Leaping into the Abyss - Planning and Postmodernism

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Two episodes prompted this paper. The first was a question asked at a symposium, when a discussant responded to a presenter's call for planners to recognize, as part of the emerging postmodernist politics of difference, the grievances, concerns, and, above all, the existence of marginal social groups, by asking: "How is this different from what we have been doing since the sixties, with advocacy planning?" The other episode was a panel at a conference of the Associated Collegiate Schools of Planning

(ACSP). The panel, borrowing from a 1991 article by Robert Beauregard on postmodernism and planning, bore the title *Leaping the Postmodernist Abyss*. The discussant's question and the title of the panel—one stressing continuity in the planning arena, the other claiming that postmodernism introduces a break in planning theory and practice—indicate two opposite reactions to the questions that postmodernism poses for planning.

First, the question at the symposium, if I am reading it correctly, suggested that the challenges to the totalizations and metanarratives of traditional (modernist) views that have emerged from critical studies, literature, history, geography, the arts and politics, are not dissimilar from the views advocacy planning championed. To be sure, postmodernism has brought into focus histories, interests, and voices of social groups and movements—feminist, gay and lesbian, ethnic—that advocacy planning had not taken into consideration. Yet the discussant saw them as an expansion (and a vindication) of the major themes that advocacy already broached. In his famous 1965 article, Paul Davidoff had called for a plurality of plans in which all the special interests of different social groups would be represented and where advocate planners would seek out "clients" to represent according to "shared common views about desired social conditions and means towards them" (333). Although the groups to which Davidoff was referring were mainly low-income communities and the arena of advocacy planning was largely limited to housing issues, it seemed that advocacy could easily expand its horizons to include the voices of the new

movements and themes. Indeed, the latest incarnation of advocacy—equity planning—is providing this expansion (Fainstein and Fainstein 1996). For the discussant, what was surprising in the encounter between postmodernism and planning was not the encounter itself, which simply expanded the horizon of advocacy, but the lateness with which this encounter was taking place, at least a decade after post-modernism made its voice heard in other disciplines.

In contrast, following Beauregard's lead, the panel at the conference maintained that the postmodernist critique goes far beyond a simple expansion of modernist disciplines. Postmodernism, by rejecting modernist reductionism—its centralized universal social subject—and the universality of rationality and knowledge, attacks the epistemological base of modernism. Planning, which borrows most of its knowledge from other fields, is certainly not exempt from this critique. Thus, the purpose of the panel was to open a discussion on how planning can change itself in order to answer these critiques and how planners can "leap the abyss" on which they are "suspended, between a modernism whose validity is decaying and reconfiguring, and a postmodernism whose arguments are convincing yet discomforting" (Beauregard 1991: 193).

These very different reactions to postmodernism provide two different entry points of my discussion on planning and postmodernism. The first section of this paper responds to the discussant's question by focusing on the changes in the material conditions in which planning currently operates in most western countries. A growing body of literature has recog-

nized an ongoing economic and social restructuring as a new, post-Fordist, "regime of accumulation." This is characterized by an overall flexibility that no longer requires the macro-regulatory mechanisms of the previous (Fordist) period. The neoliberal policies inaugurated by Reagan and Thatcher and now followed in varying degrees in most industrialized countries, and the general attitude of "enough with big government," are symptomatic of the withering away of those mechanisms. As a result, planning, as one of these systems of regulation, has been retreating. It has reached the point that today any attempt to institute, say, a national industrial policy or a health care plan is doomed to failure. Advocacy planning grew out of this earlier context of wide-ranging state intervention, was shaped by it, and, although critical of it, can still be seen as part of the Fordist regulatory system. Roweis and Scott (1977) have characterized the advocacy position as an "imperfect negation," since it does not go far enough in distancing itself from its mainstream counterpart. As a result, advocacy is not exempt from the crisis that the new regime of accumulation has provoked in the planning field. The discussant's attempt to see the postmodernist politics of identity and difference as an expansion of advocacy is, therefore, self-defeating in two respects. It is not sufficient to give new energy to advocacy planning, unless postmodernist critiques can help advocacy to sever its regulatory roots and become something else. At the same time, the attempt to incorporate postmodernism into the existing advocacy paradigm reduces the possibility that postmodernism can open genuinely new directions in planning.

The second half of the paper, taking the panel as its starting point, shifts its focus to another facet of planning's crisis—the weakening of its theoretical underpinnings. Perhaps pushing the theme of the panel beyond its intentions, it argues that the postmodernist critique cannot be satisfied by suggesting a new theory of planning, or a new planning paradigm, or even a new role for the planner. Rather, the critique should lead to questioning the assumption that there is one meaning of planning, one scientific knowledge, and one planning theory (even if that theory is contested). From this perspective, planning can take on different meanings, contingent upon the specifics of individual situations and according to the social groups involved. Confronting a recognized instability of knowledge and of planning discourses, planning theory, rather than seeking the dominance of one planning discourse, should be concerned with the need to open up spaces where a multiplicity of discourses and of knowledges can be recognized and encouraged. It should be aimed, in other words, at creating "epistemological heterotopias,"[1] spaces that accept difference and the juxtaposition of dissimilar knowledges and plannings. In this space, the figure of the planner too becomes variable. The planner is no longer, or not always, the pre-established holder of appropriate knowledge, or even the privileged interpreter of social needs. Instead, the planner's roles and who should fulfill them emerge from each context. Therefore, the problem with "leaping the abyss" is that it assumes that the planner can bridge the abyss and re-establish order. However, if we take postmodernism's attack on

metanarratives and order seriously, we should instead be ready to leap *into* the abyss, without the comfort of an opposite bank on which we, as planners, can safely land.

