

## **Structural origins of subversion in capitalist societies: some reflections about planning**

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This paper proposes to carry out a rereading of two of our contributions regarding public planning theme (urban and regional in principle) that have been produced at two different times within the trajectory of our reflection in more than 20 years. There are two moments marked by two different positions on ways of planning that apparently - and only in appearance - are opposites: the first, in the mid-1990s, we held discussions and defence of a planning called "communicative" by its creators (RANDOLPH 1995); now, in the second, in more recent times, we are defending the need to rethink the planning and begin to propose another form what we call "subversive" (2007 RANDOLPH, 2014).

By observing these two "ends" of the trajectory it seems that there was, in this period, such a deep inflection of our reflection we should have made obsolete that debate of 1995. But, somewhat paradoxically, this is not the case as will be noticed from our efforts to recover the older approach.

It will be posed that communication and subversion are on the one hand, opposing ways of doing economic and social practices; but on the other, and in certain historical circumstances - in contemporary capitalist societies - the subversion appears to be the only way to "defend" the communication against "attacks" that aim to weaken it; and it is this defence of communication that provides subversion its own strength. In this sense, it seems possible to speak of a "subversive potential" of communication that would explain better the meaning of a "subversive planning" if something like this would exist in contemporary capitalist societies.

In other words, the assumption of this essay is that to facilitate the understanding of a new "way" of planning, which could perhaps be called "subversive", it seems to be useful to return to the discussion of communicative planning. But to

achieve an understanding of this "subversive force" of this new planning, it would be necessary to overcome the communicative approach in a dialectical sense, i.e. not denying it.

Within this position, it is clear that in this study there is no need to delve into all those different approaches, forms, modes or models of planning that can be found in the literature as the rational-comprehensive, incremental, the advocacional, participatory and others (see here the systematization carried out in the 1970s by FRIEDMANN, HUDSON, 1974, pp. 4s) whose various conceptions and practices were never questioned radically. More recently, in the 1980s and 90s other arrangements deserve mention like the communicative or collaborative ones to which we will return later on, and, last but not least, the strategic planning that turns hegemonic right after the mid-90s of last century.

In a later in-depth discussion we shall regard one form of planning that emerged at the turn of the century and is still being discussed today. It is the "insurgent planning" (see HOLSTON 1995, FRIEDMANN 2002, MIRAFTAB 2009 and others) which, even by its name, may have some resemblance to our proposal called "subversive". After all, what's the difference between "insurgency" and "subversion" (see for this RANDOLPH 2014, pp. 45 ff).

As reported by Miraftab, for John Friedmann the insurgent planning is concerned to marginalized and oppressed groups and offers a critical analysis and understanding of the structural forces that marginalize and oppress populations (MIRAFTAB 2009, p.46). It has as its origin a perspective looking at radical planning from the anti-colonial struggle of the South and can be characterized by three properties:

(i) Insurgent planning is transgressive in time, place, and action: It transgresses false dichotomies, by public actions spanning formal/informal arenas of politics and invited/invented spaces of citizenship practice. It transgresses national boundaries by building transnational solidarities of marginalized people ... (ii) Insurgent planning is counter-hegemonic: It destabilizes normalized relations of dominance and insists on citizens' right to dissent, to rebel and to determine their own terms of engagement and participation. Insurgent planning seizes advantage from the contradictory nature of

neoliberal capitalism ... (iii) Insurgent planning is imaginative: It recovers idealism for a just society – the imagination that the neoliberal illusion of TINA, There Is No Alternative, has suppressed. Insurgent planning recognizes the symbolic value of insurgent citizenship activities that offer hope from which to work towards alternatives (MIRAFTAB 2009, p. 46).

In the course of this work we will find that some elements of "subversive planning" seems to be apparently similar to the insurgent characteristics outlined here. But there is a big difference - and, in a sense, divergence - between the perspectives that support these two approaches. To show this, is the aim of this essay.

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