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Transformative spatial governance

New avenues for comprehensive planning in fragmented urban development

Özoğul, S.

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PART IV

Conclusions

7. Synthesis and conclusions: new avenues for planning research and practice

7.1 Introduction

Urban development increasingly occurs through area-based development formations, which can be understood as spatially fragmented governance activities bringing together diverse sets of actors. In this dissertation, I termed these formations *city-building endeavours* and modelled their existence through the complex interplay between institutional and spatial fragmentations. Immersed in discussions on processes of neoliberalisation altering the relationships between state, market and civil society actors, I consider institutional fragmentation as a major cause of complexifying spatial governance. This complexity creates pockets of micro-regulation (Tasan-Kok et al., 2019), in which different *spatial governance* actors and institutions interact. Not only do these interactions create tangible, area-specific spatial outcomes, but they further institutionalise fragmented urban development practices.

On the one hand, scholars are concerned that fragmentation leads to the abandonment of norms and values, and contributes to increasing forms of injustices, exclusion and polarisation (Albrechts, 2016; Tasan-Kok and Baeten, 2012; Harvey, 2009). On the other hand, scholars have pointed out the value of fragmentation in terms of enhanced flexibility responsive to area-specific conditions and needs (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014; Palermo and Ponzini, 2014). I used this juxtaposition as a point of departure to explore the extent to which new forms of comprehensiveness can be created amidst complex and fragmented spatial governance activities. While the focus of this thesis is directed to public-sector planning practices, I do not advocate for a return to comprehensive planning principles of the past. Instead, I put forward the idea of a new conception of comprehensiveness that allows for opportunities to create linkages to make purposeful connections between fragmented city-building

endeavours.

In my conception of comprehensiveness, linkages – referring to durable, tangible and intangible connections between fragmented city-building endeavours – should not be all-encompassing. Their creation requires critical engagement as well as context-dependent and tailor-made approaches. With the development of the integrative framework encompassing the four major dimensions of fragmentation currently discussed in planning studies, I intended to facilitate this process. The dimensions that are raising concerns for scholars are: *i)* the dissolution of social and spatial interventions; *ii)* the existence of opportunity-driven and project-based development projects; *iii)* the appearance of various micro-scale social efforts with claims to urban built environments; and *iv)* the disconnection between these multifaceted city-building endeavours and overarching visions and governance arrangements. By turning them into my framework’s building blocks, I provide a lens to approach fragmented urban development from a new perspective that facilitates understanding different groups of action and considers the possibility of linkages between them, instead of providing a blueprint solution.

I conducted research in the Toronto and Amsterdam based on my conviction that “theoris[ing] in an effort to transform planning practices” (Fainstein and DeFilippis, 2016: 2) requires a thorough understanding of how existing practices work. Hermeneutics allowed for a continuous revision of research questions based on my experiences from the field (Patterson and Williams, 2002), and thinking in terms of *singularities* and *repeated instances* (Robinson, 2016) helped me to start conceptualising from two different vantages without engaging in a systematic comparison. In Amsterdam, I examined the creation of linkages through intangible learning transfers of public sector project managers, which they gained through their interaction with private sector actors. In Jane-Finch in Toronto, I uncovered the role of space in creating linkages between micro-scale social efforts, as well as to residents living in the area. The comparative analysis of Jane-Finch and Regent Park, two areas in Toronto, revealed conditions for the creation of linkages between property-driven developments and community concerns allowing city-building endeavours to instigate wider changes in the city’s spatial governance.

My notion of *transformative spatial governance* drew attention to the opportunities and limitations of instigating institutional change on the basis of these linkages. Following Hernes’ (1976) three levels of structural change, I considered spatial governance as transformative when it modified on the basis of a concrete city-building endeavour, and, as part of the process, altered or adopted new elements that supported linkages in other city-building endeavours in the future. I posit that this form of transformation is pivotal to uphold a new form of comprehensive

spatial governance structure which allows city-building endeavours to flourish but simultaneously places them into a firm but flexible and adaptive framework to avoid fragmentation's negative effects and externalities. However, as the empirical evidence from Toronto and Amsterdam illustrates, it is a challenging undertaking in practice.

In this chapter I elaborate on these challenges and present my dissertation's conclusions. I start by providing a general synthesis of my empirical findings to answer my first research question by specifying how fragmentation is accommodated by spatial governance in Toronto and Amsterdam. It is followed with an answer to my second research question concerning the creation of new forms of comprehensiveness, in which I also justify my terminological choice and contrast it with alternative ones. I continue by reflecting on my contributions to the emerging body of literature on 'transformation' in recent years, and explicate planners' roles in creating linkages and supporting transformative spatial governance. I end by considering the caveats of my dissertation, and provide recommendations for future research.

7.2 How does spatial governance accommodate fragmentation in urban development?

With institutional and spatial fragmentation influencing urban development, my first research question centred around the ways in which spatial governance relates to this situation. Having explored case studies in two research settings allowed me to draw out some *singularities* and *repeated instances* (Robinson, 2016) through the emergence of interesting occurrences while engaging in diverse forms of analyses. To synthesise and discuss my empirical findings from Toronto and Amsterdam, I use Hernes' (1976) differentiation between output structure, process structure and parameter structure, which I equated to my own understandings of *spatial governance*, *city-building endeavours*, and *elements of transformation* in Chapter 3.