A reader of a draft of this paper pointed out that the two sections of the paper are not well integrated and "scream at each other," since the first section falls squarely into an economic-reductionist perspective, proposing a linear metanarrative of dominant planning paradigms that follow one another according to economic crises and restructurings, while the second, by calling upon the instability of knowledge and the multiplicity of discourses, undermines the very approach of the first section. It is not my intention to suggest a perfect symmetry or a cause-and-effect relationship between material crisis and planning's intellectual reconceptualization. Rather, my purpose is to juxtapose two dimensions of the crisis and restructuring of planning. In this sense, it may be positive that the reciprocal scream of the two sections can be heard, since it means that the two dimensions have not collapsed into a unitary explanation. Gianni Vattimo pointed out that ideology is not false thought only because it masks a truth, but also because it presents as totality what is only partial (Vattimo and Rovatti 1983: 14). My attempt here is to present two partialities that both demonstrate the need for a restructuring of planning theory, despite their two different and even contradictory trajectories. To be sure, these are not the only narratives or dimensions from which the predicament of planning theory and practice can be reviewed. Feminist and minority critiques are other obvious perspectives

from which to trace other trajectories. Restructuring, I think, involves many dimensions. Rather than a unitary dynamic, it should be seen as a "node" where different narratives cross each other and interact. The questions which inspired this paper identify two of these threads.

The Crisis of Planning, Take One: Advocacy Planning and the Fordist Regime of Accumulation

This is not the first time that changing material conditions have led to a restructuring of planning. Already the local, state, and federal responses to the Great Depression drastically changed planning's colors. To begin with, its importance and scope increased from an activity largely limited to urban problems to the Roosevelt Administration's creation of a myriad of agencies that brought planning interventions to the forefront at both regional and national scales. Equally important, planning broke out of its limited concerns with the built environment to refocus on social and economic issues. To be sure, the slum clearance plans of the turn of the century and the City Beautiful and City Functional movements also dealt with social questions and problems. The New Deal, however, marks a shift of balance in planning: the organizing principle of planning changed from the view that intervening in the physical environment was the means by which planners could address all issues—physical or not—to the view that physical planning was just one among the many means that planners had at their disposal to address social issues.

The increased importance of planning, its expansion into new arenas, and its shift of focus did not occur in a vacuum. Nor were they simply a reaction to the Depression, an attempt to return to business-as-usual. They were an important factor in shaping and helping the emergence of a new socio-economic organization of American capitalism—what the Regulation School calls the "Fordist regime of accumulation."[2] This regime can be characterized by three major elements:

■ An industrial organization dominated by mass-production, which, in turn, is characterized by the expansion of internal economies of scale based on process-flow and assembly-line methods, a detailed technical division of labor, and by standardization of output. Mass production had already entered the American industrial system with Henry Ford's introduction of the assembly line in 1914.[3]

■ A mass market that is large enough, homogeneous enough, and expanding rapidly enough to absorb the standardized goods produced. A major cause of the Great Depression was precisely the absence of adequate aggregate demand vis-à-vis growing industrial productivity.

■ An appropriate mode of regulation; that is, a set of regulatory mechanisms able to: 1) ensure, even if uneasily at times, conditions of social and industrial peace for undisturbed continuity of production; and 2) stimulate the growth of an homogeneous mass market, pace its expansion, and direct its evolution on a course coherent with the productivity increases of the industrial system.

The type of planning that came to dominate the American scene from the depression onward—I would call it "Strong Planning," paraphrasing Gianni Vattimo (Vattimo and Rovatti 1983), to indicate the existence but also the marginalization of "other" plannings[4]— was integral to the development of these regulatory mechanisms. Strong Planning played a particularly important role in both staking out the boundaries of the mass market and in organizing the market around a *social norm of mass consumption*. Certainly, these were not the only areas that planning entered during the Roosevelt Administration. These were the areas, however, where intervention was most successful and its effects more lasting. In contrast, attempts to counter the overcapacity of the industrial system (recognized as the root of the crisis) by intervening on the supply side (such as the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Bill of 1930 that limited imports and lowered taxes) or by establishing an all-inclusive national system of economic coordination and cooperation (the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, that aimed at expanding the market by increasing wages, regulating prices, and reducing work hours as well as coordinating industrial activity between and within industrial sectors) did not succeed.[5] Even the famous Tennessee Valley Authority may have been successful in breaking the monopoly of private companies over energy production (thus lowering the cost of electricity for industry) but had little effect in overcoming the overproduction crisis.[6]

