line with wider discourses such as the rise of neoliberalism. The rollout of neoliberal policy privileges urban and regional competitiveness, mainly through the subordination of social policy to economic policy, allows for more elitist forms of partnerships and networks (Jessop, 2000; Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009: 618) and limits the scope for genuinely innovative development. City governments are lured to adopt an entrepreneurial style of planning in order to enhance competitiveness. As a result, planning faces major ontological and epistemological challenges. These may include the scope of planning, approaches, use of skills, resources, knowledge base and the involvement of a wider range of actors. It is therefore argued that spatial planning is in desperate need of a critical debate that questions the political and economic processes of which existing planning approaches are an integral part (see Sager, 2013: xviii), as well as a need for fresh ideas and approaches (see Allmendinger and Haughton, 2010: 328). Within the architectural/urbanism

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discipline an approach to land-use regulation emerged through a new generation of strategic (mainly urban) projects – especially for the revival of rundown parts of cities and regions – such as the French 'Projet de ville' (see Secchi, 1986). In addition to traditional sectoral and technical knowledge, design operations provide a specific and original body of knowledge (see Viganó, 2010). In this approach urban design, as an instrument to analyze and to read places, uses images and representations to reveal qualities of existing spaces and places and their possible futures. The influential Barcelona model provides a link between an urban design component involving small-scale interventions to upgrade neighborhoods and improve the image of the city, and a strategic planning component.

In the 1990s, strategic approaches, frameworks, and perspectives for cities, city-regions, and regions became fashionable in Europe, Australia and, mainly through the impact of the Barcelona model and UN-Habitat, in Latin-America and Africa (see Borja and Castells, 1997; Healey et al., 1997; Albrechts, 1999; Salet and Faludi, 2000; Borja, 2000; Tibaijuka, 2005, UN-Habitat, 2009; Gonzáles, 2011). This chapter focuses first on the roots of strategic planning, its aims, logic and some critiques. In a second part I focus on four dimensions that aim to explain the strategic nature of planning. I hereby rely on theoretical literature (Healey, 1997a, 2009; Gonzáles, 2011; Balducci et al., 2011; Haughton et al., 2013; Albrechts, 2013, 2015), a dissection of planning processes all over the world (Albrechts et al., 2017) and my experience in practice.

Strategic Spatial Planning: History, Logic, Aims, Critique

Patsy Healey, together with other authors (see Albrechts, 2001, 2004; Balducci et al., 2011), has gradually developed a definition. She defines strategic planning as: 'a social process through which a range of people in diverse institutional relations and positions come together to design plan-making processes and develop contents and strategies for the management of spatial change' (Healey, 1997a: 5). For Healey (1997a) strategic planning provides an opportunity for building new ideas and building processes that can carry them forward. Strategic planning is looked upon as 'self-conscious collective efforts to re-imagine a city, urban region or wider territory and to translate the result into priorities for area investment, conservation measures, strategic infrastructure investments and principles of land use regulation' (see Healey, 2000: 46). Interpreted in this way, strategic planning deploys one of its most interesting potentials, its capacity to produce action frameworks and interpretative images capable of mobilizing people to action and, in some cases, of constructing a new governance culture (Albrechts et al., 2003). Just as in planning, generally speaking, there are different traditions of strategic spatial planning and as these different traditions/origins leave a mark on the way strategic planning is applied I reflect briefly on its history, logic, aims and critiques formulated.

History

The word strategy has its roots within a military context (see Sun Tzu, 1994 [500BC]). The focus is on accurate understanding of the real situation, realistic goals, focused orientation of available strength and persistence of the action. In the early 1980s, the state and local governments in the US were called upon to use the strategic planning approach developed in the corporate world (Kaufman and Jacobs, 1987). Bryson (1995) stresses the need to gather the key (internal and external) stakeholders (preferably key decision makers). Moreover, he stresses the importance of external trends and forces, and the active involvement of senior level managers, to construct