Despite their path-dependent and contingent nature, I found that *spatial governance* in Toronto and Amsterdam accommodates fragmentation through complex and dynamic relationships between various actors, whose roles extended beyond traditional or stereotypical perceptions. Nonetheless, with spatial governance especially flexibilising to accommodate private sector interests in urban development, the active involvement of private sector actors with the financial means to invest in spatial interventions in fragmented *city-building endeavours* crucially affects their internal processes. State-market relations in land and property, in line with prevailing spatial governance, emerged as a major precondition for city-building endeavours to develop alternative institutional relations that were not marginalised but actively incorporated in overarching arrangements.

With these insights, I revisited the *elements of transformation* that are highlighted in existing literature and that may play a role in transforming dominant governance arrangements.

Spatial governance as output structure

Spatial governance, understood as output structure, draws attention to dominant governance arrangements that influence the intricate interplay between interventions in urban built and social environments at a particular moment in time. The specific ways in which spatial governance in Toronto and Amsterdam accommodates fragmentation in the cities' development is highly contingent and path dependent. It revokes discussions on the culturally and contextually embedded nature of neoliberalisation processes colliding with longstanding regulatory landscapes (Booth, 2011; Brenner and Theodore, 2005). Factors addressed in the empirical analyses of this dissertation, and in this respect representing *singularities*, include administrative arrangements, the structure of planning systems and history including perceptions of and discourses on the linkage between social processes and physical structures, as well as particular electoral politics and wider provision of welfare services by the state. Nonetheless, the simultaneous occurrence of spatial governance complexities and fragmentations in the institutional as well as spatial sense in both research settings underscores the value of gaining insights from specific contexts to address fragmented urban development at a conceptual level.

In both Toronto and Amsterdam, a changing role of the state and new dynamics between public and private sector actors influenced the fragmentation of spatial governance. Orientation toward property-driven practices, especially since the 1980s, have been documented in both settings (Heurkens and Hobma, 2014; Boudreau, Keil and Young, 2009), and proved fundamental in the creation of fragmented urban development. In Toronto, the dependence on private sector capital to finance revitalisation schemes strongly influenced whether a city-building endeavour was incorporated, or was marginalised, in the city's wider spatial governance. Planning and related public policy in Toronto embraces and advocates for close collaboration between public and private sectors by underscoring both its necessity and benefits. While the general attitude of interviewed public sector officials working in Toronto local administration was welcoming to private sector involvement, the challenges and impediments that come with this approach were also openly acknowledged. In Amsterdam, power dynamics between public and private sector actors shifted in the last four decades towards more fragmented and project-led practices by providing increased flexibility to embrace market interests in a planning system that was long been characterised by dominant state involvement. The 2008 crisis triggered a number of regulatory changes which further institutionalised this accommodation

of private sector interests. Allmendinger (2016) argued that English town planning is instrumentalised in what he terms neoliberal spatial governance. While similar dynamics are certainly true in Toronto and Amsterdam, my findings reveal that the situation is in fact more complex.

Neoliberal political economic ideology creates entrepreneurial governance dynamics, in which planners are considered important agents steered by a market logic, and planning is utilised to attract capital and unleash economic development, often through flexible mechanisms of intervention and public-private partnerships (Tasan-Kok, 2010; Harvey, 1989). Entrepreneurial planning practices are not new, neither in Toronto where close ties between local municipalities and property developers already shaped the construction of modernist suburbs in the mid-20th century (Sewell, 2009), nor in Amsterdam where the municipality has long been actively involved in land markets in line with the Dutch active land policy, as well as having collaborated with private sector actors following notions of a public interest (Louw, van der Krabben and Priemus, 2003). However, as I stressed throughout my thesis, contemporary spatial governance is extremely dynamic and traditional role divisions are not applicable anymore. Instead, my empirical examples illustrate the incorporation of a diversity of spatial governance actors, both in terms of types of actors and the diversity within these categories. For instance, entrepreneurs in the Jane-Finch area play a crucial role in appropriating spaces and contributing to local community dynamics manoeuvring a challenging built environment. The private developer Daniels CM Corporation (DCM) in Regent Park established relationships with social housing provider Toronto Community Housing (TCH) in the joint revitalisation scheme to engage the local community beyond contractual agreements. And public-sector project managers displayed a variety of attitudes, behaviours and reflections to working with private parties in development projects. In a way, spatial governance embraces the multitude of spatial governance actors, and hence fragmentation, by triggering their existence in the first place. Simultaneously, however, growing complexities should not result in a disregard of what or who is *not* governed (Le Galès and Vitale, 2013).