The lasting pattern and the regulatory function that emerged from the crisscrossing paths of the planning agencies and programs of the New Deal is, in my opinion, particularly relevant in two areas. First, the New Deal was instrumental in setting up a mechanism for the expansion of the consumer market. This goes beyond the simple creation of stop-gap employment measures and wage raises, although these were certainly goals and achievements of the Roosevelt Administration. It implies instituting a system geared toward a continuous consumer market expansion.[7] The key legacies of the New Deal in this respect are the financial planning programs such Social Security and, most importantly, the bank loan system reform initiated by the Home Owner Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration. These programs began a trend, continued after the Second World War (for example, by the Veterans Administration housing loans and, in general, by the spread of the credit system), toward an increasing socialization of finance. This not only helped to stabilize access to the consumer market for large sectors of the working population, but, more importantly, it also made an ever-wider range of mass-produced durable goods accessible to a large share of that population. These, even with the decline in prices due to standardized production, would have otherwise remained unattainable.

Second, planning also helped to create the infrastructure that gave direction to mass consumption. Many of the New Deal planning programs and interventions supported the market expansion of the two main commodities on which the Fordist mode of consumption hinged—the single family home (the privileged site of individual consumption) and the automobile (the means of transport most compatible with the separation of work and single-family housing). The socialization of finance not only made access to homeownership easier. The mortgage system—together with other planning initiatives, such as parkway construction, subdivision planning, and the spread of land-use planning— also directed that access toward the type of housing that could be more easily standardized, that had a larger multiplier effect on the consumption of other mass-produced commodities, and that facilitated the social standardization of the family in its nuclear form. At the same time, the well-known practices of redlining and preferential financing of single-family houses also reinforced social and spatial divisions between those who had access to mass consumption and those who were excluded.[8] In this way, Strong Planning was able to control inclusion and exclusion from the developing mass society and to homogenize consumption in the public domain.

I do not intend to overestimate the function that planning (even if Strong) had in establishing or shaping the Fordist regime. To be sure, many of the forms that the Fordist mode of regulation took in the United States are less palpable and institutional than planning interventions (such as the cultural and ideological constructs of the American Dream of Home Ownership, or the American "love affair" with the automobile). Nor do I mean to suggest that all the planning initiatives of the New Deal were purposely aimed at expanding, regulating, and limit-

ing mass consumption. However, it seems to me that the regulatory aspects of planning from the New Deal onward and the tensions that inclusion or exclusion from mass consumption produced are an important aspect of planning practice in the United States, and are particularly relevant in understanding advocacy planning as a response to the social unrest of the nineteen sixties.

Radical planning, in fact, did not escape this regulatory function. Or better, it escaped it only as far as it withdrew from attempts to truly challenge it. Thus most radical approaches, such as the Marxist critiques, ended up as academic endeavors that while criticizing the practice of planning (and, later, its theorization), remained largely ineffective in providing alternative practices and were able only to advance half-hearted alternative definitions of planning such as "the planner can become the revealer of contradictions, and by this an agent of social innovation" (Castells 1978: 88). The accomplishments of advocacy, in its most radical version (i.e., seeking radical political change through alternative social organizations), were equally limited, leading to the formation of co-ops and communes that remained marginal to Strong Planning and unable to truly challenge it. The major practical success that radical planning could claim was in the form of "classic" advocacy, where "desirable processes of change are arrived at by a more inclusive pluralistic political process which incorporates into decision-making and intervention the ideas and interests of the broadest social spectrum of people concerned" (Peattie 1978: 88).

The many institutional arrangements and public programs that emerged from the 1960s drawing on "citizen participation," from the War on Poverty to the Model Cities Program, are a direct legacy of this. Despite the intentions of its proponents, if and when radical planning proposals managed to be implemented and recognized as legitimate planning, their intervention took place in forms that continued the process of regulation and homogenization of Fordism towards the inclusion of other social groups in mass society. Only later and probably without critical intentions, Davidoff recognized this aspect of advocacy planning, stating that "the *redistributive* outlook that is growing today in planning is only an expansion of the advocacy movements that were common to many professions in the nineteen sixties" (Davidoff 1978: 71; italics added). Roweis and Scott (1977) called advocacy planning an "imperfect negation" for its inability to exit the theoretical framework of the dominant planning paradigm. The imperfection of the negation, we may add, can also be seen in its practice, in its inability to propose alternatives, and in its actual support of the dominant regime of accumulation.

Certainly, it would give too much credit to planning to maintain that advocacy led to the crisis of Fordism. Advocacy, however, is indicative of the increasing difficulty that Fordism encountered in maintaining the connection between the expansion of production and consumption that characterized Fordism in its heyday. Although productivity gains, which allowed the spread of mass production in the previous decades, slowed down, the mode of regula-

tion, created for and geared towards continuous growth of the regime, continued to seek the expansion of its social base. As a result, mounting social costs (i.e., the costs of the public infrastructure necessary to support private production and consumption) were no longer matched by corresponding productivity increases. The Fordist regime, as the Regulation School tells us, had reached its limits to growth. If the emergence of advocacy planning can be linked, in whatever small measure, to the crisis of Fordism, the linkage is not to be found in terms of successful opposition, but of bad timing. Stimulated by the social movements of the 1960s, advocacy planning kept calling for social inclusion and expansion of consumption precisely when the Fordist regime could no longer sustain them.

