



On Spatial Planning and Marxism: Looking Back, Going Forward

Ståle Holgersen 

Department of Social and Economic Geography and Institute for Housing and Urban Research,
Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden;
stale.holgersen@kultgeog.uu.se

Abstract: The renewed interest in Marxism that occurred in social sciences and humanities after the 2008 economic crisis has not yet found its counterpart in spatial planning. This paper examines what Marxist planning theory and practices could mean in the current conjuncture. It does so through scrutinising (1) the vibrant Marxist discourse in planning that existed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, (2) the recent history (since the 1980s) of planning theory and its relation to the political economy, and (3) the current political economic context (not least defined by the diabolic crisis). Where previous Marxist approaches to planning were very strong on analysing the political economy, I argue there is currently a need—with old hegemonies losing ground, communicative approaches losing support, and neoliberalism in the political economy losing legitimacy—to *also* discuss establishing alternatives.

Keywords: planning theory, critical realism, Marxist planning theory, economic crisis and climate change, neoliberalism, Marxism

Introduction

Since the economic crisis in 2008—the most severe economic crisis for almost a century—there has been renewed interest in Marx and Marxism. The last decade has seen soaring sales of Marx's work, with *The Guardian* reporting that: "Yes, Karl Marx is going mainstream—and goodness knows where it will end" (Jeffries 2012). If the 2008 crisis brought Marx "back", there is currently no reason for him to disappear again as the crisis itself is not solved (Holgersen 2017; Shaikh 2016).

This "return of Marx" never really occurred in planning discourses. Which is peculiar as Marxist analyses have been *especially* strong in the neighbouring discipline: human geography. And it is also peculiar as there *was* a vital Marxist discourse in planning during the 1970s and 1980s that one could potentially draw inspiration from—if a return to Marxism is indeed desired.¹ The non-return of Marx in planning theory is observable in various places. Marxism is seldom discussed in papers or books concerned with spatial planning, and analyses that draw on a Marxist political economic framework are rarely articulated in journals like e.g. *Planning Theory and Practice*, *Planning Theory*, *Town Planning Review*, or *European Planning Studies*. Regrettably—it almost goes without saying—there has not been a resurgence in Marxist-influenced planning policies either.²

This discussion on a possible return of Marxism in planning theory will be conducted against the Marxist discourses that did exist in the 1970s/80s and will explore how planning theory has developed since. It is important to learn and draw inspiration from history, and from the development within e.g. human geography or urban studies. But any “return” of Marxism in planning theory can neither be a blueprint or the discourse in the 1970s/80s, nor simply copying the development within other disciplines.

A revival of Marxist planning theory and practice must be analysed within a context of the broader political economy. For analytical reasons, I divide this context into three components: processes and relations within capitalism that *do not* change substantially over decades; changes that *have* occurred during neoliberalism; as well as the current economic and ecological crises.

The economic and ecological crises constitute what Sayer (2015) calls a *diabolic crisis*—in the sense that solving one (e.g. re-establishing economic growth) would automatically damage the other (economic growth being a problem for climate change). In urban studies, there has been much focus on how the crisis was triggered by a bursting housing bubble, with a dynamic but unstable financial sector contributing to its global spread (ironically partly through “securitisation”). My main focus here is how the underlying problems that caused the crisis have been postponed (e.g. through lowering interest rates, qualitative easing), rather than solved. Real estate markets and processes of urbanisation continue therefore to be destabilising factors in the economy. As the political economy is neither providing growth (material foundation) nor hope (ideology), neoliberalism as a way of organising the political economy is crumbling. This has created a crisis in neoliberal ideology and policy. And it is a crisis in the current planning regime.

Major economic crises under capitalism are normally solved through processes of creative destruction—including changes in how and what we plan. The threat of climate change intensifies the need for both destructive and creative changes. Old fossil landscapes need to be demolished. Green workplaces and industries, homes and infrastructure need to be planned and built for the working class. This is the time of not only countering to the worst effects of neoliberalism—segregation, polarisation, financialisation, privatisation, etc.—but also to introduce new planning models. After decades of class struggle from above, we need new planning practices that prioritise the working class within ecological limits. In light of this, it is hopeful that both the 2008 crisis and the climate crisis have triggered explosions of activism, including the Right to the City movements, radical planning and housing networks, organisations against eviction, Ende Gelände, and so forth (on the economic crisis in urban contexts, see Aalbers 2012; Harvey 2010; Holgersen 2015a; Peck 2012; Rolnik 2019; on ecological crisis, see Foster et al. 2010; Holgersen and Warlenius 2016; Malm 2016; Næss 2006; Sayer 2015; on resistance, see Marcuse 2014; Mayer 2013).

“Planning” will in this article be understood as spatial planning or, more concretely, as the “complex processes of regulating land use that (often) ends with a decision as to where (not) to place what” (Holgersen 2015b:6). This involves a range of actors and an ensemble of activities—including both “formal and informal” strategies of power (Fox-Rogers and Murphy 2014)—that in modern capitalist societies are

normally sanctioned by the state apparatus (often through municipalities and regions).³ Planning theory, then, is the work of providing theoretical reflections and concepts that relate to these kinds of activities for both planners and society at large.

“Marxism” is a broad concept with a wide-ranging history, spanning various disciplines, continents and generations. In this paper, Marxism will be discussed from a political-economic perspective. When distinguishing Marx’s work from others, the starting point is his innovative work—drawing upon Ricardo and others—on the theory of surplus value. Entwined in this concept is that economic growth comes from labour, and that exploitation of the working class is rooted in the normal workings of capitalism. Capital accumulation is therefore a class activity (Marx 1973, 1976).⁴

This paper consists of three sections. The first section explores the vibrant Marxist discourse that existed within planning theory during the late 1970s and early 1980s, and goes on to discuss this discourse against its critiques.⁵ Despite the fact that the Marxists concerned with planning theory in the late 1970s and early 1980s sometimes had different points of departure; did not always reference one another in their texts (but often did); and had disagreements (see Kirk 1980), I will argue that Marxism in planning constituted one unified discourse in the 1980s. I will do this—following Fairclough’s (2010) take on discourse—as they worked within a common framework based on how they represented certain aspects of the social world. The core of this discourse was to integrate Marxist critique of the political economy with analysis of spatial planning (on *critical discourse analysis* and *critical realism*, see Fairclough 1989; Fairclough et al. 2002).

The second section outlines some general trends in the development of planning theory since the 1980s. As Marxism is a materialist approach, and due to the fact that I draw inspiration from Critical Realism, I will emphasise the intersection between the political economy and planning (Næss 2015; Sayer 2000). These first two sections provide necessary clarifications, analytical background and historical context for the analysis and reflections on Marxism and planning discourses in the contemporary setting that follows in the third section.