Neoliberal ideology translates in more than economic changes but is connected to agendas of self-responsibilisation, as well as the entrepreneurialisation of the 'self' (Rossi, 2017; Wilson, 2004). In both Toronto and Amsterdam, policies emphasise participation, self-organisation and community emancipation. However, as the case of entrepreneurs from the Jane-Finch area illustrated, their disadvantageous position in relation to other actors involved in spatial governance hinders their spatial needs being met and ultimately diminishes their opportunities, even if they seem to fit into the overarching ideology of self-responsibilisation. The example illustrates how

entrepreneurialism in governance can lead to serious contradictions (Tasan-Kok and Baeten, 2012). In the case of Amsterdam, policies increasingly underscore the value and necessity of active citizenship. At the same, however, the restructuring of the local state in 2014 re-centralised urban development responsibilities to the city-wide local administration, removing the districts' abilities as area developers and enlarging the distance between spatial interventions and the activities of residents and area-based micro-scale efforts. Thus, spatial governance in both Toronto and Amsterdam selectively accommodates fragmentation, while creating challenges for, and discouraging some, others.

How and what forms of fragmentation are accommodated is closely tied to politics. In both research settings, political decision-making processes, particularly at higher levels, strongly enhanced not only the existence of several dimensions of fragmentation at the city level, but also shaped responses to them. In Toronto, for instance, fragmentation cannot be understood without the 1998 amalgamation which pushed urban development into a stronger market-oriented direction. Merging the old city of Toronto with surrounding municipalities, one might suspect a more comprehensive grip on the new area. However, the resulting fiscal pressures, reliance on property taxes and corresponding local politics hampered the local council's approval of capital-intensive revitalisation schemes (Horak and Moore, 2015) and correspondingly the city's spatial governance to respond to spatial needs in commercially unattractive areas, Jane-Finch for example. In Amsterdam, the 2008 economic crisis enhanced small-scale and piecemeal approaches to the development of the built environment (Savini et al., 2016) coupled with regulatory changes, particularly by the national government shaping planning practices in the city in the years that followed. At the same time, changes to the local council due to the 2018 municipal elections, policies and regulations have become more restrictive particularly regarding residential property. All these factors emerged as being influential in the ways in which spatial governance accommodated city-building endeavours.

City-building endeavours as process structure

According to Hernes (1976) trivalent model of structural change, transformation occurs when different levels divert from each other and alterations can be found in both output and process structures. My understanding of *city-building endeavours* captures the process structure in terms of fragmented urban development, and I approached it from an institutional perspective. Concretely, it allowed me to assess the discrepancy between established spatial governance representing formal and informal norms, established patterns and procedures, framing interaction and relationships between actors, and the actual processes in concrete development

formations. My empirical cases illuminated three different scenarios in this respect, providing insight into fragmented city-building endeavours' embeddedness in spatial governance. Land and property values in particular emerged as crucial pre-conditions for public - and private sector actor relationships that either placed the city-building endeavour into an advantageous or disadvantageous position within spatial governance.

The first scenario can be found in the Regent Park case, in which the city-building endeavours as part of the revitalisation effort were very much in line with the overarching spatial governance. The area's inner-city location close to gentrifying neighbourhoods and the Central Business District created pressure to redevelop the social housing complexes as land and property values were high. Regulatory changes that had cut government funding for TCH forced the social housing corporation to find new revenue streams, making a public-private partnership attractive. And the City, following the recent amalgamation, welcomed a large-scale property development project giving this inner-city area a facelift. With these factors coming together, the Regent Park revitalisation project started in 2003, and provided the foundation for processes extending beyond established procedures. For example, the City developed a comprehensive policy framework which combined zoning and spatial interventions with the city's first place-based Social Development Plan, allowing for flexibility and creativity, yet setting a firm foundation in terms of social objectives. Moreover, TCH and private developer DCM began to closely collaborate and experiment with new approaches to engage residents and incorporate existing grassroots organisations in their efforts, ascribed to the ideological commitment of all invested parties. They include the creation of a wide range of community spaces, in the form of public spaces, and creative spaces for artists and youth. Furthermore, in some areas where the City or TCH had no influence to decide on the type of retailers who would be allowed to rent commercial spaces in the area, DCM used its influence and established its own community-retail strategy, renting out commercial spaces to local social enterprises and 'homegrown' retailers at reduced rents (Lorinc, 2018).

The second contrasting scenario are city-building endeavours in Jane-Finch in Toronto. Resourceful community initiatives and community-oriented entrepreneurs are active agents in appropriating the built environment and address social needs in this disadvantaged area. In novel ways, they define community needs at the micro-scale and develop creative solutions within the given circumstances. However, these micro-scale efforts are a perfect illustration that not all "potentially disruptive social practices [...] turn into agents that can transform existing contexts" (Savini and Bertolini, 2019: 4). Instead, understanding how they are embedded in the

wider institutional context illuminates that market-oriented spatial governance marginalises these efforts, and ultimately prevents the community's desired spatial interventions in terms of community and commercial space, as the area had, for a long time, not been commercially viable for private property development. While these conditions slowly change, for instance due to a subway extension also encouraging the local administration to reconsider the development potential of the area, it remains to be seen how ingrained power relationships and conflictual structures of building provision play out for the community.