Studies of post-Fordism are divided on whether the new regime requires new regulation mechanisms at all. Some writers (e.g., Hirst and Zeitlin 1992; Scott 1988) argue that the new "regime of flexible accumulation" no longer needs mechanisms to secure the growth and stability of the market, or even to establish a norm of consumption, since flexible production (based on multi-purpose machinery, small production units, short production runs, and variable patterns of work) can adjust the volume and characteristics of the commodities produced to adjust to market growth, decline, or differentiation. Others (e.g., Altvater 1992) posit that, despite the growth of flexible production systems, it is too early to talk of a new regime precisely because the new mechanisms of regulation necessary to guarantee sustained economic growth remain elusive. What seems to be sure, however, is that the regulatory infrastructure of Fordism

has reached the end of its usefulness. The growing social fragmentation and differentiation in most industrialized countries (and not only there), ranging from increasing segmentation of labor markets to the emergence of "gated" or "carceral" urbanization, where the city breaks down in a series of isolated and self-contained parts, to the increasing importance of "identity politics," seem to indicate that a tendency towards social differentiation has taken the place of homogenization. With it, the role of planning—mainstream or not, but Strong and Fordist, anyway—is drastically shrinking. Thus planners, if they are not to be left hoping for a return to the past, should be prepared to deal with these new conditions. They should engage in a process of restructuring of their own, trying to identify what kind of planning theory (or theories) and practice (or practices) are best suited to deal with the dangers that the new situation presents and to seize the opportunities it offers.

The Crisis of Planning, Take Two: Planning Theory and Postmodernism

Studies that, typically from a Marxist perspective, seek to connect the economic restructuring outlined in the previous pages and postmodernism generally link the flexibility of production, fragmentation of the mass market, and loss of relevance of regulatory mechanisms of post-Fordism with the cultural fragmentation and the proliferation of social and political identities of postmodernism as a cause-and-effect relationship. David Harvey, for example, argues that the postmodernist "emphasis upon ephemerality, collage, fragmentation, and dispersal in philosophical

and social thought *mimics* the conditions of flexible accumulation" (1989: 302; italics added). Fredric Jameson (1992) identifies postmodernism as a new "cultural dominant," reflecting the changes that occurred in the economic structure with the passage from one phase of capitalist development to another. Postmodernism, in these views, is the collective term for the superstructural modifications that follow from the restructuring of the economic base.

If we stop here, we are simultaneously looking at planning from a different perspective and being led back the argument of the previous pages on the socio-economic context of planning. The different perspective rests on the shift of emphasis from the function of planning as a "material" activity to its ideological role of legitimization and rationalization. The claim that planning is not a "neutral" activity aimed at furthering the common interest by rational means, as mainstream planning theory maintained, and that this conception, in fact, gives a patina of neutrality and universality to ideological constructs is probably the most important legacy that radical planning left behind. Regardless of the limited success of advocacy to effectively lead to a truly different planning practice and theory, and to the Marxist inability to go beyond its negative critiques, they succeeded in arguing that common interest, rationality, and scientific knowledge are shaped, if not created, by specific material conditions. As Harvey says, "they are set according to the reproduction of the social order which is…a distinctively capitalistic social order" (Harvey 1978: 224). Precisely by presenting themselves as universal and neutral, the notion of common good and of the dependent principle of rationality fulfill the task of justifying and legitimizing dominant planning practices. Planning theory, or rather ideology, in other words, is part of the superstructure and, if it changes, it does so in response to modifications of the "capitalistic social order." Thus, according to this perspective, if we want to understand what new material and theoretical forms planning may take today, we should begin by turning (back) to the analysis to the economic restructuring in progress.

Postmodernism, however, does not limit itself to cultural, political, and socio-economic changes. It also claims that the increasing attention to social diversity is symptomatic of an epistemological shift, of a change in the way theory is constructed which, by rejecting modernist foundations, makes social diversity visible. The rejection is not limited to *some* modernist theories, but addresses the epistemological matrix common to all modern thought—what Foucault called the "modern episteme" and Habermas the "Enlightenment Project"—and whose limits Martin Jay (1984) summarized as its "latitudinal and longitudinal totalizations." These totalizations are at the core of all postmodernist critiques. Thus, Derrida's deconstruction shows the impossibility of any all-inclusive narrative; Baudrillard signals the end of modernism as "end of the phase of the mask" (where, although hidden and difficult to decipher, a true and universal reality was still knowledge's goal); Vattimo claims that the "strong thought" of modernism has made invisible other, "weak," histories and thought; Foucault illustrates the limits of mod-

ernism as a series of "doubles"—i.e., undecidable oscillations between the empirical nature of knowledge and its aspiration to universality, between origin as the source of history and history creating the need for an origin, and between the finitude of the human subject and its ambition to be all-inclusive. All of these views point out the futility of modernist attempts to identify the essential core of social experience (the latitudinal totalization, which seeks in the romantic Zeitgeist, or the Hegelian Idea, or in the Marxist dominance of class relations a unified social subject) from which all other aspects of social life depend and that, in the last instance, establishes the parameters within which an essential History (the longitudinal totalization) unfolds and progress is measured.