The third section discusses the possible return of Marxism in contemporary planning. From a materialist perspective, it is imperative that developments of theories must be discussed dialectically with the social formation in which they exist. In this respect, we need to understand how class struggles also take place within planning and within the state, in order to produce a new hegemony based on new class relations and a different relation to nature. Where Marxist planning theory in the 1970s and 1980s was more concerned with *is* than *ought*, the current diabolic crisis forces us to work on both fronts simultaneously. We need to embrace what previous Marxist discourse did not manage to include, something that is necessary if a Marxist discourse on planning is going to have an impact—the greatest promise of Marxism: a call for social change.

Marx, Marxism, and Planning

Marx mentions in *Grundrisse* (1973) that every form of production creates its own form of government and legal relations. Methods and forms of organising land

use surely play into this. But Marx never really came close to discussing spatial (urban or regional) planning. He wrote very little about planning,⁶ and not much about urbanisation either. But Friedrich Engels did. Engels linked broader capitalist relations and housing in *The Housing Question* (1942), and described relationships between health, city and class in *The Condition of the Working-Class* (2013). *The Housing Question* continues to influence housing studies today, while *The Condition of the Working-Class* can be found in curriculums on planning theory (though it is arguably mostly used to stage where planning “comes from”, not actually to examine the relation between planning and capitalism).

Marx, however, did write on many other issues relevant to urban planning. Several of these—like capital accumulation, exploitation, different forms of rents, alienation, relation to nature and social reproduction—have had a direct impact on Marxists’ writing on planning. Apart from early reflections by Walter Benjamin, the major pioneering work around Marxism and urbanism, started with Henri Lefebvre, who was followed by David Harvey and Manuel Castells in the 1970s. Not much later, Marxists investigated the local state (Cynthia Cockburn), gentrification (Neil Smith, Eric Clark), housing (Michael Stone, Peter Marcuse), real estate developments (Francois Lamarche, Michael Edwards), economic geography (Richard Walker, Doreen Massey, Jamie Gough), landscapes (Don Mitchell), and even architecture (Bill Risebero).

It is in this intellectual context that Allen J. Scott and Shoukry Roweis, among others, started criticising conventional planning theory. In 1977, they argued that conventional planning theorists resolve the mismatch between planning theory and the real world of practical urban interventions by introducing the notion that planning theory is about *ought*, rather than understanding what planning *is*. From their Marxist perspective they rejected “right at the outset any attempt to derive such theory out of abstract normative principles as to what planning ought in ideal circumstances to be. Our concern is uniquely with what planning *is*” (Scott and Roweis 1977:1097). Scott and Roweis break their Marxist approach to the subject matter into two steps: first, urban planning is a “concrete and social phenomenon” and, second, “there exist connections between urban planning and the rest of society such that this intertwined totality constitutes the universe of social reality” (1977:1100). The main task for planning theoreticians thus becomes to understand the “nature” of such social phenomena. Rather than simply being a tool for everyday policy-making, the role of theory should be to scrutinise, criticise and reveal power relations:

Current formulations in the field of “planning theory” tend to be purely descriptive or purely normative. Little is done in the way of *analytical/historical* formulations concerning the essence, roles and “logic” of urban planning in capitalist societies. As a consequence, planners tend to lack a systematic understanding of their discipline/profession; of the real constraints imposed on, and the objective opportunities open to, their practice. Lacking, as it were, a map of social reality in which they can situate themselves and their practice, planners tend to vacillate between utopianism and technical pragmatism. The former robs their practice of its potential effectiveness and their theory of its practical significance. The latter reduces practice to an aimless

management of day-to-day bottlenecks and theory to a technical instrumentality of shortsighted “problem-solving”. (Roweis 1981:159)

Roweis and Scott were not the only Marxists concerned with planning in the late 1970s and early 1980s. C.G. Pickvance brought French discourses and texts on urban planning and urban questions more broadly to an English-speaking audience when *Urban Sociology: Critical Essays* was published in 1976. Michael Dear and Allen J. Scott (1981) brought together 21 scholars, mostly working in North America and investigating urbanisation and planning from Marxist perspectives, in their edited *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society*.⁷ Most of these approaches were concerned with analysing the role of planning, land use and capital accumulation through Marx’s critique of the political economy. Also within this framework we find Lamarche (1976) who discussed property development, Stone (1977) and Marcuse (1980) who examined housing, and Harloe (1977) scrutinising urban sociology.

The aim here is to analyse planning from Marx’s theoretical apparatus and to understand the underlying structural mechanisms and social relations that constitute planning. Planning is embedded within a system defined by capital accumulation and class conflicts,⁸ private profit and endless and compound growth, and which is organised through exploitation, competition and private ownership of most companies. This has consequences when discussing real estate, land use, the built environment, property development, land ownership and the role of (ground) rent, urbanisation and so forth (cf. Castells 1977; Harvey 1999; Mandel 1978; Marx 1976). According to Kirk (1980:79), what is both obvious but also crucially important, is that the Marxist approach to planning “does not treat economic factors as non-issues”.

The relation between planning and social relations under capitalism has also been crucial to the work of Marxist planners. Authors like Beauregard (1978), Cockburn (1977), Kirk (1980), Lojkine (1976), and Scott and Roweis (1977) are all examining the local state and local policies for land use. One crucial aim here is to understand the particular activity that planning is, and its embedded relationship with political economy. The core argument is that planning is not a neutral, purely technical and/or independent activity. Planning must rather be understood as rooted in a political economy defined by capitalist social relations. As power relations are produced through various mechanisms in our societies, planning must be grasped as *one* particular and material way of producing and reproducing power.

Planning is of such a character that responsibility cannot be left to a single capitalist. The organisation of infrastructure, land use, public space, etc. demands some sort of collective organisation. This is, in the global North, normally organised (one way or another) through the state. The state—and planning—is tied up in class in the sense that broader structures in society always play into state activity (see e.g. Cockburn 1977; for recent discussions see Eisenschitz 2008; Holgersen 2015b).

Richard Foglesong grasps this well. In *Planning the Capitalist City* (1986) he examines planning history from a Marxist perspective by historicising the

development from colonial town planning to planning in the 1920s in the US. In his theoretical analysis, Foglesong distinguishes between what he calls the “property contradiction” and the “capitalist-democracy contradiction”. The former examines planning’s relation to the capitalist economy, as the “institutions of private property stands as an impediment to attempt to socialize the control of land in order to meet [the] collective needs [of both capital and labour]” (Foglesong 1986:21). The “capitalist-democracy contradiction” refers to relations between planning and liberal politics, and expresses the contradiction between “the need to socialize the control of urban space to create the conditions for the maintenance of capitalism, on the one hand, and the danger of capital of truly socializing, that is, democratizing, the control of urban land on the other” (Foglesong 1986:23).