The third scenario emerged in Amsterdam. The focus of my analysis was on project managers' experiences with interacting with private sector actors in property-driven projects and the learning transfers thereof. Nonetheless, it provided insights into the difficult position of 'area transformation' projects, which are those city-building endeavours in which private sector actors take on leading roles in contrast to strictly public-sector controlled and more traditional 'area development' projects. The challenge for these area transformation projects, as well as the public-sector project managers who were involved in them, rests on their partial compliance and partial discrepancy with overarching spatial governance. New development approaches are in line with wider regulatory changes and conditions enhancing the position of private sector actors in planning practices. However, discrepancy exists in terms of being dependent on collaboration with private sector actors to deliver policy objectives in a local context with tightening regulatory and policy framework, enabled by high land and property prices increasing market interest, as well as discourses on the envisaged role of public sector actors being in command.

Each scenario highlights a different aspect of spatial governance's accommodation of fragmented urban development. In their totality, they should be understood as *singularities*, but the importance of land and property as *repeated instance* confirms Adams and Tiesdell's (2010) argument that more attention should be paid to their underlying relationships, as well as planners' active role in property markets. Furthermore, the scenarios provide the first insights into processes of institutional change. In Chapter 3, I reflected on neo-institutionalist schools and ultimately following Buitelaar, Lagendijk and Jacobs (2007) who concluded that with regards to planning, this distinction is arbitrary as both may occur simultaneously. My empirical analyses confirm this approach. In Amsterdam, for instance, evolutionary form of change can be expected with regards to the experiences and learning practices of project managers in dealing with property-driven development. Interviewees saw the begin of slow changes in terms of acknowledgement of the new circumstances and the need to share and develop new approaches, based on a variety of uncoordinated experiences in fragmented projects. At the same time, the local administration's ambition to construct 50,000 new apartments by 2025

can be considered as an example of collective choice. How processes of change are governed by specific *elements of transformation* is examined in the following section.

Elements of transformation as parameters

Parameters, according to Hernes (1976), are part of the process structure, and take on concrete values. They can either contribute to the stability or change of a system by changing, disappearing or emerging. In Chapter 3, I turned to the existing literature to explore parameters in terms of *elements of transformation* that scholars have underscored in processes of change in overarching governance arrangements, and placed them into five umbrella categories. I did not systematically test these elements in my empirical settings, but in line with hermeneutics used them as inspiration on my research journey and thought processes. I found that it is through many of these previously highlighted elements that spatial governance in Toronto and Amsterdam accommodates fragmentations in the sense of creating linkages and incorporating fragmented city-building endeavours. Moreover, I revealed that while space plays a role it is often neglected in discussions on transformation in the existing literature, and once again stressed that spatial governance makes room for and reconciles with fragmented urban development, particularly through private sector actors, an element that deserves more attention.

The first category that I defined in Chapter 3 related to elements in public sectors. My empirical results confirmed the importance of public sector regulations, not only in the creation of fragmentation as was the case through national legislation in the Amsterdam setting, but also to incorporate city-building endeavours in comprehensive spatial governance by means of a detailed policy framework in the Regent Park case in Toronto. Regulation and policies were also closely tied to the allocation of resources, especially when different administrative levels pooled resources to allow for area-based developments in the cities, and similarly, political support from all levels was considered as crucial in experimental practices, as repeatedly stressed by interviewees working for Amsterdam's local administration. While the element of 'expert knowledge and adequate information' did not emerge in my own cases, flexibility of the public sector turned out to be a double-edged sword in both settings. In Toronto, it was welcomed and embraced as it allowed for approaches to be responsive to local conditions, but it also negatively affected micro-scale social efforts in Jane-Finch. In Amsterdam, the lack of flexibility in regulations and established approaches was considered as a challenge to link social and physical interventions in and around project areas, while too much flexibility was criticised in the example of the 40-40-20 ratio determining the composition of housing according to income groups in new developments as being negotiable with private sector actors. Overall, my empirical results illustrate that it matters greatly

to what happens in the public sector.

The second category that I defined focused on elements in relation to civil society. It emphasised grassroots initiatives, counter-hegemonic movements, situated struggles and the capacity and leadership of local actors. In relation to this category, both my approach and empirical results differ slightly from the existing literature on transformation. While acknowledging their value and contribution, I showed that it is useful to move beyond the frequently adopted and rather narrow focus of counter-hegemonic movements in this respect. My explorations in the Jane-Finch area illustrated the importance of entrepreneurs as social agents who played a crucial role in local community dynamics and micro-scale social efforts, despite their profit orientation. Frequently, these private sector actors were the ones with the capacity and leadership skills to implement changes benefitting the local community. Moreover, also in Jane-Finch, I uncovered the role of space in linking micro-scale efforts. I contend that space should be added as an *element of transformation*, and particularly in terms of its physicality without falling into a spatially deterministic perspective.

Thirdly, the existing literature barely mentioned private sector elements, particularly in terms of general, generic participation and knowledge contribution. Here I see one of my main contributions, arguing that private sector actors play a crucial role in transformation processes in market-oriented spatial governance, which deserves more scrutiny. In the Regent Park area, private sector actors with considerable financial resources to invest in revitalisation were the underlying reason for the institutional difference from prevailing spatial governance compared to Jane-Finch, where the private sector actors involved were mainly small-scale entrepreneurs. Following the collaboration of TCH and DCM in Regent Park, among other factors influenced by the personal engagement of visions of the individuals involved, both organisations adjusted their strategies to deal with similar projects and set a new precedent, hence influencing spatial governance beyond the project scale.