From this point of view, planning theory is not only the ideological offspring of the Fordist phase of capitalist accumulation, but also a specific expression of a longer theoretical bloodline going back to the faith in progress, rationality, teleology, and totalizations of the Enlightenment. John Friedmann (1987) has made this connection explicit, tracing planning back to that period and to the major intellectual traditions of modernism. The various paradigms of mainstream planning are rooted in the ideas of Bentham, Adam Smith, Saint Simon, and Comte, while their critiques and oppositional views go back to Marx and the anarchic and utopian movements of the nineteenth century. The variations of planning that emerged in the nineteen sixties and nineteen seventies and that dominated discussions of that time were certainly inspired by different theo-

retical frameworks. In fact they show that, rather than one planning theory, we should talk of many theories of planning constructed according to different intellectual matrixes. At the same time, however, all these versions of planning participate in a theoretical discourse that is informed and limited by the epistemological tenets of their progenitors—a discourse that, in other words, shares the totalizing tendencies of the modern episteme.

A first round of postmodernist critique to planning attacks precisely its modernist theoretical foundations and, consequently, is not particularly different from the general critique of any modernist theory. Returning to Foucault, for example, planning theories suffer from all the oscillations that he mentioned as "doubles" of modernism. To begin with, both mainstream planning and its critical counterparts swing unsatisfactorily between highly general and experience-limited definitions. In mainstream planning, one end of the oscillation is exemplified by rational models that, drawing from the positivist assumption of a natural social rationality (preceding the individual), propose definitions such as "planning applies rational decision-making procedures in order to reach desired goals" and achieve universality by de facto eliminating any substantive relation between their formulations and reality. This makes them as unassailable as they are vacuous. The other end of the double, the incrementalist paradigm, borrows its view of market rationality (where social rationality follows from the sum of individual ones) from neoclassical economics and sees planning as a tortuous process of "muddling through" political

and bureaucratic obstacles and compromises (Lindblom 1959). As a result, planning swings back to empiricism, denying the possibility of a true theorization altogether. We can recognize the same oscillation among oppositional views with, on the one hand, advocacy planners (and some Marxist scholars) claiming that, given the changes society had undergone since Marx's analysis, it is useless and counterproductive to try to fit the new reality in the obsolete categories of traditional Marxism and it is more useful for planners to adjust their views to the social movements that are emerging. On the other hand, orthodox Marxists emphasize the priority of the theoretical framework that Marxism offers and the need to insert social movements and interventions into it.

Similarly, to paraphrase Foucault's second double, "it is against the already begun that" the various versions of planning are "able to reflect on what may serve them as origin" (Foucault 1973: 330). Whether the origin (and the justification) of modern planning can be found in the natural rationality of man, or in the development of capitalism as Harvey stated, or in the appearance of Fordism as I claimed in the previous pages, it is not the origin that precedes the History of planning, but the conceptualization of a planning "that had already begun" that determines its starting point. To continue with Foucault, it is not "the origin that gives rise to" planning; it is planning "that makes possible the necessity of an origin" (ibid: 330). Thus, it is again the theoretical framework on which planning is grafted, emphasizing the transhistoricity of rationality, or the history of capitalism, or the Fordist restructuring, that determines its origin and gives legitimacy to the framework. This by itself does not mean that these views are wrong. It means, however, that their reliance on the origin functions as a means to justify their totalizing character. It is the selection of an origin that makes a particular version of planning strong and renders other planning histories and versions weak and invisible.

The Planner as Ventriloquist

Perhaps most importantly, both mainstream and radical planning also exemplify Foucault's third double. In the modern episteme the double of the subject is expressed by its attempt to encompass all social experiences and identities and by the simultaneous discovery that these Other experiences and identities have been transformed in order to be known—or, in fact, have transformed the subject itself. In other words, modern thought remains unable, despite its efforts, to avoid referring to an ordering subject. The existing subject may be able to include previously ignored or emerging interests and voices by defining and ordering them in such a way that they fit into its worldview. Or the "new" voices may lead to a new ordering, to the creation of a new center, and to a re-definition of the social subject. In either case, though, a subject still remains the ordering agent of the social totality. As in the double of the origin, the problem of modernist planning is not that its subject is wrong. Indeed there is enough variety among planning theories to supply a wide range of subjects from which to choose. Planners can be overseers qualified to identify and facilitate the

smooth working of social rationality and efficiency of rational planning; or they can be the brokers of market rationality from an incrementalist standpoint; they can "reveal contradictions" in the interest of the working-class when their views rest on Marxist theory; or they can be advocates, taking on different attributes depending on the interests they share with their clients. In each of these cases the identity of planners (and planning) changes. Even if they change, however, planning and planners are still the active subject (i.e., the agent determining a course of action or study). Even when particular attention is devoted to specific social groups, these groups remain passive subjects (i.e., the object that planning and planners discuss, study, or represent).