Although the authors mentioned above begin from a common starting point—integrating Marxist analysis with spatial planning—their approaches differ: some relate planning to *circulation* of capital (Lamarche), some to *collective consumption* (Castells), others to how the built environment is used as a *means of production* (Harvey and Preteceille), while others still are more concerned with the policy-side of planning processes, either relating urban planning under capitalism to the problem of *collective control* (Dear, Scott, Roweis, Cockburn) or how internal structures of the *state* impose limits on planning and capital (Foglesong, Beauregard, Kirk).

Dialogue with Critique

The Marxist discourse in planning was met with critique for being economic determinist, for not solving the relation between theory and practice, and for alienating planners. Much of this critique came from heavyweights within the discipline. Norman Fainstein and Susan Fainstein (1979) claimed Marxist theory and planning practice live uneasily with one another for two reasons. First, because “Marxism cannot provide a completely satisfactory guide for what planners should do and still remain planners”, and second because “seemingly radical planning activities have themselves been ‘demystified’ by Marxism” (1979:397–398). The theoretical efforts in placing planning within the enormous apparatus of the capitalist mode of production are, according to Fainstein (2012:164), very “discouraging to progressive planners” (for a similar critique, see Klosterman 1985).⁹

In *Cities of Tomorrow*, Peter Hall (1988:339) criticises Scott and Roweis: “the Marxian logic is strangely quietest; it suggests that the planner retreats from planning altogether into the academic ivory tower”. Scott and Roweis claim, according to Hall (1988:339), that theory is either “about unravelling the historical logic of capitalism, or it is about prescription for action”.

Margo Huxley argues that planning from the standpoint of Marxism or the political economy: “place[s] planning in the context of historically developing economic relations of inequality, which planning’s search for ideal environments can do little to alleviate” (2010:139). Huxley acknowledges, similar to Kolsterman but in contrast to Hall, that Marxists have been invaluable in revealing the

economic and social inequalities in which planning is enmeshed. Huxley is, however, critical of the way they have done so with “a tendency to provide mono-causal, meta-theoretical explanations for [planning’s] persistent failures and occasional successes, rooted, in the last instance, in the relations of capitalism” (Huxley 2010:140).¹⁰ Given this tendency, actual social progress, according to Huxley, has been depreciated as only “short-term or localized effects, mystifying the underlying relations of capitalist exploitations and in the long run, perpetuating them” (2010:139–140).

That Marxists emphasise the power of capital often results in critiques of economic determinism. We find this critique levelled by Peter Hall in *Cities in Civilization*:

Marxists would claim, as one would expect, that it is all fundamentally a question of class interest: where an innovative measure served the interests of capital, it would be applied; if not, not. Yet of course it is not as simple as all that ... (Hall 1998:614)

Hall’s claim that “it is not as simple as that” is absolutely correct. But none of the Marxists I have mentioned above would argue it was.¹¹

Critiques of Marxist approaches to planning also concern the relation between “theory and practice”. In 1979, Fainstein and Fainstein claim that Marxist theory operates at such a high level of abstraction and is so critical towards the state that fruitful connections between planning and Marxist theory are impossible (*ibid.*; see also Paden 2003). In Hall (1988:339), Marxists are presented as being totally unable to handle the practice of planning. There is an important point in this argument. Marxist urban theory *has* lived uneasily with planning practice. Then again, Marxist theory also lives uneasily with “Marxist practice”. Furthermore, it would seem that the same applies for planning theory in general, which has its own never-ending tensions between theory and practice (Holgersen 2015b; Porter 2015; Sager 2009).¹²

In fact, in 1977 Scott and Roweis articulated a critique against conventional planning that is fairly similar to Fainstein, Fainstein and Hall’s critique against Marxists: arguing that there was a “definite mismatch between the world of current planning theory on the one hand, and the real world of practical urban intervention on the other hand” (Scott and Roweis 1977:1116). The simple conclusion to draw from this—from the two sides criticising each other with almost identical arguments—is that they are both right.

Some of the critique of the Marxist discourse simply places higher demands on the Marxists than on anyone else. Above, we saw arguments that Marxism cannot provide a “completely satisfactory guide” for action, and that Marxist planning theory lives uneasily with planning practice. This is true, but actually is a concern within all approaches to planning. “Marxism” here becomes a scapegoat for problems that apply to the whole discipline. This, however, does not mean that all the critique is completely misplaced. Similar to other concurrent Marxist discourses, there are places with underpinnings of structuralism and economism. Foglesong also recognises this in 1986, when he argues that his concrete historical research has the explicit aim of counter-weighting what he calls the “abstract formalism that has deterred empirical research” in the Marxist urban literature (1986:11).

Whether one labels something economist/determinist or not, also depends highly on context.¹³ Let's take the case of David Harvey. He surely places planning within the "enormous apparatus" of the capitalist mode of production, and he concludes that, after a Marxist analysis (including the domination of capital over labour): "we might come to understand why the planner seems doomed to a life of perpetual frustration [and] why the high-sounding ideals of planning theory are so frequently translated into grubby practices on the ground" (Harvey 1985:184).¹⁴ When quotes like this are taken out of context, they surely seem both determinist and depressing, not least to planners: who wants to be "doomed to a life of perpetual frustration"! Read with a Marxist analytical lens, however, one can also find (in the case of Harvey included) hopefulness and sometimes even optimism: after all, Marxism is nothing less than a call for revolution.

But this call for action is not always articulated very well. Indeed, the general tendency in the Marxist literature on planning of the 1970s and 1980s is that calls for action and social change are either highly under-communicated or simply missing.

Transforming Political Economy—Changing Planning (Theory)

From a materialist perspective, it is important to stress that theoretical discussions are also embedded somewhere outside of themselves, outside the world of ideas. From a Marxist perspective, it is important to see changes in planning theory in relation to changes in the political economy. One crucial process in this respect is the much-researched and extensively debated transformation from industrial, Fordist and/or Keynesian cities, into post-Fordist, post-industrial, knowledge-, entrepreneurial-, and/or creative cities. This transformation consists of various interrelated processes and changes. Grasped jointly as one larger system, these processes are often called neoliberalism (see e.g. Harvey 2005; Jessop 2001). There is no space here for an extensive examination, but it is important to stress that neoliberalism consists of various interrelated components such as: the *political economic* components (the stagflation crisis which could not be solved by Keynesian policies, oil crises, crushing of trade unions, privatisations, deregulations, new role for financial markets, changes from a Fordist to flexible accumulation regime); *geographical* components (globalisation, relocation of industries, new spatial division of labour); *ideological* components (Keynesianism losing hegemony, free market dominance, trickle down and ideas that states were per se inefficient); and *technological* components (containerisation and the coming data-technology). In class terms, such processes changed both the power relations between labour and capital (strengthening the latter at the expense of the former) and between different capitals (e.g. finance over industrial capital) (for some references: among planners, see Aarsæther et al. 2012; Beauregard 1989; among human geographers, see Harvey 1990; Holgersen 2017; among economists, see Lysestøl and Eilertsen 2001; Shaikh 2016; and among sociologists and political economists, see Aronowitz and Bratsis 2002; Jessop 2001).

