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Nicholls, W.J.; Uitermark, J.

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PLANNING/RESISTANCE

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Walter J. Nicholls[a] and Justus Uitermark[b]

[a]Department of Planning, Policy, and Design, 300 Social Ecology I, University of California, Irvine, CA, USA; [b]Department of Sociology, University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

For years urban planning has been understood as a government instrument to rationalize space, populations, and the conduct of residents. This view is consistent with recent discussions of the "post-political" city. As the introduction of the special issue on Planning / Resistance, this paper takes a different view. It examines the politicizing effects of planning. It argues that planning conceives and implements the orderly city by imposing lines and rules that render certain activities illicit and others licit. This effort to divide good from bad conduct, normal from abnormal behavior, results in excluding people who fail to meet dominant norms. The exclusionary lines of urban planning become specific points that often spark resistances. As some resistances (certainly not all) catch fire, they become political conflagrations of people who feel wronged by the denial of equality. Thus, rather than simply evacuating the city of politics, planning generates small and big political resistances by enacting countless dividing lines in the city.

While theorists (Fainstein, 2010; Soja, 2010) and professional ethics guidelines insist urban planners should serve the public interest and seek social justice,[1] critical urban literature argues that planning has become subordinate to, and instrumental for, neoliberal and revanchist urban strategies (Smith, 2002). Rather than counterbalancing dominant interests, planning buttresses neoliberalism's hegemony by providing ancillary institutions for capital accumulation (Brenner, 2004), preempting opposition (Mayer, 2009), and legitimating exclusionary policies that benefit certain class and status groups over others (Purcell, 2009). Critical urbanists have suggested that the promotion of participation serves as a way to extend control into the urban grassroots rather than as tool for emancipation and empowerment (McQuarrie, 2013; Miraftab, 2009). These accounts lend support to the diagnosis that we are experiencing a post-political condition where important policy decisions result from general consensus and technical expertise rather than political struggle (Swyngedouw, 2009). While research on neoliberalism, governmentality, biopolitics, and post-politics is certainly attentive to contradictions and tensions, it seems to us that the role of planning in engendering—not just channeling or muting—conflict has been underexplored both empirically and theoretically. The emphasis has been on how planning serves as a tool

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CONTACT Walter J. Nicholls ✉ wnicholl@uci.edu

of power, a technical means to neoliberal ends. Here we take a different angle by analyzing planning as a terrain through which politics unfolds. Planning not only serves to establish order but also creates multiple resistances and conflicts. This introductory article and the contributions to this collection on the planning/resistance interface analyze and disentangle how planning is a generative source of disruptive politics in the city.

Theoretical rationale and aims

Like other disciplines (medicine, psychology, etc.), planning operates within larger political economic forces and is constrained by these forces. But also like those other disciplines, planning has distinctive discourses, ethics, and norms; it generates categories and methods; it demarcates the sociospatial order conceptually and physically; and it creates lines of inclusion and exclusion. As a modality of power, planning enables city making by imposing limits on what is to be done, who should be included, what proper roles should be played, and who needs to be excluded. Planning is productive because it is essentially limiting, no matter how "just" and "inclusive" a plan may be. As Lefebvre concisely put it, "[s]tate-imposed normality makes permanent transgression inevitable" (1991, p. 23). Planning is, therefore, a comprehensive yet highly unstable modality of power that enacts the orders of government and incites resistances against the governing order. Conceived in this way, the process of planning generates small resistances at every specific point in its enacting.

Jacques Rancière's work is an obvious go-to for geographers seeking to understand the planning/resistance interface. Rancière's work is saturated with spatial notions and this is especially true for his key conceptual doublet of "the police" and "the political." In Rancière's understanding, the police order is premised on a definite organization of space in which only some bodies, words, and acts are permitted visibility. The police is "an established social order of governance with everyone in their 'proper' place in the seemingly natural order of things. It is based on a partitioned spatial organization" (Dikeç, 2005, p. 174). The political is instantiated when this order is disrupted. This is, again, an intrinsically spatial process: "There is dissensus when there is something wrong in the picture, when something is not at the right place" (Rancière, 2007, p. 559). Building on these ideas, Rancière locates politics with geographical precision: "Politics lodges one world into another: the world in which we are all equal into the existing order which allocates parts based on some other principle (rule of the best, the strongest, the wealthiest, the cleverest, and so on)" (Rancière, cited in Davidson & Iveson, 2015, p. 548). One further contribution by Rancière is that he charts how political contestation can refigure the police order by challenging its principles of hierarchy in the name of equality. Rancière, therefore, not only provides extensive and spatially sensitive conceptualizations of the police and the political but also hints at how we can conceive of their intertwinement. When planners and authorities conceive, implement, and manage a planned space, they draw boundaries to differentiate what they perceive to be acceptable (licit) from unacceptable (illicit) conduct. Planning entails the proliferation of real and imagined lines between the acceptable and unacceptable, the licit and illicit, which in turn generates a multiplicity of possible political resistances to transgress each exclusionary act.