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a longer term vision. In the 1960s and 1970s strategic spatial planning in a number of Western countries evolved toward a system of comprehensive planning at different administrative levels. In the 1980s a retreat from strategic planning can be witnessed, fueled not only by the neo-conservative disdain for planning, but also by postmodernist skepticism, both of which tend to view progress as something which, if it happens, cannot be planned (Healey, 1997a). Instead, the focus of urban and regional planning practices was on projects (Secchi, 1986), especially for the revival of rundown parts of cities and regions, and on land-use regulations. Gradually a definition of strategic planning developed that is clearly different from the military and the corporate stance. In the 1990s a growing literature and an increasing number of practices seem to suggest that strategic spatial planning could provide an answer to the shortcomings of statutory planning (Healey, 1997a, 1997b, 2006, 2007; Albrechts, 2004, 2013, 2015; Tibaijuka, 2005; UN-Habitat, 2009; Albrechts and Balducci, 2013; Balducci et al., 2011). It is not surprising that these ideas and practices started to travel. The Barcelona model (see Borja and Castells, 1997; Borja, 2000; Gonzáles, 2011) became very influential. Strategic planning in Barcelona[1] has been limited to creating an environment of civic debate in which the economic actors, public entities, social and labor organizations, and professional and academic sectors are equal. It has served to promote or legitimize public and mixed projects and programs, contribute to their coherence, and reflect on the future (Borja, 2000). In 2005, in four volumes (quick guide, manual, toolkit and action guide) UN-Habitat promotes local economic development through strategic planning. Here the strategic approach

> implies careful consideration of the various trade-offs and making difficult choices. It demands harnessing and mobilizing the local human, social, financial and natural capital towards the common vision, goals and objectives that the community aspires to achieve. This is possible only when various actors join forces to make a difference in quality of life in their cities, towns and settlements.
>
> *(Tibaijuka, 2005: iii)*

In a 2009 publication, UN-Habitat stresses that

> strategic spatial planning also has a crucial institutional dimension. … Coordination and integration of policy ideas of line-function departments is essential (because planning is not just about the functional use of land), and the plan itself cannot achieve this coordination. New institutional relationships must evolve to do this.
>
> *(UN-Habitat, 2009: 61)*

With support from UN-Habitat and the African Network of Urban Management Institutions, strategic plans based on the *Millennium Development Goals* were drawn up. 'Integrating the MDGs within planning made it possible to rectify certain major shortcomings encountered in master planning'. The approach made available a strategic spatial framework with time horizons and indicators of objectives. It gave an understanding of the realities and trends in the implementation of the MDGs at the urban level. The approach made it possible to acquire information to identify the actions to take 'in order to improve living conditions and access to basic social services at the urban level. It made available indicators for monitoring the strategic plan and, thus, strengthened public accountability' (UN-Habitat, 2009: 61–62).

As a result of a reawakening of 'the political' based on equality (see Swyngedouw, 2014 in line with Rancière), a demand for transformative practices leads to a call for a more radical strategic planning (Albrechts, 2013, 2015). It is based on dealing with structural issues, co-production

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as a political strategy[2] and in this way as a base for democratic engagement, working with conflicts and legitimacy.

Logic, Aims and Critiques

The motivations for using strategic spatial planning in practice vary. However, the objectives – as demonstrated in its history – have typically been: to construct a challenging, coherent and coordinated vision and to frame an integrated long-term spatial logic (for land-use regulation, for resource protection, for sustainable development, for spatial quality, sustainability, equity, etc.). It aims to enhance action-orientation beyond the idea of planning as control and to promote a more open multi-level type of governance.

Despite a certain popularity of strategic spatial planning, one cannot be blind to the critique articulated on strategic planning (Metzger, 2012). The critiques focus on very different registers of the strategic spatial planning approach (Albrechts, 2015). Some of the criticisms are related to the ontology and epistemology of strategic planning. Questions are raised on how and to what extent the shift from a Euclidean concept of stable entities toward a non-Euclidean concept of many space-time geographies is reflected in strategic spatial planning? How are the different types of knowledge (tacit/experiential knowledge of local communities versus traditional scientific knowledge) relevant for a more relational approach to strategic planning reflected in strategic plans and actions based on these plans? Economic, political and ideological critiques draw a link between the rise of strategic spatial planning and the strengthened neoliberal political climate (see Leal de Oliveira (2000a) on strategic planning in Rio de Janeiro; see also the interesting exchange (2000a) between Borja and Fabricio Leal de Oliveira, and Carlos B. Vainer in *Progressive Planning Magazine* (both available on Planners Network (www.plannersnetwork.org/)). In this respect questions are raised whether strategic spatial planning practices are able to resist the hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism (see Olesen, 2011). Some attack the militaristic and corporate terminology of strategic planning (see Leal de Oliveira, 2000a). Other critics argue that the results of strategic planning, in terms of improvement of the quality of places, have been modest. They ask whether actually existing practices of strategic spatial planning really follow their normative groundings and they point at its weakness in theoretical underpinnings (Newman, 2008; Monno, 2010). Monno (2010) and Moulaert (2011) question the conditions under which visions would materialize, the lack of concern about the path dependency of the resources, a too sequential view of the relationships between visioning, action, structure, institutions and discourse. Concern is raised about the legitimation of strategic spatial planning, the role of expertise and knowledge, and how to introduce transformative practices (see Albrechts, 2010).