The way spatial planning in the global North has played into neoliberalism can be described through five planning-relevant questions: *what* has been planned (housing areas for the wealthy, offices as workplaces, symbol buildings to attract attention, shopping centres, sport stadiums); *for whom* has it been planned (rich people and capital); *by whom* was it planned (often by “planners” and architects hired by capital, privatisation of planning per se); *how* has it been planned (public sector seeing private sector as role model, new public management (NPM), communicative planning, collaboration with capital and wealthy “neighbours”, implementation and dictation in poorer areas); and *where* are things placed (as a general rule, capital dictates the where of investments, production and development, and people in wealthy areas dictate (indirectly) the localisation of social institutions like homes for drug addicts, etc.) (see Amdam and Veggeland 2011; Harvey 1989; Holgersen 2017; Nordahl 2012).

Planning theory was definitely not left untouched by such changes. Since the introduction of neoliberalism was much contested and met with protest of all kinds, one could imagine that planning theory would meet such changes by engaging in the emerging conflicts, perhaps through analysing the power relations within the transformations and thereafter siding with the less powerful in these conflicts. But rather than engaging in the political economy, the opposite happened. The field of planning theory, according to Beauregard (1989:391), met these vast socio-spatial transformations by increasingly turning “inwards”, focusing more on process and the procedural, and advocating for communicative theory.

Planning theory experienced a “communicative turn” (see Healey 1999, 2010), and claims were made during the 1990s about consensus amongst planning theoreticians on key theoretical and methodological questions—such as the need for normative theory, the relevance of agency over structure and the interest in studying practice (Yiftachel and Huxley 2000:908; see also Mäntysalo 2002).¹⁵

This “turn” was also part of a broader critique of post-war positivism and high-modernism. Within planning theory this meant a critique of relying too heavily on location theory, not understanding different social situations and aiming for neutral objectives in the effort to maximise the benefits for everyone (Harvey 1973; Holt-Jensen 1999). This critique was related to the rise of post-structuralism and post-modernism, and critiques of meta-narratives and truth-claims.¹⁶ Marxists also criticised the assumed positivist “objectivity” of planning serving the “common good”, but differed from the post-modernist in a number of ways, like on the question of meta-narratives (Dear 1986; Fox-Rogers and Murphy 2014).

In the previous section, we saw how Marxists were accused of being overly concerned with economic structures and the overall development of the political economy. Marxists have criticised the dominant planning theory—in its various forms over time—for the very opposite. From Roweis arguing in 1981 that planners were lacking “a map of social reality in which they can situate themselves and their practice” (1981:159), to Beauregard, who argued in 1989 that “planning theorists have rejected materialist perspectives for idealistic ones” (1989:390). Petter Næss (2015) argued similarly, some 34 years after Roweis and over 40 years after Harvey’s *Social Justice and the City*, that communicative

approaches tend to neglect underlying social mechanisms as well as planning's social and environmental impact.

The focus on fruitful dialogues and favourable processes owed to the communicative turn has removed planning theory even further from the messy world of political economy, and this has also exposed it for critique. Critiques of communicative approaches confronted its inability to handle power (including class), accused it of ignoring outcomes of social relations in society in general and spatial processes in particular, charged it with functioning as a tool for (legitimising) neoliberalism, and argued that in practice it has often meant more power to the already powerful (see e.g. Fainstein 2000; Fox-Rogers and Murphy 2014; Gunder 2010; Holgersen and Haarstad 2009; Næss 2015; Purcell 2009; Sager 2009).

The strong critique of communicative approaches, for giving priority to dialogues, processes and language over connection to the political economy, has also brought with it more materialist approaches (on Marxism and materialism, see e.g. Marx 1976:102; see also Næss 2015; Ollman 2003; Sayer 2000). But a materialist embedding does not need to be Marxist. Fox-Rogers and Murphy (2014:263) are among the few who do embed planning explicitly in a Marxist political economy framework, arguing that "the central driver ... [is] linked to economic power rather than 'network contacts' alone". A materialist-feminist approach could, in a similar way, situate planning in gender relations, and a materialist-post-colonial approach in the context of racism and imperialism, etc.¹⁷ Some different ways of embedding planning in something outside of itself are found with Yiftachel and Huxley (2000; see also Yiftachel 1998) embedding planning in the (national-)state, Libby Porter (2011) in the "political" (à la Chantal Mouffe), and Guy Baeten (2012) in "neoliberalism". Or with Ananya Roy:

The most obvious and necessary form of disruption to planning theory comes from the straightforward fact that the cities of the world, and thus their planning regimes, are inextricably entangled with the logic of late capitalism. (Roy 2010:102)

These are fruitful approaches—Marxist or not—that, after two decades of attack, have seriously weakened the communicative and idealistic hegemony. Yet despite this, if there is currently one dominant discourse in planning theory, it is arguably still communicative planning: partly due to lack of any one competitor (planning theory is currently a rather fragmented discipline) and partly because the theoretical underpinnings are still popular.¹⁸ However, there are no longer claims about "consensus".

Although the vital Marxist discourse in planning that existed in the 1970s and 1980s has disappeared, this does not mean that there have been absolutely no Marxist analyses within planning discourses since the late 1980s. Authors like Linda Fox-Rogers, Enda Murphy, Berna Grist, Tom Angotti, Petter Næss, Aram Eisenschitz, Robert Beauregard, Libby Porter and Samuel Stein (2019) have all drawn on Marx or a Marxist political economy approach in different ways in their work. But it is too early to claim that these constitute a significant discourse.

It is also possible to make an argument that Marxism never disappeared from planning discourse. This argument, however, depends on how we define "Marxism". Defined very broadly, including not only those relating directly to a Marxist

political-economy framework but also people influenced in various and indirect ways by Marx or Marxists, one could argue that “Marxism” did not disappear. See for example how Kristina Grange (2014) draws upon the “post-marxists” Laclau and Mouffe in discussions on ideology; Mark Purcell (2013) discusses the “normative political vision” of Deleuze and Guattari; Michael Gunder (2010) on “the value of Žižekian critique” in a “post-Marxist world”, or “Lacanian deconstruction” (Gunder 2016); Bent Flyvbjerg and Tim Richardson (2002) use Foucault (to understand power and planning); and Genevieve Carpio, Clara Irazábal and Laura Pulido (2011)—amongst others—examine planning in relation to Lefebvre and the “right to the city”.