New forms of relations, covered by the fourth category of relational elements, were hence also confirmed. The existing literature furthermore highlighted alliances, collective mobilisations and inter-scalar relations, which were all influential in my empirical cases. Experiences from Regent Park shaped perceptions and approaches to redeveloping disadvantaged neighbourhoods and new forms of collaboration between actors, and especially the importance of inter-scalar relations was demonstrated. As the examples from Jane-Finch show, solely bottom-up forms of decision-making are not sufficient to address communities' needs in multi-level spatial governance. On the other hand, as the Amsterdam case illustrates, multi-level arrangements can also lead to contradictions and inconsistencies, for instance

when different levels of government put forward diverging approaches. These contradictions can lead to a difficult position, and discrepancies between city-building endeavours and spatial governance.

Lastly, the elements discussed in the existing literature that I categorised under ‘cognition’ drew attention to a range of abstract, mental processes and actions. Changes in belief system and new ways of thinking were pivotal in city-building endeavours across both research settings, and I additionally emphasised the differences of discourses and framing ideas in Toronto’s and Amsterdam’s spatial governance. The importance of critical self-reflection and normative long-term visioning was underscored by public sector interviewees, but in both cities, it was criticised and noted that local administrations often do not spend sufficient time on these tasks. I concluded that based on these project managers’ experiences in Amsterdam, the importance of these cognitive elements and learning transfers in urban development processes increases. Combined, *elements of transformation* as parameters concretise how spatial governance accommodates fragmentation, as well as abstract notions of transforming prevailing arrangements. However, as Hernes (1976) stipulates that parameters are subject to endogenous and exogenous influences of a system, questions arise as to the degree to which fragmentations can actively be countered in urban development.

7.3 To what extent can new forms of comprehensiveness be created amidst complex and fragmented spatial governance activities?

My second research question focused on the creation of new forms of comprehensiveness considering contemporary spatial governance complexities and the multitude of fragmented spatial governance activities that are often occurring in a seemingly uncoordinated manner. I posed that new forms of comprehensiveness can be created by investigating possibilities for creating linkages between fragmented city-building endeavours, as well as between these endeavours and wider spatial governance. However, my empirical explorations also illustrated the challenges that emerge related to creating linkages between social and spatial interventions in market-oriented spatial governance. In this respect, I concur with Filion, Kramer and Sands (2016) on neoliberal conditions limiting ‘urban transformative potential.’ At the same time, however, I intended to unravel opportunities and possibilities to improve and create new linkages throughout the dissertation. Hereby, I specifically adopted a public sector, and particularly public-sector planning perspectives.

Examining the structuring influence of dominant spatial governance on the one hand, and the role of actors and agents in transforming it on the other, revokes

longstanding discussions on structure versus agency in the social sciences. Following hermeneutic principles, I adopted an intermediary position considering actions as neither entirely determined by external structures nor by complete agency (Patterson and Williams, 2002). In a similar vein, I followed Hernes (1976) who expressed a dual understanding of macro-structures, representing limitations and frameworks steering and constraining actors' behaviours, as well as representing the aggregation of actors' intended and unintended choices. Institutional analyses, in this respect, provide a powerful tool to place the action of planners into the wider institutional context and looking at positions, power relations and established procedures (Salet, 2018). Scrutinising actors and their degrees of agency and relationships within overarching institutional structures provides valuable insights on the basis of which more targeted actions can be developed.

By emphasising spatial governance complexities in both Toronto and Amsterdam, I aimed to clarify that fragmented urban development is neither the fault of the individual planner, nor entirely the result of a neoliberalising spatial governance structure that lies entirely out of the control of social agents. Contemporary conditions in both settings, however, result in the fact that comprehensive planning principles of the past are neither feasible nor desirable anymore. Not only do public sector planners not find themselves in a position of ultimate control in urban development, but many reasons speak against desiring a top-down, expert-driven and spatially-deterministic planning practices, ranging from context-specificities, multifaceted socio-spatial needs and insights into the social construction of space. Nonetheless, abolishing any overarching framework that steers fragmented spatial governance activities will not suffice, as the literature on the negative consequences of neoliberalising contexts and entrepreneurial planning and governance practices, in this respect, is vast. Albrechts (1991) famously contended that planners ironically need to become more entrepreneurial to develop innovative and tactical ways to better cope with market forces in order to plan 'for society' and 'not for capital'. Furthermore, steering development in a future direction on the basis of an incomplete, yet as encompassing as possible, picture has been the essence of planning as a discipline and practice (Madanipour, 2010). Therefore, I argued that comprehensive planning from a present-day perspective requires a new conception of what comprehensiveness means.