Planners, in short, act as intellectual ventriloquists, in a way, allegedly endowed with the ability to convey the message of other social groups and subjects, but in practice ordering the form and content of the message according to their own theoretical framework. Different planners/ventriloquists hold different worldviews. Addressing new issues, interests, and social groups, they may even change those views, say different things, and replace their dummies. What remains unchanged, however, is the relationship between the ventriloquist and the dummy. The latter remains passive, dressed up, and spoken for by the former. Actually, mainstream and Marxist planners have no need to change their views, since their Strong and all-inclusive theoretical frameworks can easily make room for the new issues and social groups that come to their attention. For example, the plight of the homeless (to mention a social issue that has surfaced with increasing frequency over the last few years) can be slotted into their respective worldviews as the problem of a group unable or unwilling to participate in society and for whom (in the best hypothesis) the state should supply social services or lodging, or as a social group marginalized and made expendable by the logic of capitalism.

Advocate planners, by contrast, may be more sensitive to the specific characteristics of the group they are representing (or at least less determined to force it into a preconceived and totalizing worldview). Thus, they may pay closer attention to the needs of the homeless that might otherwise go unheard. Yet they too hold on to a preconstituted referential system: an accepted set of rules, practices, and provisions that can be called a "planning system"—similar to the legal system from which the tradition took name and inspiration— and which defines the needs of their "clients" (for housing, in my example). As Tosi put it, "needs speak the life of others....[since the user's actions] are not included in the representation of the system for meeting the needs .... [and] the user is present merely through the prescriptions of behavior incorporated in the provision"(1991: 597).

The metaphor of the ventriloquist is useful only up to a point, however, since it doesn't address the fact that planners not only present a "picture" of the groups and interests they deal with, but change them. Friedmann (1987) pointed out that the philosophical views on which the various versions of planning are based does not provide the "theoretical object" of the planning discourse. These views are borrowed from broader intellectual traditions whose

epistemic limits (and whose ventriloquism) post-modernism has already criticized *ad abundantiam*. The specific terrain of planning theory is defined by the attempt to link the knowledge that each planning paradigm derives from its worldview to action. Whether it is "system maintenance," or "system guidance," or "systemic change" (if I can borrow some more from Friedmann's definitions of types of planning), the discourse of planning theory is characterized by the changes that, under the guidance of knowledge, planning accomplishes in the real world. This linkage, as writers as different as Wildavsky (1973) and Castells (1978) have told us, has not been particularly effective in eliminating the problems that planning set out to solve. In contrast, however, planning's actions have been more successful in changing those "problems" by ordering them and by making real the representation created of them. Returning to the example of the homeless, the knowledge and the actions of the planner have certainly not led to the elimination of the problem. They have succeeded, however—by assuming that the lack of shelter is the all-encompassing identity of the group and acting on this assumption— in transforming that assumption into reality, often by bulldozing their camps and makeshift shelters (i.e., their homes). This does not mean that the homeless are not in need of (better) shelter. It means, however, that the action of planning is based on a two-fold ordering. It orders the "problem" by inserting it in its worldview and, simultaneously, it orders it internally, by prioritizing the lack of shelter over other characteristics of the "problem" group, such as mental illness, alcoholism, or even lack of jobs.

These other characteristics, even if recognized, take a secondary position in the homogenized identity of the group.

In brief, the theoretical and epistemological limits of the modernist planning discourse are threefold. First, and directly linked to its epistemic grounding, the crisis of planning theory reflects the increasing difficulty of adapting its established theoretical framework(s) to the discovery of (or the encounter with) increasing numbers of social groups and identities that claim their right to be heard and their right to difference. The emergence of feminist, minority, or gay planning theories and histories is an indication of the weakening of the established forms of Strong Planning. Second, the strong character of modernist planning, even if it disappears in the subject matter and in the theoretical frameworks, remains in the persistence of a "discipline" of planning and of planners as "disciplining" agents who establish the parameters according to which an issue must be expressed in order to be accepted as ground for planning intervention. Appropriate objects for planning intervention may change and include new views and methods of dealing with the object and the arena of planning. But it is still the planner that stakes out the boundaries of the terrain where the discussion takes place and defines what issues, and in what form, are allowed on that terrain. Third, the issue of ordering and defining the object of intervention is particularly relevant in planning, since the specificity of planning lies in the move from knowledge to action. "Disciplining" in planning is not limited to a representation of the object of planning,

but entails a material modification of reality to make it fit better in its representation.[9]

The Author is Dead: Long Live the Translator

The issue of the discursivity of knowledge and its ordering character (the second limit of planning mentioned above) is a theme dear to postmodernism from its beginnings (Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Order of Things*, for example). More recently, it has also made its way into the planning field both as a critique of dominant planning and as the basis for what Judith Innes (1995) called the new "emerging paradigm of planning." John Forester (1982, 1985) claimed that planning suffers from systemic distortions of communication, while Christine Boyer (1983; see also Tett and Wolfe 1991) identified the roles that (changing) discourses have on planning practices. More recently, Seymour Mandelbaum (1991) pointed out how conflicting historical narratives and the way of dealing with their incongruities lead to different planning approaches and Jim Throgmorton (1993; 1996) showed how planning is fundamentally a form of persuasive future-oriented storytelling.