This is a fragmented collection of approaches and certainly does not constitute one unified discourse. Some refer to “post-Marxism”, some stand on post-structuralist ground, others—like Lefebvre and Žižek—are commonly considered to be Marxist, and meanwhile there is a never-ending debate on how to label Foucault.

Whether we define the above approaches as “Marxist” simply depends on how one defines Marxism.¹⁹ My outline of Marxism in this paper does not include every piece of work where the author has been labelled Marxist. Rather, I use a fairly narrow definition of Marxism: one that (based on historical geographical materialism; following Marx’s analysis of capitalisms) stresses the critique of the political economy and its class relations. This approach remains, I argue, the core of Marxism, and is also where a Marxist approach has most to offer in conversation with other critical approaches—like feminist, antiracist/postcolonial, etc. Another benefit of a narrower definition is that it has the appropriate breadth to be operational in this paper, it has a history that we can learn from, and it is possible to identify it as a discourse, making it easier to mobilise into political change.

The core content of my approach to Marxism, i.e. starting from Marx’s analyses on the political economy, is also specifically crucial *now*, when the contradictory processes within capitalism are creating both economic and ecological crises. It is to the particular importance of Marxist approaches in planning that I now turn to in the next section.

Towards Marxist Planning: The Dialectics of *Is* and *Ought*

The history of communicative planning theory is a good example of what happens when we ignore questions of *is*. When planning lacks a “map of social reality” into which planners can situate themselves and their practice, it is surely hard to suggest where to go—or, as Rowe phrases it, not to “vacillate between utopianism and technical pragmatism” (1981:159).

“While extremely valuable in helping reveal the underlying nature of contemporary planning”, Klosterman argued in 1985, “the Marxist perspective has obvious limitations as a guide to planning practice” (1985:14). The Marxist discourse in planning in the 1970s and early 1980s prioritised the *is*, but at the cost of focusing on alternatives and practice. The current diabolic crisis forces us to also discuss practice. As the world is burning—literally—we cannot put *ought* on hold

until our analyses are “complete”. Even though a rigorous analysis of *is* must form the basis for *ought*, as intellectuals we are forced to discuss both at once. This is indeed a challenge, but also a necessity if we want theories to become relevant beyond academic and abstract exercises. According to Harvey (1972:4), “a revolutionary theory upon which a new paradigm is based will only gain general acceptance if the nature of the social relationships embodied in the theory is actualized in the real world”. Following Luxemburg (1918), we can also argue that much important knowledge about our social world and ourselves does indeed come from political struggle itself.

In order to understand how Marxism could play a role in planning theory and practice, we need to identify the historical materialist context in which this would take place. For analytical reasons I will break the context down to three components. The first is processes and relations within capitalism that do not change substantially over time; the second is the changes that have come out of decades of neoliberal development; and the third is the diabolic crisis we currently find ourselves in. But before discussing these three, I will also argue that Marxism is well suited in this respect. From a materialist foundation, which acknowledges that capitalism contains structures and processes that are constitutive to the system *and* are a revolutionary mode of production (where all that is solid melts into air and all that is sacred is profaned), Marxism is well suited to understanding dialectics between what changes and what remains, and how developments are uneven and combined (cf. Marx and Engels 1994; Ollman 2003).

Much of the Marxist analysis on planning from the late 1970s and early 1980s was concerned with scrutinising and revealing power in relation to planning, by analysing the “essence, roles and ‘logic’ of urban planning in capitalist societies” (cf. Roweis 1981:159). The quality of much of the Marxist work referred to above is impressive, and authors like Foglesong, Beauregard, Cockburn, Kirk, Dear, Scott and Roweis not only deserve a broader readership due to the quality of their work (which they certainly do), but also because so much of it is still relevant. When we now (at the end of neoliberalism) re-read the Marxist literature discussed in section one (written at the very beginning of neoliberalism) it is striking how much has *not* changed. The logic within capital accumulation, the system’s need for profit and growth in order to reproduce itself, the role of exploitation for growth and capital dominating labour, the need for states and planning to coordinate, as well as discussions on the “property contradiction” and “capitalist-democracy contradiction” are as relevant as in the early 1980s.

Despite the significant amount of excellent work that was conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there is much work to be done. One crucial aspect is the lack of focus on analysing how class and capital intersected with racial and gender questions: *how* this plays out has changed since the late 1970s, but *that* they interact have not. I cannot do justice to this here, but if the revival of Marxist planning is to be theoretically rigid and politically relevant these questions cannot be avoided.

Although much has not changed since the early 1980s, much has indeed also changed. We touched upon this in section two: the NPM; the role of finance and rent; how capital dominates labour, and the increasing power it exercises;

housing prices becoming a backbone of economic growth; increased power to rentiers (of various kinds); privatisation of not only real estate but planning as such; and segregation, economic polarisation, and cities and regions increasingly designed for the rich, etc. All this has indeed had massive impacts on urban and regional planning. From the overview in section two, we also see how (Marxist) planning theory has a lot to learn from scholars in urban studies and human geography (e.g. Christophers, Harvey, Gough, Massey, Peck, Rolnik, Smith). One immediate conclusion one can draw here is that a Marxist theory and practice is also needed in the urgent sense: to avoid the worst effects for the working class.

A third component of the historical-materialist context is the current interregnum we find ourselves in, as neither the economic nor the ecological component of the diabolic crisis are solved.

Crisis must be grasped at various levels of abstractions or generality (cf. Harvey 2010; Shaikh 1978). Since 2008, the economic problems have been postponed though policies at the medium-level and on the surface. The problems have been postponed through policies like early rounds of crisis management in terms of counter-cyclical investments (not least bailing out the banks), and later rounds of austerity, through China's massive investments, through systematic lowering of interest rates, and through qualitative easing. But underlying concerns continue to plague capitalism. The weakening health of the economy with weak economic growth rates and profit rates—due to processes such as the law of the falling rates of profits (LFRP) or overproduction—keep the political economy unstable (for different underlying explanations, see e.g. Desai 2010; Harvey 2010; Roberts 2009; Shaikh 2016; within human geography, see Holgersen 2015a).