Most strategic planning processes react against perceived shortcomings of statutory planning. Statutory planning is blamed for the lack of political, economic and environmental consideration; the rigidity of planning methods; its incapability to deal with uncertainty and tackle flexibility; its view of space as a container that holds objects inside with distinctive physical and administrative boundaries; and the fact that statutory plans serve only (mainly) as binding documents to obtain building permits (see different chapters in Albrechts et al., 2017). So in other words 'statutory plans serve the purpose of both generating a conception of a place and the locales within it and of defining the legal and spatial parameters within which rights to develop sites and properties are developed' (see Vigar et al., 2005: 1408).

The shifts from control to framing, from an extended present to becoming, from comprehensive to selective, from masterplans and land-use plans to probes of the future, strategies, projects and distributive justice, from places as containers toward many space-time geographies, all constitute not only epistemological challenges but also fundamental ontological issues.

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Potential Critical Features Explaining the Strategic Nature of Planning

The theory and practices of strategic planning demonstrate that strategic planning involves content and process, statics and dynamics, constraints and aspiration, the cognitive and the collective. It involves the planned and the learned, the socioeconomic and the political, the public and the private. It has a focus on the vision and the action, the local and the global, legitimacy and a revised democratic tradition, values and facts, selectivity and integrativity, equality and power, long term and short term. In the next paragraphs these elements are defined according to a set of inherent features that are considered essential to the identity and functioning of strategic planning (see Healey, 2009; Albrechts and Balducci, 2013; Albrechts et al., 2017). They belong to four relevant dimensions: content- and context-related, visioning embedded in becoming, relational nature, and legitimacy.

Context- and Content-Related

Political and Institutional Context

Strategic spatial planning needs a contextual understanding of power and material interests, of (leading) discourses and the constraints of a more-of-the-same attitude (see also proposition 4 by Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000: 339). The context forms the setting of the strategic planning process but also takes form and undergoes changes in the process (see Dyrberg, 1997). For some (Olesen and Richardson, 2012: 1690; UN-Habitat, 2009) strategic planning needs a specific political and institutional context and is sensitive to specific intellectual traditions. The capacity of a strategic spatial planning system to deliver the desired outcomes is dependent not only on the legal-political system itself, but also on the conditions underlying it. These conditions affect the ability of planning systems to implement the chosen strategies. New ideas and concepts need to be able to travel into different contexts to change and to be changed by the dominant culture. Strategic planning does not do any work on its own. It needs change agents, what Kingdon (2003) has described as 'policy entrepreneurs' (a champion in the terminology of Bryson, 1995) to take the approach and deploy it. The influence is not direct, but works through multiple processes in which relevant actors can see an opportunity to use strategic planning to push forward a policy change (see Sorensen, 2010: 133). Actors interpret strategic planning differently and will adopt those aspects of the approach that best fit their own situation. This might be a choice for elements that promise to solve some problems and can be implemented or reinterpreted within the frameworks of existing planning tools (see Healey and Upton, 2010). Practices illustrate that dominant models are sometimes reimagined as smoke screens behind which agendas of privatization are implemented. For Leal de Oliveira (2000b) and Vainer (2000) the Barcelona model has opened up in Rio de Janeiro a door for more corporate-friendly strategic planning techniques and mega urban projects (see also Gonzáles, 2011: 1412). Such projects have become a key component of a neoliberal shift from distributive policies, welfare considerations and direct service provision toward more market-oriented and market-dependent approaches aimed at pursuing economic promotion and competitive restructuring (see Swyngedouw et al., 2002: 572).

A challenge in contemporary governance – and by extension in strategic planning – consists in the dialectic between movements that seek democratization, collective decision-making and empowerment of citizens on the one hand and the established institutions and structures that seek to reabsorb such demands into a distributive framework on the other (see Young, 1990: 90). The question concerning who is to be considered an actor in a particular context or situation is not only an epistemological challenge, but also a fundamentally ontological issue (Metzger,

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2012: 782). One can find a very wide variety of actors in strategic planning practices (Vainer, 2000; Albrechts, 2006; Albrechts et al., 2017): city, regional, and national governments, sector departments, agencies, banks, universities, chambers of commerce, trade unions, associations of entrepreneurs, cultural organizations, civic associations, consumer organizations. The search of strategic planning for new scales of policy articulation and new policy concepts is also linked to attempts to widen the range of actors involved in policy processes, with new alliances, actor partnerships and consultative processes (Albrechts et al., 2001, 2003; Healey et al., 1997).

