

# ID 1613 | SUBVERTING THE PRESENT, PLANNING THE FUTURE: PROPOSING A COUNTER-PLANNING

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Our discussion references are the realities of contemporary, capitalist societies under the (more or less) domain of a neoliberal market ideology and economy. In this context of political and institutional changes and mobilizations of different orders and scales in streets and squares, there is an increased academic production regarding processes of insurrection and subversion in the most different spheres of politics and society. (Pierce and Williams, 2016, Olson, 2016 and others).

Also in the discussion of different modes of planning, insurgent and subversive practices of planners can be identified under certain circumstances. Sager (2011, pp. 8ff), in a broad systematization of forms of planning, describes a range of situations and activities that characterize planning as "radical" and planners as insurgents and subversives. As he states, in a reference to Friedman, "state engagement in radical planning seems close to contradiction in terms". For this reason, he understands that radical planning is "an oppositional but overt activity performed by planners with their professional base in civil society and with a strong commitment to a cause" (Sager, 2011, p. 9).

Stimulated by experiences of alternative forms of planning, we try to discuss, in this essay, their possibilities and potentialities to contribute to such a "radical" society's transformation as it is put in their proposals. Without referring to a specific country and its society, the adopted approach seeks to show, generically, existing structural conditions for the necessity of "another" planning and its characteristics.

This seems nearly a paradox in the face of discussions about reformulations between State's and society's relations in the sense of transferring public (state) responsibilities and tasks to private agents or to the anonymity of market forces' performances - even in the form of public-private partnerships or new forms of governance with the participation of stakeholders.

Nevertheless, encouraged by the above-mentioned approaches of "radical planning", it is the aim of this text to show why and how, especially in these (neoliberal) societies, planning could gain an even increased potentiality and necessity than in the past.

Our argument will be that it is necessary to abandon planning's main features to anticipate or forecast situations and events in the future; and give up that it has to prepare decisions rationally or even to increase problem solving capacities. Obviously, such conditions would be unconceivable for the traditional planning modes and methods, even of those like communicational and collaborative forms; a discussion about the different modes and their characteristics see in Limonad (Limonad, 2015).

Instead of this, like presented in the title of this essay, planning's main incumbency should be to subvert the relation between present and future: shrink the future and increase the present. This will demand a shift in the "temporal dimension" of planning which has its consequences for the understanding of planning as a social process how will be shown afterwards.

But, there is a second dimension, a "spatial dimension", linked to the understanding of planning practice as an element of producing (social) space. Besides the "subversion" of time, there will be discussed a "subversion" of space (and its representation) as the second constituent element of our argumentation.

Both of them, together, will signify an "epistemological shift" in planning understanding. What we intend to show in this essay is: that planning's future depends on an "epistemological shift" on behalf of time and space in planning. That, dialectically, even a planning, which not wants to be a "planning" in the former sense, remains planning within a shift to a new episteme and a different comprehension of the "world".

Therefore, it is necessary, as hypothesis of the present work about the “subversion” of planning, to “open” the potentials of the present and focus on the (real) potentialities of the future. In other words, it is necessary to “subvert” the very logic of planning.

## 2 EXPANDING THE PRESENT, CONTRACTING THE FUTURE: VALORIZING DAILY LIFE EXPERIENCES

The contemporary consciousness of time was formed in the end of the eighteenth century with its references to an actual epoch itself and not to the coming eternity that would arise until the final judgment's day. Since then, according to Habermas (Habermas, 1987 ; see also in Randolph, 2016), "past" and "future" are established from a conception where the actuality is a passage to the new. This actuality - the present - "lives in the awareness of the transitoriness of historical events and in the expectation of other configurations in the future. ... Actuality linearizes the rupture with the past as continuous renewal".

Confidence disappears that present problems could be solved in relation to examples from the past; other times do no longer serve as guidance for overcoming problems and time becomes a scarce resource for accomplishing this. Thus, as the author says, modernity finds itself "completely abandoned to itself, it has to extract from itself its normativity. From now on, authentic actuality is the place where the continuation of tradition and innovation are intertwined". Planning certainly belongs to this place of intertwining tradition (past) and innovation (future).