That the impact of finance, housing and real estate on the political economy has *increased* after 2008 is seen by some authors as an indicator of the strength of these sectors (e.g. financial investors seized the opportunity after 2008 by buying so-called "toxic assets" on the cheap, and changed their focus by entering the *rental* housing market, instead of only focusing on homeownership; Rolnik 2019). However, several Marxists from outside urban theory give a different view: the crisis of 2008 *appeared* as a financial crisis, as this was the most dynamic sector in an otherwise unhealthy economy. It was here that the underlying weakness manifested itself (see e.g. Mattick 2011; Roberts 2009). And thus, the crisis is by no means solved as the underlying weakness remains. If anything, the situation has only intensified since 2008.

Nonetheless, finance has truly had huge impact on urban planning and development, regardless of whether one defines finance as productive capital or not (Marazzi 2011 vs Roberts 2009), or gaining hegemony due to its own strength, or because the underlying economy is weak (Rolnik 2019 vs Mattick 2011), or whether this constitutes a "new relationship" between capital and space under the hegemony of financial and renter capital (Rolnik 2019; see also Christophers 2015). From a Marxist perspective, finance capital must absolutely be regulated one way or another.

When finance is analysed in relation to crisis theory and the broader political economy, we can argue that simply taming finance will neither be enough to solve the economic crisis nor to create socially just cities. Historically, we see that

major economic crises, like the ones in the 1930s, 1970s, and the current interregnum, also come with crises of legitimacy in the political organisation of the economy—currently exemplified by Brexit, Trump, right- and left-wing offensives and pasokification. And indeed, the 2008 financial crisis has developed into social, political and ideological crises. The development of planning theory and practices has historically also taken new directions around major economic crises. This trend is currently visible in urban policies, where neoliberal principle of trickle down, city branding as growth machine, and NPM are increasingly losing legitimacy (cf. Holgersen 2017). One outstanding example being Richard Florida's (2017) famous repentance, admitting that the discourse on the "creative economy" (which he propagated) led to more segregated cities.

Although theories matter, crises are never solved through simply replacing old ideas with new ones. Historical analysis shows how major crises are solved through rounds of creative destruction, and how new ways of organising the political economy and new technologies are replacing old ones. As crises also are dialectically related to altering power balances between capital and labour or between factions of capital, they also come with changes in class domination and hegemonies. As mentioned, the current economic crisis differs substantially from previous economic crises in one respect, as it coexists with an unprecedented ecological crisis. In the midst of a diabolic crisis, what was common sense yesterday might be completely out-dated today. Gramsci (1971) described famously such periods where the old were dying but the new could not yet be born as interregnums: times where varieties of morbid symptoms appear. If we accept the claim that major economic crises are dialectically related to changes in how we plan and organise space, and that the current crises are not solved, and that the ecological crisis will only intensify the need for changes in the near future, we can conclude that we can expect dramatic changes in planning theory in years to come (on relations between major economic crises and crises in urbanism, planning and broader social relations, see also Harvey 1999, 2010; Holgersen 2017; Lefebvre 1976; Sayer 2015).

This paper argues for the need to include Marxist planning practices that build upon Marxist theory, when facing the diabolic crisis. Again, we can break this down to three components. First: when engaged with underlying processes and structure in capitalism, we need to know the logic of capital, its need for coordination, etc., as a Marxist approach to planning practice does not—regrettably—start in utopian futures. It starts now. Marxist theory is also useful for understanding the role of rent (which needs to be converted into political questions on socialisation of land rent, etc.), the real and difficult contradictions that come with challenging exploitation and economic growth, and how state policy necessarily comes with a class character, etc.

On the second component: thinking planning after around 40 years of neoliberalism, the immediate response would be to replace the current regime that focuses on participation and deliberation with more radical solutions that "look towards the redistribution of economic power between stakeholders" (Fox-Rogers and Murphy 2014:244). This is crucial. As well as mobilising theoretical understanding of the state (to stop NMP and privatisations), of financial development

(to reorganise finance, so crucial to construction), of the housing question (to combat the neoliberal commodification of all housing), and so on and so forth.

Concerning our third component—the diabolic crisis—more analytical work is needed. But a Marxist theoretical approach, I argue, does give a more profound understanding of both crises than any other economic theory: locating the ultimate causes of crises in economic growth (crucial for ecological crisis) and contradictions within capital accumulation (as in economic crisis), as well as revealing the relations between these crises, and how crises normally are solved (through creative destruction) (Holgersen and Warlenius 2016; Næss 2006, 2016).

Given this context, the next step becomes to formulate a theoretical approach that also opens for action. One that, in contrast to the Marxist planning discourse in the 1970s/80s, builds alternatives into the very analysis. We need to bring the theory with us towards practice.

Towards Practice

So, how to think alternative regimes of planning in these troubled times? According to Giddens (2011) we need a “return of planning” when facing climate change. It is surely tempting for a planner to applaud such a conclusion, but this really depends on how one defines planning. If we start with Polanyi’s famous quote “laissez-faire was planned; planning was not” (1944:147), Giddens is wrong: we don’t need *more* planning. In terms of understanding how planning actually works—the *is*—we also see how climate change is indeed spatially planned: from production plants to pipelines and the whole fossil fuel infrastructure, not to mention all the roads, buildings, shopping malls, etc., that facilitate the circulation and consumption-side of climate change. But we do certainly need a *different* planning. And in this respect do need *more* interventions, regulations and directed policies from states that favour the working class and the environment—and that limit the power of capital.

Doing *is* and *ought* simultaneously contrasts with both Scott and Rowe’s approach, where the concern was “*uniquely* with what planning is” (1977:1097, emphasis added), as well as the normative approach in communicative and other idealist approaches where *ought* is derived from abstract principles and ideas about “ideal circumstances”. Our task is to criticise and reveal power relations while *also* looking for alternatives.

One fruitful way of establishing a theoretical foundation that opens for resistance and practice could draw inspiration from Nicos Poulantzas’ take on the state: as a “*specific material condensation* of a relationship of forces among classes and class fractions” (2000:129; see, for a profounder discussion in terms of planning theory, Holgersen 2015b). According to Poulantzas, the state is neither a thing nor a subject. Translated into planning this means that planning is neither a thing/tool that can simply be used by certain actors (e.g. party or capital), nor a subject that can do whatever it wishes without any constraints. Rather than having no autonomy or full autonomy, we should rather see planning as dialectically related to the social relations that constitute capitalism.²⁰

Planning is therefore never a neutral activity but embedded in a political economy defined by capitalist social relations. It is with these social relations—like class—we should start when discussing *normativity* and *ought*. On one side, capital accumulation comes necessarily with the capitalist class exploiting and dominating the working class, and as one key role of the state is to ensure the well-being of the dominant economic system (often measured through growth rates), the state under capitalism will necessarily need to facilitate this class relation. But—*nota bene*—class is *also* constituted by conflicts and resistance, and these conflicts do *also* play into planning. Planning is likewise not only a place to facilitate capital accumulation, but also a place where class conflicts play out. Planning offices are not neutral and “objective” places, but physical spaces where social relations are enacted and (re)produced. Therein lies both the reproduction of capital, but also possibilities for alternative futures.