Content

One of the most important manifestations of legal and spiritual life is the fact that whoever has true power is able to determine the content of concepts and words (Schmitt, 1988: 202). With regard to crucial political (and by extension strategic planning) concepts it depends on who interprets, defines and uses them. Who concretely defines the visions, the strategies, the actions? Who defines what spatial quality, what equity, what accountability, what legitimacy are? As a transformative process strategic planning produces visions or frames of reference, the justification for coherent actions, and the means for implementation that shape and frame what a place is and what it might become (Albrechts, 2001, 2004). Visions and concrete actions must accept the full complexity of a place while focusing on local assets and networks in a global context, social justice, spatial quality, and a fair distribution of the joys and burdens. Where statutory planning ends up – as a result of its legal status – in a closed system, the political potential of strategic planning lies in its dimension to broaden the scope of the possible and imagine the impossible. This implies the development of relational more-than-human perspectives as a way to broaden the concepts used (see Metzger, 2014).

Selectivity

Strategic spatial planning defines issues and shapes actions as a result. Much of the process, which is inherently political in nature, lies in making tough decisions about what is most important for the purpose of producing fair, structural responses to problems, challenges, aspirations, and potential. Thus, strategic planning involves choice, valuation, judgment, and decisions that relate to envisioned agreed-upon ends and to the selection of the most appropriate means, not in a purely instrumental sense, for coping with and implementing such ends. In strategic planning, the overall picture that inspires choices is not given by a comprehensive analysis, but rather by synthetic long-term visions.

Output

Strategic spatial planning, both in the short and the long term, focuses on results and implementation by framing decisions, actions and projects. It incorporates monitoring, evaluation, feedback, adjustment and revision. Where traditional spatial plans are judged in terms of conformance, strategic spatial plans are judged in terms of performance (Mastop and Faludi, 1997). The focus on becoming produces quite a different picture from traditional planning in terms of:

- *Products*: strategic plans/policies, frames, strategies versus master plans or land-use plans.
- *Type of planning*: providing frameworks and justification for specific actions (a geography of the unknown; see Albrechts, 2006) versus technical or legal regulation.
- *Type of governance*: government-led versus government-led but co-productive forms of governance.

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In some places, the process of 'discourse structuralization' and its subsequent 'institutionalization' becomes perhaps more important than the plan as such (Hajer, 1995; Albrechts, 1999). In this way, new discourses can become institutionalized, i.e., embedded in the norms, attitudes and practices, thus providing a basis for structural change.

Strategic Planning Is Action- or Project-Oriented

Traditional spatial planning is concerned with the production of plans as a reaction to problems and challenges or just to something a place wants to achieve. Strategic spatial planning relates to action and implementation. This is seen as the pattern of purposes, policy statements, plans, programs, actions (short, medium and long term), decisions and resource allocation that define what a policy is in practice, what it does and why it does it – from the point of view of the various affected publics (Bryson and Crosby, 1992: 296). This stresses the need to find effective connections between political authorities and implementation actors (planning officers, individual citizens, community organizations, private corporations, developers and public departments) (Hillier, 2002). Most actors will not go on the long march unless they see compelling evidence, within a reasonable period of time, that the process is producing acceptable results. Therefore, short-term results are needed to build the credibility needed to sustain efforts over the long haul and needed to help test visions against concrete conditions (Kotter, 1996). But, a strategic planning process should not maximize short-term results at the expense of the future. It means that strategic planning implies a move from episodic to continuous change (Kotter, 2008: 17).

