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In Conversation with Klaus R. Kunzmann

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Willem Salet is Emeritus Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Amsterdam. He chaired the Program Group Urban Planning between 1998 and 2016, and was President of the Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP) between 2007 and 2009. In 2016, he was awarded honorary membership of AESOP. Professor Salet specializes in institutional approaches of planning and investigates cultural, political and governance aspects of metropolitan regions.

One of the most puzzling paradoxes of our time is that men and organizations are becoming more and more interconnected – internationally – crossing cultural and physical borders of all levels of space with increasing velocity and intensity in long-distance communication, whilst on the other hand, a contrarian movement of sheltering in proximity and familiarity is closing social and spatial relationships (Beck 1992). In urban planning, we might call it the revenge of proximity after the explosive opening of Melvin Webber's "non-place urban realms" some decades ago. This paradox has many faces and is investigated intensely in sociology. Referring to the works of Beck, Giddens and Lash (1994) and Beck (1992), the French urbanist Alain Bourdin (2000, 2005) conceptualized this paradox as the scissor-movement of mundialization and individualization. Mundialization builds on the permanent specialization and rationalization of social and economic relationships, and tendencies of individualization (maybe as a reaction to it) attempt to appropriate social spaces and create new atmospheres of familiarity and intimacy (Salet 2009). Giddens summarized the dialectic of contrarian experiences via these four dimensions (Giddens 1990):

- Spatial and temporal distancing (creating the need to bridge the far and near, the here and now);
- Impersonality and intimacy (impersonal rationalization creates need for new familiarity; both sides move);
- Continuous specialization and – simultaneously – new forms of social appropriation;
- Particularism and engagement.

The simultaneous articulation of both sides of these divergent and convergent orientations creates a complicated dynamic and tension of human experiences which urges reflection on the social and spatial meaning of places and urban planning.

In the domain of spatial planning, the role of Klaus Kunzmann is highly symptomatic of the struggle with this tension. As one of the founders of the European community of planning schools, he was among the first to intensely scrutinize the international potential of the discipline more than a generation ago. His fulfillment of the Jean Monnet Chair was devoted to the social integration of Europe, afterwards he was teaching on various continents. At the same time, it was Kunzmann who vehemently opposed tendencies of universalism of culture

and in particular the Anglicization of culture and language at the universities in his homeland, Germany (Kunzmann 2012). Universalism of culture is not attractive and home identity may be weighted, but how do we foster border-crossing identification in a world which is increasingly retreating into its shelters whilst becoming anxious about recognizing home as home because of the increasing plurality and multi-dimensionality of social relationships?

This question has become the Achilles heel in the justification of planning, which cannot be effective without the trust of its constituents and which has become even more troublesome at the levels of scale where it is needed most. Urban planning has grown into a matter of crossing borders. The major dramas of this time – referring to climate change and the urgencies of human migration – are staged in particular in the widely urbanized yet internationalized settings of today. However, responsive planning strategies badly need not only the crossing of urban borders but also trust and legitimacy to make this effective.

Considering the easiest border, the territorial dimension of cities today, the major agendas of urban planning can no longer be accommodated within the administrative borders of the compact cities of the 20th century. Political agendas for the cities of Europe still call for urban compactness, but the market (whilst pulsing to the heat of core cities) is already two decades in to rearranging the spatial orders of the urban peripheries in their own fragmentary ways. Regionalization of urban policies has become inevitable, in particular in facing the new urgencies of changing climate and increasing social polarization. The challenge to upgrade regionalizing urban areas to new spaces of network quality is one of the most important challenges of urban planning for the coming generation. It is a complex institutional agenda because neither the core cities nor the national states in Europe are eager to cooperate in this cultural and political transition. Neither in politics nor amongst the population does there seem to be a strong identification with the regionalizing of urban politics. But, how to arrange sustainable mobility in a split metropolitan configuration? Use the bike in the city center and the car in the surrounding periphery? Sustainable mobility in cities requires firstly an upgrade of integral spatial network quality of multi-modal facilities (cycling, light rail, car and train) and public

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transportation at regional level (versus hierarchies and radiation). How to arrange the saving of energy use and the transition from fossil to renewable resources in the widening urban fields without regionalized urban policies? It is impossible to find solutions when reproducing the split framework of core cities and peripheral surroundings. Energy infrastructures connect the heavy concentrations of infrastructure around airports, seaports, green ports, and even brain ports in the wide peripheral zones with the masses of users in the core cities, but the cultural, political and governmental maps are not yet arranged at the level of regional network. All alternative models for renewable energy rely on the wider urban area in terms of production, distribution and energy storage. Issues of climate adaptation (in particular, water) need even larger areas to control flows. The same need for regionalizing cities goes for the new tendencies of social polarization and the huge impact of migration. Poverty and urban problems are increasingly exported to outside areas. Urban riots do not start in the selective spaces of knowledge workers in core cities; the peripheralization of riots reflects the social and material change of urban experience in our time.

Even more complicated in the justification of planning is the crossing of international borders for more sustainable cities. Most emissions are produced in cities and in rural concentrations of agro-industries. Responsive strategies for these local and regional problems, however, depend for the most part on measures at international level. For instance, how to promote energy transition in urban areas when there are no real price restrictions on blowing carbonites into the air? In an open economy, only at macro level (EU) may price conditions be established effectively. The same goes for conditions on agriculture: the local response needs the conditions of international norms. The internationalization of social and cultural relations requires even more combinations of local-transnational response. The increasing needs of migration, in particular from Africa, would require a type of Marshall Plan at European level to create infrastructure and opportunity in countries where people have to escape poverty, war and climate to find a living. Cities may sustain their own ties with cities in these countries and may use the knowledge of migrants to improve the plausibility of this international investment and make it effective. The local challenges are internationalized, but international challenges have also become local. Rather than sheltering, the new context poses challenge and opportu-

nity for planners in trans-scalar spaces. However, planning itself has to reconstruct its base of justification to acquire responsiveness. The smoothing of the third border might be very helpful in this challenge of justification.

The third border concerns the social embedding of planning. Planning has lost its social roots in the modernist epoch of managerialism. Reinventing planning has to start in the legitimacy of social self-regulation by urban dwellers and organizations that are often local and international at the same time. However, social initiatives cannot be responsive on their own, they need conditions. The government has to be involved in setting conditions for public action and facilitating public initiatives rather than arranging production and management itself. And we also need active conditioning at the level of the EU. The change in planning culture has to be in socially motivating and accounting for the “why” and “how” of intervening, rather than organizing the “good and public purposes” out of its own hands. The crucial challenge is in the reinvention of genuine trust building across all borders. It is not self-regulation against municipalities, not Barbers’ united power of city mayors against national states (Barber 2013) and not the sheltering of national leaders from the power of the European Union (mocking it with history by returning to national patriotism with the alibi of pleasing the population!), but the reinvention of justification and social accountability of badly needed intervention that has to cross all borders to breathe new life into the planning and public action we need.

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