For several reasons I decided to use comprehensiveness as terminology, instead of a new term or adopting a conceptual framework such as relational planning (Boelens, 2010) or connectivity (Madanipour, 2010) that have already been introduced to planning studies. Planning theorists have emphasised that planning thought is not stable but constantly evolving (Haselsberger, 2017; Fainstein and DeFilippis, 2016). I

wanted to draw on the understanding gained and discussions raised by thinkers in the past and build on them. Notions of comprehensiveness in modernist planning, for example, were stoutly dismissed as a reaction to criticisms of technocratic development practices. Discussions shifted almost entirely from physical space to pure relational understandings of comprehensiveness, while disciplines such as geography or urban sociology display a much more nuanced engagement with the physicality of space and its intertwinement with social processes (Hubbard and Kitchin, 2010). I intended to show that relational perspectives and foregrounding physical space do not have to contradict each other, and much can be gained from a combination of the two. Furthermore, reflecting on meanings of comprehensive planning throughout time emphasises the importance of social, political and economic contexts in shaping these understandings. This realisation also facilitates in situating my own conception of comprehensiveness into present-day conditions, and considering it in line with hermeneutics as inherently influenced by my own positionality, time and context.

My view on comprehensiveness based on creating linkages between fragmented city-building endeavours incorporates both tangible spatial considerations as well as intangible relational connections and learning transfers. Thus, it differs from a pure actor-relational approach to planning (Boelens, 2010) by foregrounding space instead of considering it as the passive backdrop to social relations and interactions. My interpretation is closer to Madanipour (2010) who talks about planning's role in creating connectivity in an institutional and spatial sense. However, also here I see a subtle difference in terms of terminology with connections referring to relationships of actors and events, while the term linkage expresses both the action and the state of being linked. This means that linkages convey a more action-oriented perception as well as express a different degree of stability, in line with my objective for long-lasting transformations in spatial governance. With my exploration of different types of linkages in Toronto and Amsterdam, I intended to inspire and highlight examples of new avenues to implement new forms of comprehensiveness, even in market-oriented spatial governance settings.

7.4 On transformation through private sector actors

Throughout this dissertation, I have investigated the interactions between city-building endeavours and spatial governance to understand processes of transformation. This interest in institutional transformation through multi-actor constellations led me to explore a relatively recent body of literature that I saw emerging in planning studies. Taking neoliberalisation processes as a point of departure, scholars are discussing and calling for transformation in terms of structural change in planning and governance arrangements. Following my

critique on the vague application of ‘transformation’ in many accounts, I tried to be explicit about my own understanding of it by differentiating between three levels of structure in my notion of *transformative spatial governance*. The danger that exists with ‘transformation’ and related terms is that they become new catchwords, similar to place-making, and hence lose their potential to advance substantive discussions on contemporary urban development. Nonetheless, I see much potential in this literature, especially in terms of avoiding disenchantment related to the current state of affairs.

I see my contribution to the literature on institutional transformation as emphasising and deciphering the importance and role of private sector actors in processes of urban change. This does not mean that I am giving up my critical views on neoliberalisation, nor that I advocate for increased flexibility to accommodate market interests in spatial governance, for example. I do, however, differ from much of the existing literature on transformation by broadening my focus from considering transformative practices as needing to be radically different from the present reality (Albrechts, 2016) to include a wider array of practices. In market-oriented settings, as I illustrated in my thesis, private sector actors influence the transmission of experiences and practices from city-building endeavours beyond the micro-scale as they provide advantageous conditions for fragmented efforts to be linked in comprehensive spatial governance, and hence play a major role in enhancing their transformative potential.

Private sector involvement in urban development practices is often approached in negative, generalising terms, without sufficient understanding of the diversity of actors that exist within the private sector (Campbell, Tait and Watkins, 2014; Henneberry and Parris, 2013). Therefore, in line with scholars criticising oversimplified characterisation (ibid.), I underscore the importance of critical analyses that dissect the diversity of private sector actors. This understanding is an essential precondition to develop tools and instruments that utilise market-oriented spatial governance in order to bring ‘substance’ back into planning. In fact, the inability of generalising and drawing hasty conclusions reached beyond private sector actors in my thesis, for instance, the example from Jane-Finch showed that profit orientation was not the main goal of entrepreneurs but their activities were frequently intertwined with social objectives and community engagement, and the example of public sector project managers in Amsterdam showcased some of their divergent attitudes and internal conflicts. Contemporary social reality is extremely complex and so is spatial governance. Critical understandings of this situation are needed to establish cognitive, spatial and institutional linkages, and can also play a role in bridging the widening gap between planning studies and practices.

Many planning practitioners do not see their daily challenges and situations reflected in the planning literature and planning challenges are ‘wicked’ in nature, meaning they cannot be subjected to one-size-fits-all solutions (Innes and Booher, 2010). Nonetheless, the risk of the existing literature on transformation, for example, lies in planning scholars primarily discussing elements of transformation pertaining to public sector and civil society organisations. This may raise questions on the part of practitioners of how to implement the envisaged changes of scholars while primarily dealing with private sector actors. In my view, the changes which scholars desire in planning practices require concurrent evolution in planning thought. The situations that practitioners face should be better reflected in the literature, as well as incorporated in planning education (Tasan-Kok and Oranje, 2018). Accounts on the diversity of actors and the private sector’s role in transforming spatial governance, for instance, can help to indicate mechanisms and opening new perspectives on the basis of which planners and other actors can initiate action.