Visioning Embedded in Becoming

Envisioning

Envisioning is a process that creates desired futures and then moves back to what is as it wants to present ideas and concepts that are solid, workable, and of testable value. It works as well as possible with uncertainty, and it enables actors to open up the spectrum of possibilities. Visions must symbolize some good, some qualities, and some virtues (diversity, sustainability, equity, spatial quality, inclusiveness, accountability) that the present lacks. Speaking of sustainability, spatial quality, virtues, and values is a way of describing the type of place citizens want to live in, or think they should live in. To get to these ideas, it needs both the solidity of the analysis and the creativity of the design of alternative futures. Since envisioning is also the journey and not just the destination, and as visions are so central to transformation and so all invasive, it cannot be confined to a single actor or institution in the process. The values and images of what a society wants to achieve are not generated in isolation, but rather are socially constructed and are given meaning and validated by the traditions of belief and practice. They are reviewed, reconstructed, and invented through collective experience (see Foucault, 1980: 11; Hillier, 1999).

Becoming

Becoming emphasizes actions, movements, relationships, conflicts, process, evolvement and emergence (see Chia, 1995: 601). It expresses very well the dynamic nature of the strategic spatial planning process. Becoming produces, in a non-linear way, visions and frames of reference. A frame is the way people see an issue, a problem, a situation, a challenge, an opportunity or a practice (see Healey, 2004: 46). Strategic planning becomes the activity whereby (taking structural

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constraints into account) that which might become is imposed on that which is, and it is imposed for the purpose of changing what is into what it might become. Becoming privileges change over persistence and novelty over continuity (Chia, 2002: 866).

Relational in Nature

It is impossible to understand material places and social nodes such as 'the city', 'the city-region' and 'the region' in terms of a one-dimensional hierarchy of scales (Healey, 2007: 267). Therefore, strategic spatial planning focuses on place-specific qualities and assets (social, cultural, and intellectual, including physical and social qualities of the urban or regional tissue) in a global context. If planners, politicians and citizens reflect upon the city in which they live their lives, they will be able to discover layers of stakes (Healey, 1997b: 69, 91–92) that consist of existing but perhaps unconscious interests in the fate of their city. Hence a plea for strategies that treat the territory of the urban not just as a container in which things happen, but as a complex mixture of nodes and networks, places and flows, in which multiple relations, activities and values co-exist, interact, combine, conflict, oppress and generate creative synergy (Healey, 2007: 1). This implies that the objects that society engages with are not things, but are rather an interconnecting set of shifting relations in which action is undertaken not only based on the identification and use of material assets, but also on an awareness of divergent understandings, – say, different professional codes or local norms – (Chia and Holt, 2006: 649).

The term spatial brings into focus the where of things, whether static or dynamic; the creation and management of special places and sites; the interrelations between different activities and networks in an area; and significant intersections and nodes in an area that are physically co-located (Healey, 2004: 46). Places become both the text and context of new debates about fundamental socio-spatial relations, about 'thinking without frontiers' (Friedmann, 2011: 69). They provide new kinds of practices and narratives about belonging to and being involved in the construction of a place and in society at large (see also Holston, 1995; Yiftachel, 2006; Watson, 2011). The focus on the spatial relations of territories allows for a more effective way of integrating different agendas (economic, environmental, cultural, social, and policy agendas). As these agendas have a variable reach, they also carry a potential for a rescaling of issue agendas down from the global, continental, national or regional level, and up from the municipal level.

Legitimacy

As (mainly) non-statutory processes, questions are raised on the legitimacy of strategic planning processes (see Mazza, 2013: 40). Legitimacy is not only a procedural problem (who decides) but also a substantive problem (the link between strategic planning and statutory planning). For Mazza (2011, 2013) and Mäntysalo (2013) the possible detachment of strategic spatial planning from the statutory planning system into a parallel informal system would pose a serious legitimacy problem. So, instead of detaching strategic planning from statutory planning Mäntysalo (2013: 51) identifies strategic planning not only as planning distinct from statutory planning but also as a planning framing the statutory-strategic planning relationship itself. In line with Friedmann (2004: 56) he argues that, as a consequence, the object of strategic planning should not be on the production of plans themselves (not even strategic ones) but on the production of insights of prospective change and in encouraging public debates on them. It is a way of probing the future in order to make more intelligent and informed decisions in the present (Friedmann, 2004: 56). The strategic probing of future uncertainties frames the fixing of certainties in the present.

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The non-statutory character of most strategic planning experiences seems, for some, to act as a structural antidote against marked standardization (see Sartorio, 2005; see also Hillier (2013) for strategic planning in Australia at a metropolitan scale which often tends to be a set of long-range blueprints for investment). For others the end product might consist of a critical analysis of the main processes and structural constraints shaping our places. This can inform realistic, dynamic, integrated, and indicative long-term visions (frames), plans for short-term and long-term actions, a budget, and flexible strategies for implementation. It constitutes a commitment or (partial) (dis)agreement between the key actors.