Given the influence that Habermas has exerted on Innes' new planning paradigm—aptly called communicative action to make its Habermasian connection explicit—it is important to recall that, differently from Foucault or other postmodernists, for Habermas the communicative distortions that mar the Enlightenment Project can be eliminated and the unfinished project of modernism rescued. Similarly, communicative action planning wants to put modernist planning back on its tracks, by openly recognizing its discursive base and intervening on it. Like Habermas, planners in the communicative action paradigm believe in the possibility of a public environment that is all-inclusive and where different viewpoints, narratives, and knowledges can be effectively expressed, without distortions, and then mediated towards consensus (Healey 1993). In fact, undistorted communication and consensus go hand-in-hand, since dialogue requires, as a condition for its beginning, faith in the possibility of consensus; consensus, in return, requires a discussion "under conditions that neutralize all motives except that of cooperatively seeking truth" (Habermas, quoted in Young 1998: 435). Thus, theorists in this paradigm shy away from conceptions of planning based on expertise and technical knowledge and emphasize instead the role of the planner in facilitating public participation in the planning arena and in helping to articulate the experiences, needs, and problems of the public in the spirit of "cooperative truth-seeking". Rather than an expert or an advocate, the main role of planner is seen here as a mediator, a facilitator whose purpose is to move planning towards what Habermas called an "ideal speech situation." Communicative action planners are not the ventriloquist of the previous pages, but rather benign gate-keepers of the public sphere who do their best to guarantee free access to the planning table, and translators with the task of eliminating distortions from the public's statements in the progress towards consensus.

The assumption that a neutral public sphere may exist, that consensus is a legitimate goal, that com-

municative distortions can be eliminated, and that an ideal speech situation can be achieved are central tenets of Habermas' rescue effort and at the core of his critics' arguments. Nancy Fraser has contended that the public sphere where communicative action is to take place is never open to all; that the distortion is already embedded in the very definition of public sphere, or better in the assumption that an inclusive public sphere exists, since any conception of "public" inevitably ends up by making invisible some social groups and silencing some discourses, or at least by misrepresenting both (Fraser 1985; 1992).[10] Along similar lines, Iris M. Young has argued that the search for consensus and social inclusiveness rests on "the ideal of reason expressing an impartial point of view" (1998: 435). This is to say, beyond a veneer of social difference, society must be based on an "essential" homogeneity and sameness among its members for inclusiveness, universality of reason, and impartiality to exist. Thus, echoing Foucault's double of the subject, Young concludes that even if social unity "is not a starting point, but a goal of political dialogue," by "looking for what we have in common—whether as a prior condition or as a result—..... we are not transforming our point of view. We only come to see ourselves mirrored in others" (1997: 66-67).

Fraser's and Young's arguments can be equally applied to communicative action planning. This new planning paradigm remains a modernist activity that finds its centering features in the existence of a universal public (and public sphere) and in the possibility of a consensus that can and should be built.

By the same token, the figure of the planner emerges, once more, as an ordering agent that, in assuming an all-inclusive definition of "public," necessarily operates implicit exclusions and that, in assuming and seeking consensus, takes on a maieutic role, with an unwittingly biased role in shaping both the dialogue and the planning discourse. We return, in other words, to Foucault's third double. The attempt to include the Other in the domain of planning results in changing the characteristics of the subject—the role of the planner. At the same time, this attempt also changes the Other, since the subject, in its attempt to encompass and understand all social experiences and identities, must inevitably transform them.

Epistemological Heterotopias

Towards the beginning of the previous section I mentioned that the limits of modernism are to be found in its "longitudinal and latitudinal totalizations;" that is, in an epistemology in which contradictory theories and philosophies (with different subjects and histories) find a shared base in the belief that society is ultimately a coherent unit, coalescing around a central social subject and a unitary history. Similarly, the centering aspect of modernist planning is not agreement (which does not exist) over what planning or the planner's role is, but lies in the assumption that there is something called planning, and someone called a planner, that are both identifiable independently from, and a priori to, the situation and the social groups to which planning is to be applied. This preordained character of planning

and planners rests in turn on the assumption that the planner is in a privileged position to "know" what has to be done. This knowledge can take the form of "hard" knowledge, as in the technical reason of the rational model, or be present in the "soft" version of communicative action, as the ability to help on the road to consensus. In any event, what persists is the position of the planner as expert who speaks for others, or at least interprets or directs what others have to say, and an epistemology of planning still anchored on a view of society as a knowable unity.