The question of *ought* should therefore not be based on abstract principles from ideal circumstances (cf. Scott and Roweis 1977), neither on vague theories on communication nor false beliefs that we should plan for the benefit of all. Normativity should rather derive from examining the dialectical relation between planning and how it plays into the broader social formation. It follows from this that planning *per se* is neither the problem nor the solution. To which degrees planning plays a progressive part from the perspective of working class and in terms of limiting climate change depends on planning’s relation to broader processes in the social formation.

If the starting point is that planning is a material condensation of social relations, and this is understood dialectically, we also come to the fact that planning plays *one part* in broader social development (cf. Holgersen 2015b; on dialectics, see Ollman 2003). Planning practices that build upon Marxism are surely impossible without changes outside the sphere of planning. But also vice-versa: major social, political and economic transformations that will prevent climate change and challenge the logic of capitalism are impossible without reorganising landscapes and producing new spaces. One consequence of this is that people working with planning—planners, politicians, theoreticians, activists, etc.—must necessarily interact and collaborate with people outside of planning (offices): for example, political parties, labour unions, activist groups of various kinds, neighbourhood organisations, community gardening or grassroots organisations struggling for urban commons.²¹

Much analysis during neoliberalism has been a defensive critique, and resistance towards mega-projects, privatisations, NMP, etc. have surely been very important. But the diabolic crisis forces us to articulate critique in an offensive sense. After all, the main aim of Marxism is not to “fight the power”, but to produce a new hegemony: to implement new ways of producing and organising space. In this respect, we need to discuss geographical scale and our relation to seizing power.

There is currently a vast urban literature on relations between climate change and urbanism, as well as on cities being key-places for resistance against neoliberalism and main sites for implementing alternatives to capitalism (see e.g. Barcelona en Comu 2019; Harvey 2012; Marcuse 2014; Mayer 2013). The diabolic crisis forces us to rethink how to organise commodity production, transportation

and consumption. In order to challenge the logic of capitalism, and to stop fossil capital as soon as possible, this cannot be discussed on the urban scale alone. For example, one crucial question—which also plays into the questions on the mobility of energy sources (Malm 2016)—is where we should produce which commodities. The neoliberal principle of letting capital decide where to place production (i.e. where labour conditions are poor and environmental protections absent) has been a complete disaster for the working class and the environment. Deciding what to build where from the perspective of the working class and the environment will demand not only more (democratic) control over production of space, but also to think environmental and social planning beyond the urban. The urban is not enough.

The emerging *Fearless Cities* movement (also called *New Municipalism*) is a case in point. This movement has contributed progressively in different ways around the world—not least through their focus on the “feminisation of politics”—and their local focus has not hindered them from engaging in international solidarity. But although struggling—at least discursively—to avoid the “local trap”, the problem remains in their hostility to even thinking about seizing state power (Barcelona en Comu 2019; Russell 2019). This position was not unproblematic before the climate crisis, and has indeed become a greater problem now, during the diabolic crisis. Especially given the climate crisis is already here. We have—at best—a decade or two to dramatically reorganise the political economy. It is very hard to imagine how it would be possible to produce new landscapes needed for such transformations without using state power. Not least as this would include, amongst other things, devaluation of the infrastructures that support fossil energy sources, and building the infrastructure for renewable ones.

In order to transform spaces radically and with lasting effects, the local, urban or even regional levels are simply insufficient. This comes with implications for planning and planners: as local activities or activists *alone* cannot implement changes in the scope that are needed, local activists must organise in national and international organisations. One needs to organise in order to seize state power.

In order to get there, we need to formulate concrete strategies. As planners we are used to working with programmes. And one building block in the struggle for socialism is indeed revolutionary reform programmes.²² Here we must avoid both strategies and programmes that describe socialism in utopian and idealist circumstances in a non-specified future (i.e. maximalist approach), but also avoid a strategy that is simply narrow demands that could easily be met, but without challenging neither neoliberalism nor the diabolic crisis (i.e. minimalist approach). We need a socialist programme for how to plan, organise and produce space, with concrete strategies towards new hegemonies. Again, we can contrast this with the *Fearless City* movement, where we find an explicit call for *both* minimum programmes *and* maximum programmes (Bookchin 2019). But as we don't find any bridge between the minimum and maximum, I argue this becomes short-sighted problem solving mixed with idealist utopianism.

We need a bridge between the present and everyday demands and spontaneous anger, and the radical socialist programmes (cf. Luxemburg 1918). Inspiration in

how to formulate radical but non-utopian planning programmes can be found in different places. Fruitful places to start might be with articulating *non-reformist reforms*²³ (cf. Gorz 1968) or *transitional programmes* (see e.g. Gaido 2018). What to call such a programme or strategy is less important. The crucial part is to articulate a political direction and concrete strategies beyond muddling through and utopianism, and points to how spatial planning on various geographical scales could contribute in making a radical transformation. In the current interregnum, such programmes should be formulated as ways out of the diabolic crisis. This means that they should encompass both ecological and economic perspectives, but also contain both creative and destructive components. It is not only enough to plan more environmentally friendly buildings and infrastructure; we also need to actively devalue the landscapes of fossil capital (Holgersen and Warlenius 2016). Radical programmes should seek to introduce Marxist creative destruction.

Concluding Reflection

It will be a catastrophe for both the working class and the environment if we continue to handle the diabolic crisis with the class character that currently dominates planning: with capital (and often finance and fossil capital) holding the keys to the *what, where, for who, by/with who* and *how* of urban and regional planning. One way of approaching a different path is to reassess these five planning-relevant questions from a Marxist perspective. Here much more work is needed—that is indeed what this paper calls for. Here I will only propose some short tentative answers—loosely based on the discussions above—that hopefully can also be valuable for others in the near future.

In terms of *what*, in a very general manner, we need to plan use-values rather than exchange values. In terms of *by who*, planning must be conducted by communities/municipalities/states, not planners as consultants for private capital. Considering the nature of the challenge—reorganise commodity production, transportation and consumption, facing the power of capital accumulation and challenge the logic of capitalism, and the urgency climate change—it is impossible to avoid more state planning. Concerning *for who*, the main task for planning is to improve the lives of the working class, within planetary limits. When massive spatial transformations are needed (for green new deals, etc.), one should avoid huge casual damage. (The question *for who* is also one of several where a Marxist discourse on alternatives should interact with a feminist approach; see Fabre et al. 2018). In terms of *how*, we need to think beyond minimum (muddling through) and maximum (utopianism) programmes, and articulate reforms that challenge the system. States, municipalities and planning offices must be seen as places where class struggles play out, and where one needs to replace the power of capital with other class interests. Collaboration from below with communities, social movements, progressive parties, labour unions, etc., are important (no need to throw *all* the babies out with the bath-water in our critique of communicative approaches) without drowning the processes in procedural bureaucracy and a quasi-democratic aura. And finally, concerning the question of *where*, production must be located where it brings most benefit (or least harms) for the environment

and the working class. Similarly, transport, infrastructure and even consumption must be organised after the same principles.