7.5 Responding to fragmentation in planning practice

Despite the context-specific nature of institutional and spatial fragmentations, as well as spatial governance accommodating them, a number of general lessons can be drawn for planning practice on the basis of my empirical findings from Toronto and Amsterdam. A natural tendency of facing complexity through fragmentation seems to be a reversion to small-scale efforts, following a piecemeal approach that attempts to tackle local challenges. However, interwoven social, spatial and economic realities in cities asks for broader approaches to deal with challenges in a more comprehensive and long-standing manner. Public sector influence in contemporary urban development may be decreasing in the face of market forces (Brenner and Theodore, 2005). Nonetheless, I do not see the importance of planning decreasing, but the roles and tasks of planning practitioners is changing. While not being in ultimate control, actions of planning practitioners can fundamentally influence spatial governance trajectories: I see their role in linking fragmented actions, convoluted negotiations and tangled regulation practices in scattered city-building endeavours with one another, and to overarching policy and governance arrangements in the pursuit of transforming wider spatial governance.

Developing adequate responses to fragmentation through planning practice first and foremost requires a firm and critical understanding of any given situation. My framework on the four dimensions of fragmentation can provide insights in this respect. Considering the first dimension, from a public policy perspective, spatial justice scholars have highlighted the importance of reconciling policies affecting the urban built environment with those trying to alter social processes, for instance to create encounters between people or to link people with organisations, services

and employment opportunities (Harvey, 2009). Even though policy integration in this respect is often discursively stressed as a major goal in planning (Stead and Meijers, 2009), internal dynamics and a division of tasks in local administrations may in fact result in competing or even contradicting interventions and policies. Thus, a first step is to critically reflect on and raise these issues within local administrations.

With regards to property-driven development projects, critical self-reflection is also required with regards to relationships with private sector actors. Lacking acknowledgement of private sector influence steering public sector planning, for instance, can diminish the potential of developing new and adequate tools to better respond to private-sector driven dynamics at hand. I also concur with Adams and Tiesdell (2010) that local administrations, and planning practitioners in particular, need to be more aware of their influence and role in land and property markets. Furthermore, spatial interventions of public planning practitioners in partnership with market parties are certain to happen in market-oriented spatial governance, and planning practitioners need to understand market dynamics from a private sector point of view. Better insight into the strategies, rationales and objectives of different actors such as property developers and investors and the diversity within these groups, facilitate public sector responses and the selection of development partners in efforts to integrate opportunity-driven projects in a more comprehensive framework.

Regarding micro-scale social efforts, area-based social interventions, citizen initiatives and place-making approaches that centre around the needs of local populations also gain popularity in planning practice. Indeed, community-based activities and bottom-up projects can be effective tools for planners and policymakers, as they are directly linked to the neighbourhood and have a thorough understanding of people's needs (Tasan-Kok et al., 2017). However, often there is the risk that these notions are advertised on a discursive level, while efforts are neither given the financial and spatial means to function to their full potential, and the shift towards agendas of self-responsibilisation is often not accompanied by resources and decision-making powers. Thus, when advocating and enhancing micro-scale social efforts in planning practice, these wider conditions have to be taken into account and addressed by planners.

Furthermore, and despite their economic and social functions, commercial activities such as entrepreneurship and retail for instance, have long been overlooked, and explicit commercial objectives beneficial to the local population tend to lack, particularly in planning interventions targeting socio-economically weaker areas (Rankin and McLean, 2015). Sometimes, it is a matter of small changes to the built environment, rezoning areas into mixed-use to allow commercial functions, or

rent caps that can considerably improve the conditions for residents, bottom-up community groups or local entrepreneurs. Planners should also not underestimate the crucial influence that space can play in linking different initiatives and enhancing their impact, while they should be cautious to not fall into spatially deterministic thinking. Spatial interventions should only be made in consultation with local residents and communities.

While planning departments in local administrations tend to deal with property-driven projects and social initiatives and property development, they appear to fail to link them with each other and to broader socio-spatial policy objectives. Creating linkages between these seemingly disconnected groups of actions shaping urban development bears potential when these linked projects are embedded in a firm policy and planning framework. This framework requires, for example, the conscious employment of tools such as anti-displacement policies, which aim to prevent spatial improvements ultimately resulting in pushing out original residents, and the selection of a property developer who is willing to collaborate with the local community. On the other hand, revitalisation efforts cannot be considered successful if they involve a reduction in social housing units, relocation or pushing socio-economically weaker residents to different areas, highlighting the need for comprehensive city- and region-wide perspectives.

Processes and relationships at different spatial scales are influential in affecting planning practices on the ground. City-building endeavours should be considered within these multi-level governance arrangements, as it is not sufficient to purely focus on good niche projects without connecting them to an overarching vision. Even though planning practitioners operating at the local level have little influence, for instance, on legal changes at higher levels that determine the structure of a planning system, by considering and forging connections and relationships between city-building endeavours and processes at higher levels, they can enhance city-building endeavours' potential to be transformed into transformative practices by cutting across multiple scales. This involves, for example, sustained conversations and exchange of experiences between project managers implementing concrete projects and those public sector employees developing new policy directions.