More radical strategic planning enters into conflict with political regimes and has to look for cracks in the system to realize its objectives. It can be looked upon as an attack on the legitimacy of political institutions as it reverses and upsets the relationship between the state and its citizens. It is clear that the representative government articulates merely political and not all values. If we accept that representative democracy is not a single completed thing but that it is capable of becoming in a new context and in relation to new issues at hand then we may conclude that a more radical strategic planning does not reject representative democracy but complements it. It adds to the fullness of concrete human content, to the genuineness of community links (see Žižek, 1992: 163 about the very notion of democracy). The narrative of radical strategic planning is a narrative of emancipation. It fulfills a legitimating function. It legitimates social and political institutions and practices, forms of legislation, ethics, modes of thought and symbols. It grounds this legitimacy not in an original founding act but in a future to be brought about, that is, an idea to realize. This idea (of equity, fairness, social justice) has legitimating value because it is universal (see Lyotard, 1992: 50). So, apart from legitimacy stemming from a representative mandate, in radical strategic planning legitimacy might come from its performance as a creative and innovative force and its capacity to deliver positive outcomes and actually gain benefits. Besides the obvious 'physical' space needed to implement projects, strategies and policies, radical strategic planning has a focus on social space. In social space socially innovative relations are both catalysts and outcome of struggle between claims over physical space (Mitlin, 2008; Roy, 2009; Moulaert, 2011: 84; Van Dyck, 2011).

What Next?

The four dimensions mentioned earlier cover the major challenges for strategic planning theory as well as for strategic planning practices. They also provide some ingredients for revisiting strategic planning. The critiques mentioned earlier make it clear that if strategic planning wants to play a role in tackling the challenges the revisit will take strategic planning beyond its traditional boundaries of theory, profession, planning laws and regulations. Underlying is the need to change the perspective of strategic planning and move away from the trend to depoliticize strategic planning by translating (potential) political issues into questions of technical knowledge, skills and expertise (see Swyngedouw, 2014). It implies that strategic spatial planning – at least for the protagonists of a more radical strategic planning – is not just a contingent response to wider forces but an active force in enabling change (see Sager, 2013) according to specific terms (equity, social justice) (Moulaert, 2011: 82).

Revisiting strategic planning requires an in-depth reflection on key concepts (envisioning, becoming, legitimacy), on the path dependency of resources and on space-time geographies. With the focus on non-linear temporalities a link can be drawn to Bergson's concepts of duration (durée) and virtuality. Duration, as the unified flow of time or becoming, and virtuality provide strategic planning processes with a way of seeing the future as bound up with the continual elaboration of the new, the openness of things (see Grosz, 1999: 28). This challenges

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the combination of knowledge (traditional scientific, tacit/experiential knowledge of local communities) with the creativity of the design of alternative (even impossible) futures. It raises uncertainties for those involved in the process. How to combine providing certainty for developers, citizens with probing futures? How to combine flexibility with robustness? New space-time geographies (a geography of the unknown; Albrechts, 2006) stress the need for rescaling issue agendas down from the global, city-region, region and up from the municipal/neighborhood scale. Every situation in which strategic planning is carried out needs some understanding of the contextual factors (political, institutional, legal), some grasp of who key actors are, size and power of strategic and statutory planning agencies, and what networks are in play and how this relates to local social, economic, political and power dynamics (see also Healey, 2010: 14). The call for constructing a new governance culture through a more collective decision-making and empowerment of citizens – co-production – (see Mitlin, 2008; Roy, 2009; Watson, 2014) challenge the established institutions and structures and aims for a shift in power relations.

Notes

1 Barcelona's mentoring role for Latin American cities has been particularly developed through the CIDEU (Centro Iberoamericano de Desarrollo Estratégico Urbano) network founded and headquartered in 1993 in Barcelona and covering more than 80 Ibero-American cities. Its original objective was to diffuse the model and methodology of the Barcelona Metropolitan Strategic Plan to any interested Latin American City (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2004: 44). It was inspired by a developmentalist discourse to intervene in poorer countries to counteract a lack of urban strategic planning culture to channel the fast urbanization process (March Pujol, 2003: 61).
2 Mitlin (2008) uses the cases of the Orangi Pilot Project (Pakistan), SDI (Slum Dwellers International), FEGIP, a federation of local residents' associations in Brazil and the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia to illustrate the use of co-production as a political strategy of grassroots movements.

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