This way of thinking Marxism in planning is not only about “fighting power”, but about implementing new hegemonies. One concern that many readers might have after reading this—one that even is shared some days by this author—is whether this is possible at all. Looking through the last decades of planning theory and the development of neoliberalism, and not to mention climate change, one can easily sink into resignation and despair: so much so that not even a new hegemony in planning theory seems possible. But a “quick survey of the history of thought in the social sciences”, Harvey reminds us, “shows that revolutions in thinking do indeed occur” (1972:2). And revolutions in thinking never happen in the realm of ideas and theories alone. In hindsight, we can say that the discussions within planning theory in the 1980s and 1990s—as discussed in section one and two—were basically concerned with finding a replacement for the Fordist-Keynesian organisation of capitalism, high-modernism and planning as “problem-solving teleology” (Scott and Roweis 1977:1112). The “historical solution” was found in the communicative approach in planning and neoliberalism in the political economy (Gunder 2010; Purcell 2009; Sager 2009).

Reflecting upon changes in the 1970s, Kirk argued in the 1980s that Marxist writers and political activists concerned with planning were challenged and stimulated “especially in this period of economic crisis” (1980:78). The critiques of status quo in planning in the 1980s were directed against the vanishing Fordist regime and positivist approaches to planning. The current diabolic crisis is far more severe than the economic one in the 1970s. And currently a critique of the status quo becomes a critique of planning practices that play into neoliberalism, and planning theories based on idealism and obsessed with planning processes. The danger of dark conservative forces gaining power during the interregnum is unfortunately very real. But this is also the situation where Marxists involved and interested in planning should seize the opportunity. The time has come for a return of Marxism in planning too.

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Endnotes

¹ This paper will not discuss why the Marxist discourse disappeared from the perspective of various authors, i.e. I am not interviewing scholars about their choices, etc. My vantage point is rather the relation between planning discourses and developments in the broader political economy.

² It should be mentioned explicitly that this paper deals primarily, but not exclusively, with Anglophone and Scandinavian discourses.

³ On the importance of the state, see Parenti (2015). Recently, there have been calls for more serious debate on the state, but these have yet to be responded to (see Fox-Rogers et al. 2011; Holgersen 2015b; Porter 2011).

- ⁴ The “working class” will in this paper be used broadly as wage labourers, but excluding those with exceptionally high wages or extensive power at workplaces (cf. Bensaïd 2002).
- ⁵ It is worth mentioning that (the rise and fall of) Marxist planning discourse in the 1970s and 1980s has never really been the object of any comprehensive and thorough investigation.
- ⁶ When Soviet Russia implemented a so-called “planned” economy after the revolution, according to Hobsbawm (2012:9), “it had largely to be improvised”.
- ⁷ Discussion on the gendered character of these publications must be left for another time.
- ⁸ Class also includes intra-class conflicts, between landlords, property capital, construction and manufacturing capital, financial capital, industrial capital and so forth (see Harvey 1985; Pickvance 1976; for more recent discussion, see Holgersen and Haarstad 2009).
- ⁹ I will not here enter discussions on planners as agents, but see Kirk (1980: Chapter 4) and Beauregard (1983).
- ¹⁰ Huxley (2010) argues that similar social-theoretical explanations of planning’s failures can be found in some feminist histories where planning is reduced to reproduction of unequal gender relations.
- ¹¹ Interestingly, a few pages later Hall (1998:617) ascribes to theories of business cycles and economic waves from Schumpeter, Kuznets and Brian Berry. Such work is ironically often criticised for being precisely “over-deterministic” and “simplistic”, but Hall assures us—without any more evidence—that it is developed out of “mammoth research”.
- ¹² Fox-Rogers and Murphy (2014:263) have more recently pointed to a disjoint between the theory of communicative action and what they call “actually existing communicative action”.
- ¹³ Although traces of economic determinism surely remain, current Marxism is in general less deterministic today (cf. Jessop 2012).
- ¹⁴ The text “On Planning the Ideology of Planning” is best known as being Chapter 5 in Harvey’s *The Urbanization of Capital* (1985), but was first published in 1978 as part of Burchell and Sternlieb’s *Planning Theory in the 1980s* (1978).
- ¹⁵ Næss notes that positivist approaches still dominate within some areas of planning, notably transportation planning and branches of environmental planning such as risk management: “Although researchers within these fields rarely engage in scholarly debates on planning theory, their conceptions have doubtless a great influence on planning practice” (2015:1228).
- ¹⁶ The relation between communicative approaches and post-structuralism is not uncomplicated, as the former also builds upon and maintains belief in some sort of Habermasian communicative rationality.
- ¹⁷ How such processes intersect and interact is surely essential in any future critical/radical discourse in planning theory. But no matter how crucial such analyses are, they remain outside the scope of this paper.
- ¹⁸ In other disciplines the concept of “critical” is not seldom an umbrella that also includes Marxist approaches (as in e.g. CDA). This is not the case in planning theory. Rather, here “critical planning theory” has been tangled up with “communicative planning theory”, as the latter draws inspiration from Jürgen Habermas’ “critical theory” (Mäntysalo 2002).
- ¹⁹ This discussion will become even wider if we open for a broader definition of planning, and include discourses influencing planning, like human geography, urban studies, etc. For analytical and political reasons I have used relatively narrow definitions of both Marxism and planning.
- ²⁰ In this sense, the Marxist approach to planning is also distinguishable from liberal ones (for a similar discussion in geography, see Harvey 1973).
- ²¹ This approach is not totally dissimilar to *advocacy planning* but differs as “the planner” should not be understood as outside the social struggle (Davidoff, 1965; for critique, see Angotti 2007). Within the planning literature, it more closely resembles approaches associated with social movements (see Kirk 1980: Chapter 5).
- ²² On the distinction between reform, reformism and revolution, see Desai (2010) and Gorz (1968).

²³ This is conscious action implemented over the semi-long term, with the acknowledgment that things will change during the process, and that—in the end—it is a power-struggle that will determine the outcomes. Interestingly, this was articulated before the political economic turbulence of the early 1970s, and one concern for Gorz was how non-reformist reforms would potentially also *generate* crises, which then could be used productively. Today, we don't need to generate instability nor crises: they are already here.

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