While Rancière has much to offer to the growing numbers of geographers engaging with his work, there are tensions between the way Rancière spatializes his key concepts and conceptions of place and space prevalent within critical urban studies. We think that Davidson and Iveson (2015, p. 546) are correct in their observation that some followers of Rancière treat "depoliticization as a condition that has been realized, rather as a tendency that has taken hold" and we believe that the reasons for this can be found in Rancière's work. For instance, his key concept of "the police" refers to an "order" or a "rule" that assigns positions and fixes roles. The political, in turn, is defined as the negation of that order by a disruption or challenge premised on equality.

Rancière's concepts are strictly defined, but the messiness of actual politics means that it is exceedingly difficult to actually find "proper" or "actual" political acts. Rancière acknowledges this:

> If the distinction between politics and the police can be useful, it is not to allow us to say: politics is on this side, police is on the opposite side. It is to allow us to understand the form of their intertwinement. We rarely, if ever, face a situation where we can say: this is politics in its purity. But we ceaselessly face situations where we have to discern how politics encroaches on matters of the police and the police on matters of politics. (Rancière, 2009; cited in Davidson & Iveson, 2015, p. 549)

Rancière here indicates he is interested in the interface of politics and the police. However, the work he has done and inspired often aims precisely at identifying the pristinely political. For instance, Rancière feels that the assemblies organized on city squares are undermined by the "professionals" who seek to "manipulate" them—"you know, the professionals are there at the first hour. At the first hour when something happens somewhere, there they are! Even at the first assembly they can manipulate it. It's not a matter of explosion and then institutionalization, no, I think at every moment there is and in every assembly there is the problem of inventing a kind of anarchic discipline of the assembly" (Rancière in Papastergiadis & Esche, 2014, p. 41). Conceived as relays of the police, the primary role of the professionals is to control disruptive political acts. However, activists are invariably engaged in crafting their discourses, developing subjectivities, and policing their spaces. This illustrates a fundamental issue: in the analysis of actual mobilizations, it is difficult—politically, conceptually, and methodologically—to decide what or who is political. Rancière solves this problem ontologically by developing a coherent set of definitions but problems start when these concepts hit the ground and become operationalized with concrete empirical referents.

We are not suggesting that Rancière is wrong, but we want to call attention to the fact that his work contradicts—or, if you like, disrupts—a number of key assumptions that have been informing critical urban studies. Much of the work in critical urban studies over the last decades has been premised precisely on the idea that it is unhelpful to conceive of the status quo as a singular entity (Uitermark & Nicholls, 2014). For instance, geographers self-consciously moved away from considering "neoliberalism" as general condition and have made some of their most insightful contributions by analyzing "neoliberalization" as an ongoing, contested, differentiated, and contradictory process (Harvey, 2014; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Much the same could be said of geographers' efforts to analyze racism, the state, or the economy: there has been a move

away from analyzing these phenomena as if they were closed systems in the direction of approaches emphasizing variation, contradiction, and dynamism.

This project is different from, perhaps even at odds with, that of Rancière. This is self-consciously so: he explicitly refutes a sociological understanding of politics or power in favor of a philosophical understanding. As Deranty (2003, p. 137) notes, Rancière

> "does not support his political theses with full-fledged sociological, legal, and psychological theories. However, this is not a real shortcoming since his explicit claim is that there is a specific logic of the political that is not derived from social or developmental logics. Indeed, his main contribution is to isolate and emphasize the democratic moment in politics and to denounce all reductions to the social."

Rancière, in other words, sees little value in the explanatory and interpretive analysis characteristic of social science. Rancière's project is explicitly normative in that he stipulates that only disruptive claims premised on equality are political in a meaningful sense. This might be beneficial if the goal is to define what is properly political, but it is problematic if the goal is to investigate how subjects emerge, articulate claims, and transform social life through struggle. Rancière does not intend to offer tools to explain how, where, and why power relations consolidate or are challenged. His project, on the contrary, is based on the premise that the political defies social scientific explanation. Instead of investigating how different understandings of democracy, politics, or equality are developed and contested, Rancière claims the authority to define what these concepts mean. While such an exercise can offer a new perspective and provoke new questions, it is of limited relevance for understanding dynamics of power in general or for the more limited goal of analyzing the contradictions and contention inherent in planning regimes.