Thus, notions of learning are crucial in connecting city-building endeavours to wider institutional arrangements. With divergent conditions and area-specific actor constellations, most challenges that planning practitioners face can be considered as 'wicked' without a clear-cut solution. Therefore, the goal of creating linkages is not to replicate practices. Instead, by setting up structures and formal and informal occasions to share experiences and information, experiment and provide guidance, can all facilitate the learning transfer from one city-building endeavour

to another in a system that strives for fragmentation but avoids the isolation of efforts. Planning practitioners and other public sector employees possess a wealth of knowledge based on concrete experiences, but with growing complexities it becomes more and more important to provide opportunities for this knowledge to circulate within a local administration, and beyond. When thinking in terms of addressing fragmentation through the creation of linkages, special attention should be paid to implementing long-lasting changes in the way spatial organisation is linked to community needs, committed to substantive justice and human rights by means of a flexible, adaptive yet comprehensive spatial governance that is able to generate structural changes.

7.6 Caveats and recommendations for future research

In this dissertation, I examined different facets of spatial governance. Having underscored dynamics through and between public and private sectors interacting in urban development, I repeatedly stressed the importance of not drawing hasty, over-generalising conclusions especially concerning private sector actors. Nonetheless, my focus lied primarily on adopting a public sector planning and policy perspective. I conducted research on entrepreneurs active in, or from the Jane-Finch area in Toronto, who are essentially private sector actors. I did not engage in a more systematic exploration of the diversity of private sector actors myself within the framework of this thesis. Particularly considering the rather polarised engagement with the private sector in existing literature, much more research is needed that uncovers the differences and nuances between and among, for instance, real estate actors, developers and investors who represent major players in contemporary urban development (*WHIG Project*, 2019). Analyses addressing the private sector in development practices often either adopt very technical perspectives on finance, land and property markets, or very critical stances which, however, often lack in-depth empirical considerations and data (*ibid.*). Upholding critical perspectives while providing rich empirical analyses is crucial to understand market dynamics in fragmented urban development.

I have argued that space does matter but could only touch on the issue in this thesis. I believe that much can be gained from placing assessments and examinations of physical space more central in planning studies. In geography and other related disciplines, scholars engage much more closely with the role of space in creating encounters between people, influencing social interactions and community well-being. Furthermore, within umbrella terms such as place-making, many community-responsive practices are explored. However, the micro-scale focus of many of these investigations and practices prevents the translation of generated insights from micro-scale instances into larger-scale recommendations. Planning, with its unique

position of combining insights, thought and approaches from various social sciences disciplines in an action-oriented manner, can provide powerful contributions to the discussions at hand as well as to bridge the theory practice gap.

To avoid spatially deterministic notions of physical space, I adopted a relational perspective foregrounding space by dissecting actors in the production of urban built environments. Yet, in my analyses, I did not explicitly address the crucial function of physical spaces as a sphere of investment. The financialisation of the built environment, particularly in the field of housing, does not only influence spatial governance but has, as embodied process, detrimental effects on the well-being of individuals and social life (Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika, 2016). Particularly since the 2008 economic crisis, investment landscapes have undergone rapid changes, taking on new complexities with the emergence of new actors and new relationships (Ashton and Christophers, 2015). More concrete knowledge needs to be generated on the dynamic nature of these investment landscapes to understand their impact on scattered development formations shaping cities.

It requires further investigations of planner's roles within property markets and intricate regulatory frameworks through the formation of diverse pockets of micro-regulation (Tasan-Kok et al., 2019). Perceptions of the ungovernable metropolis are closely tied to the seemingly chaotic picture, and in order to establish tailor-made approaches to the creation of linkages to generate institutional change, these micro-regulation practices need to be further unravelled. This also involves considerations of planning practices embedded in all kinds of regulations at different scales that ultimately influence the production of urban built environments and turn planning into an increasingly complex undertaking. Additionally, the emergence of a growing amount of hybrid actors and blurred responsibilities between public and private sector actors (Heurkens and Hobma, 2014) requires further exploration as it considerably influences the nature of institutional fragmentation.

The fact that much investment flows have a global dimension draws attention to another caveat of my thesis. Looking through the lens of spatial governance allowed me to incorporate multi-level perspectives and I have discovered some discrepancies between different levels of government regulation. However, my explorations in this dissertation stopped at the national scale, and I did not take relationships and interactions into account which occurred beyond national boundaries. Future research should not only provide insight into global investment flows into local built environments, but also consider the existence of supra-national institutions such as the European Commission in adding to regulatory intricacies and shaping discourses and planning rationales with potential trickle-down effects to small-scale area-based city-building endeavours.

The picture of the intricacies of contemporary spatial governance presented in this dissertation is far from being complete. It becomes increasingly difficult but at the same time increasingly important to dissect what is governed and by whom. The body of literature on institutional transformation in prevailing planning and governance arrangements that I saw emerging over the past years has the potential to provide valuable and new impulses in discussions on structural change and planners' roles within it. However, I maintain my position that private sector dynamics should not be left out of the discussion but in fact be placed centrally and scrutinised further. Planning needs to evolve and develop new instruments to respond to changing conditions due to market dynamics. Filling the existing gaps in research and gaining intensified knowledge on complexifying spatial governance is crucial to develop new avenues for comprehensive planning in fragmented urban development.

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