All this is not to say that planning is hopelessly en-meshed in the limits of modernism and planners should find themselves other jobs. It means, how-ever, that to persist in seeking a once-and-for-all definition of planning and of the planner's role is a limiting starting point since it still maintains a con-ception of society based on unity and sameness. A better starting point may be to adapt to planning Linda M. Alcoff's statement that "anyone who speaks for others should do so only out of a con-crete analysis of the particular power relations and discursive effects involved" (Alcoff 1995: 111). Thus, in some cases, as advocate planners well know, speaking for others may be the only way to give a voice, even at the risk of distorting it, to marginal-ized groups. In other circumstances being a facilita-tor/translator can indeed help to effectively articulate a social demand and even create consensus or, per-haps better, an alliance between social groups. In still other cases, speaking for others should take place not in order to define, represent, direct, and "order" a

subaltern social group, but in order to make room for a "countersentence" that originates from that group, and that "challenges and subverts the opposi-tion between the knowing agent and the object of knowledge" (ibid.: 110). At the other end of the spectrum, the "will to speak" (even if only to trans-late and facilitate or to advocate) should be kept in check when it would silence other voices that other-wise could be heard and its effect would just rein-force the already dominant position of the speaker.

Thus, a first and relatively easy answer to the prob-lem of speaking for others is that planners should be flexible enough to recognize when and how to talk. By the same token, the theorization and practice of planning, rather than seeking the supremacy of one planning paradigm (whether the rational model, advocacy, or communicative action), should be able to change and adapt according to specific situations, shifting and mixing models.

More importantly, Alcoff's statements about the need, under certain circumstances, to speak in order to stimulate a countersentence, or even to remain silent, in order not to cover other voices, suggest the potential for a more radical restructuring of planning. Both cases, in fact, refute the pre-established identifi-cation of who the planners are and what planning is. The willingness of the official planner to remain si-lent implicitly recognizes that there are different plannings, from different sources, with different knowledges, and different active subjects as valid, if not more, as the official versions. Speaking for a countersentence goes even further, since the planner speaks in order to be contradicted (or at least is will-

ing to be contradicted) in order to facilitate the surfacing of those sources, knowledges, and subjects. In both cases, silence and countersentences can subvert the preordained character of planning by proposing counter-characterizations of planning that reflect both the groups expressing them and the specific context in which they are pronounced. Countersentences and statements from within a group can be the continuation, in the realm of planning, of the "incommensurable stories" with which Mandelbaum (1991) indicates competing narratives that cannot be synthesized into a unity and yet are equally truthful. They can lead to "incommensurable" plannings and planners' roles and be starting points for a "decentering" of the planning discourse that does not seek consensus and unity but is the ground for plannings (in the plural) for difference.

In this sense restructuring might lead not merely to the replacement of one form of Strong Planning with another (and to planners leaping from the old to the new). The restructuring of planning (and of planning education) could go in the direction of what James Duncan calls "a kind of epistemological heterotopia" (1994: 402), producing a plurality of sites—institutional (classrooms, universities, institutions for international development, planning agencies) or not (community organizations, nonprofit associations, union halls)—where different subjects, rather than determining epistemological primacy, seek epistemological differences.

Endnotes

[1] Foucault calls heterotopia "a site capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault 1986: 25).

[2] Antonio Gramsci used the term Fordism with reference to the development of mass consumption in the United States. At about the same time, "Fordism" was also the proposed Encyclopedia Britannica entry describing Ford's new production methods. Following Henry Ford's suggestion, the eventual entry read "Mass-Production." The two sources, focusing respectively on the organization of consumption and of production, signal the two sides of the regime.

For an a complete explanation of the Regulation School's method and analysis of Fordism see Aglietta (1979) and Boyer (1990).

[3] For a detailed history of the development of mass production in the United States see Hounshell (1984).

[4] For alternative forms of planning –"weak planning" to keep the parallel with Vattimo– see Sandercock and Forsyth (1992) and Sandercock (1998).

[5] Two years after their institution, the NIRA and the National Recovery Administration, the agency in charge to carry out the NIRA Programs, were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

[6] The argument has been made that, since electricity production already exceeded demand, the TVA actually exacerbated overproduction (Beaudreau 1996: 114).

[7]Concerns over the overcapacity of the industrial system were already present in the Hoover administration, whose chief economic strategist (Senator Reed Smoot) stated that low consumption levels by wage-earners "has brought about what may be called and oversupply or overproduction existing in many lines" (quoted in Beaudreau 1996: 31). The Roosevelt administration was even more clearly aware of the necessity to develop a mass market. See for example Roosevelt's address "A Discussion of Government Fiscal Policy in Relation to Consumer Purchasing Power" on May 23, 1939 to the American Retail Federation.

[8]For an accurate description of these practices see Jackson (1985).

[9]Recently a student offered me an example of this material change in relation to the establishment of Homelands in South Africa. There, the cognitive ordering of ethnic groups as excluded from the rights of true citizenship was materialized by creating "independent" territories and locating those groups in them. This resulted in making the members of the groups foreigners in their country, needing a passport to move through it, and with limited or no voice in the decision making process of the state. It resulted, in other words, in making real the initial conception.

[10]Fraser (1992) makes this case with regards to subordination of women, who in Habermas' characterization of the public sphere are relegated into the private and excluded from the discourse altogether.

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