While Foucault is in some ways close to Rancière, he does offer more building blocks for an interpretative and explanatory analysis of the planning/resistance interface. In contrast to Rancière, Foucault does not aim to identify what is properly political. Instead of foregrounding a normative understanding of what ought to be regarded as political, Foucault is interested in the dynamics of power. And rather than defining power in a limited sense (as Rancière does with politics), Foucault offers a broad understanding. Power, for Foucault, must be understood,

> [i]n the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggle and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, thus forming a chair or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (1978, pp. 92, 93)

Understanding power in this way means that "the political" does not effectuate a break with "the police order." Resistant actors are conceived of and operate in ongoing processes of social struggle that they cannot supersede or transcend. Discourses on the nature of injustice or the wrongs of a sociopolitical system can only unfold within preexisting language and meaning systems, which are bound by and shaped by the

powers that be. In other words, "resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault, 1978, p. 95) and there is "no power without potential refusal or revolt" (Foucault, 2000; cited in Ettlinger, 2011, p. 549).

Planning as an unstable terrain of politics

Planning is the pursuit of a Rancièrian police order in which everything and everyone have their proper place, but this pursuit is doomed to fail: the police order in which all roles and practices are prescribed and accepted at most a momentary achievement as "states of power … are always local and unstable" (Foucault, 1978, p. 93). Conflict is immanent to planning (Pløger, 2004). While planning is an ongoing effort to impose and create order, it is also intrinsically an unstable and destabilizing force because it imposes exclusions and limits. Each of these limits is a point that can potentially trigger small conflicts and resistances. For those finding themselves on the wrong side of the line, they are likely to resist for a variety of reasons and in countless different ways (from passive to active, individualized to collective). Resistance is often spurred by the assumption that some kind of "wrong" has been committed (triggering moral outrage). This "wrong" may not necessarily be the violation of the equality principle, as Rancière would have it, but another moral reason entirely. For example, Didier Fassin (2012) argues that "humanitarian reason" spurs many people to get involved in resistances against state practices (e.g. feeding homeless in London, helping sans papiers in Paris). The motive for resistance can, however, change during course of the struggle, from humanitarian reason to the struggle for equality. This nonnormative and empirical reading of resistance, therefore, values all kinds of resistance. It places emphasis on tracing the micro-mechanisms of their evolution through space and time: from small cracks to big and system-threatening mobilizations. It suggests that power is limited at the specific moment of its enactment because it produces cracks that spread in complex and unanticipated ways. Rather than valuing only those resistances that claim a pure form of equality, this view suggests that the walls that power builds are constantly being undone by the innumerable cracks it itself produces.

For those directing planning projects (e.g. government, developers, and para-public organizations), anticipating ruptures and channeling resistances are the central part of their job. Planners are well equipped to anticipate and manage resistance, but some seeds of resistance occasionally escape their reach and become moments of open political contention. Planning never fully encapsulates cities as people and processes falsify assumptions and betray expectations, forcing authorities to creatively adapt their mechanisms of achieving sociopolitical order and bringing what challenges them into their orbit. Challenges revolutionize planning. The slums of the global South and East once represented a challenge to the state and private property but now have become a model for urban development strategies based on entrepreneurialism (Davis, 2006). Conversely, the postwar suburbs on the edges of cities in western metropolises once epitomized the order of the modern city, but now they testify to the limits of state power as they spawn informalities, rebellions, and illegalities (Dikeç, 2007).

Foucault's work can assist us in identifying the limits, cracks, and resistances in governing orders (Foucault, 1976, 1978, 1980). On the one hand, power involves the production of discourses and measures to differentiate proper from improper conduct

(Foucault, 1978, p. 38). By producing these limits, governments construct deviant subjects and provide them with a source to fuel their grievances (Nicholls & Uitermark, in press). Producing power, therefore, is bound to produce resistant subjects. On the other hand, acts of resistance do not necessarily negate powerful forces but emerge from them and feed back into them. Foucault theorized resistance, but he especially localized resistance at the micro-level (cf. Foucault, 1978; Heller, 1996). It is, perhaps, this emphasis on localized resistances against disciplinary power that has contributed to the tendency to view power in the form of governmentality or biopolitics as geographically transversal while the obstacles and resistances to it are located in particular places. However, a key question is how the limitations and subversions of domination at a local level feed from and into contention at higher levels and involve collective actors such as social movements, political parties, and other governmental actors. So perhaps a central task is to extend Foucault's theorizing so that it can help better understand the planning/resistance interface by examining how local ruptures transform (or not) in wider challenges and transformations at multiple levels of practice and analysis.

In line with these general theories on the generative and mutually constitutive relationships between domination and resistance, this collection examines the disruptive and transformative effects of resistance on planning practices. While we conceive resistance, planning, and their mutual imbrication as productive and generative, this by no means implies that we consider the relationship between parties involved in socio-spatial conflict as benign—there are different interests, they do come into conflict, and already powerful parties are likely to win those conflicts. But, contrary to the tenets of realism or rational choice theory, a conflict is more than a collision of pre-given actors, views, and interests. Conflicts constitute actors and create new conditions of possibility, driving forward changes in the physicality of cities, how they are perceived, and how they are governed. This theoretical perspective allows us to create a view of urban politics that is dynamic and yet still sensitive to the urges of government to exert control over bodies and territories.

The contributions

How exactly the dialectic of planning/resistance plays out is a fundamentally open question that can be tackled with different theoretical perspectives and empirical strategies. While all the special issue's papers conceive of the relation between planning and resistance as a generative, they develop this argument from different theoretical perspectives, use different (ethnographic and interpretative) methods, and address cases from different parts of the world. Here, we discuss how each of the papers contributes to achieving the collection's aims.

Mark Purcell and Branden Born use their case study of the alternative food movements in the United States and Mexico to demonstrate how resistance against the globalized food system spawns new modes of social organization. Drawing on, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the alternative food movement is neither utopian nor reactionary but point toward lineaments of a radically different planning practice. The cases they analyze almost reverse the Rancièrian equation of police with hierarchy and politics with equality. Here, the police order is emergent: "Relations of sovereignty,

domination, and centrality will always re-emerge, and they must be continually warded off" to preserve the equality inherent in practices of the Food Commons and the Center for Integral Farmer Development. Hanna Hilbrandt intervenes into the ongoing debate on planning and participation. While many authors have argued participation serves as a mechanism of control and depoliticization in a post-political condition where neoliberalism is beyond dispute, Hilbrandt suggests that such accounts lack attention to the opportunities for opposing neoliberal planning that may be inherent within participatory planning processes. Engaging the literature on "insurgent planning" (e.g. Miraftab, 2009), she develops the concept of "insurgent participation" to explain how participants become politicized during the planning process. In her Berlin case study, she shows that participants did not only provide criticisms within the parameters set by the government but also challenged planning approaches and developed alternative visions of spatial development. While participants may initially simply wish to provide their views on a particular topic (in this case, a defunct airport), their engagement with the planning process can lead them to question and challenge the rules of the game. Her paper, thus, theoretically and empirically shows how resistance does not simply negate planning but emerges from planning practices itself.

Theresa Enright considers the intricate relationship between urban development strategies and mass revolts. She argues that urban development strategies in London and Paris limit the possibilities for effective contestation but also fail to fully achieve control over urban space. Engaging with the work of Alain Badiou, Antonio Negri, and Jacques Rancière, she intervenes into the debate on the social conditions of political moments. Her paper traces the mass revolts to specific geographical conditions of possibility and emphasizes their generative and productive effects. In the case of Paris, for instance, Sarkozy did more than simply restore order—he radically revisioned and redefined the meaning of Paris by "rethinking Paris outside of its historical boundaries and symbolically and materially uniting the center and peripheries of the region." While the revolts tainted the image of Paris and London as orderly and prosperous cities, they also contributed to the radicalization of urban development strategies and the projection of images of urban order and prosperity onto peripheral territories previously outside the imagination of metropolitan planners.

Conclusion

In sum, the theoretical aims of this collection are twofold. First, we use urban planning as a window to conceptualize urban politics beyond governmentality, biopolitics, and the post-political. We stress the limits and cracks that necessarily emerge from every act of government, which leads to conceiving of the governing process as dynamic, unstable, and always incomplete. Far from being a simple instrument of power, planning is an interface through which oppositions and conflicts are constituted. Second, we analyze planning as a terrain of politics generating specific modalities of power, oppositions, and grievances. As planning fixes the built environment, it also creates new terrains of struggle. As planning fixes roles, it also generates conflicts over roles. Rather than conceiving planning and resistance as mutually opposed practices, this collection highlights their tense yet productive relationship by showing how each provides the conditions of possibility for the other to emerge. Both planning and

resistance are generative in shaping cities. By examining their interplay, we not only better understand the professional practices of planners and the opposition to them, but also learn about how cities and citizenship are constituted and contested.

Note

1. According to ethics code of the American Planning Association, "Planners primary obligation is to serve the public interest", to "seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons," to "deal fairly with all participants in the planning process," and to design participation so that it is "broad enough to include those who lack formal organization or influence" (APA, 2013, np).

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Disclosure statement

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