With respect to the future – as an “utopia” –, as expectation of better and less endangered life forms, it was only in the Twentieth Century that future – as utopia – was “rehabilitated as an unsuspected medium for the design of alternative possibilities of life, which must be potentialized in the historical process itself. The utopian perspective (of futures) was inscribed in the very consciousness of politically effective history” (Habermas, 1987).

Like Habermas, Boaventura Santos realizes a reading of time and highlights the change of comprehension that occurred in recent periods. He identifies, on one hand, a contracting of the present and, on the other hand, an expansion of the future. The contraction of the present, occasioned by a peculiar conception of wholeness, transforms the present into a fledged moment, entrenched between the past and the future. In the same way, the linear conception of time and the planning of history allowed to expand the future indefinitely. It seems, that, the broader the future, the brighter are the expectations confronted with the experiences of the present (Santos, 2003).

Nowadays, besides the ending of the utopian energies, alleged by Habermas, Santos affirms that this situation of valorization of the future by neglecting the present is responsible for a huge waste of social experiences as it conceals and discredits alternatives to neoliberal globalization and capitalism produced by social movements and non-governmental organizations.

To change this situation, it is necessary to work with "a different model of rationality. Without a critique of the Western rationality model for at least the last 200 years, all proposals presented by a new social analysis, however they may be judged as alternatives, will tend to reproduce the same effect of concealment and discredit" (Santos, 2003).

The central argument for our discussion is the author's proposition that another rationality must be pursued, "in this phase of transition, ... the reverse trajectory: expanding the present and contracting the future. Only in this way will it be possible to create a space-time necessary to know and value the inexhaustible social experience that is going on in today's world".

For "expanding the present", Santos (2003, p. 4) proposes a sociology of absences; for "contracting the future," a sociology of emergencies. Without following in more depth or details Santos' argumentation, his approach can give valuable indications to identify essential characteristics of actions which can promote the valorization of the present as the very moment to recognize its future potentialities. In this way, "expansion" of the present – to the future – will be "contract" the future to the potentialities of the present (in Bloch's words, to a "concrete utopia").

The subversion of planning means that “planning” itself should be able, in practice, to contribute to extension of the “present”; in other words, to the expansion of social experiences already available, as well as to experiences as potentialities of the present. But, in Santos’ perspective, there are two problems with the multiplication and diversification of the available experiences: “... the problem of extreme fragmentation and atomization of the real and the problem, derived from the first, of the impossibility of giving meaning. This author “solves” these problems by two forms of reason: a metonymic and a proleptic one which seem to involve some “planning” afford. We shall argue, that these “problems” have to and can be solved by the same actors who create their experiences in their own “rationale”.

To show how this will be possible, it is necessary to take a look at an opposition between two different reasons which are responsible, on the one hand, for the above-mentioned reduction of present and expansion of future, which shall be called an “instrumental” reason; and, on the other hand, for a certain “survival” of social actions and forms of social reproduction responsible that there are even social experiences, not submitted to that instrumental reason. Without this “communicational” reason – not submitted, entirely, to the “dialectic” of reduction/expansion of time - there would be no possibility to think in social experiences which could have the potential to confront the reduction/expansion processes, promoted by traditional planning processes.

But, as we have shown in other place, it is not the simple communicative speech act which will be able to confront the instrumental reason (Randolph, 2015). We will discover first indications about the characteristics of this “new” (“subversive”) actions by adopting a “pragmatic turn” in linguistic as introduced by Habermas (Habermas, 1990).

In its preparation phase, these actions will have, to some extent, characteristics similar to those of communicative actions. Thus, the same way as in the pragmatic perspective of communication contacts between life-world agents cannot be based on a pretension of “truth” as a (“true”) representation (speech) of the objective world. Appealing to this (objective) “truth” is indeed a very common strategy in attempts of “experts” who advocate being the “masters” of the truth - even by relying on scientific knowledge.

Regarding the turn, (pragmatic) “truth” of any action depends on the relations of sincerity and correction between those life-world agents engaged in an action against that reduction/expansion processes.

Preserving sincerity and correctness is essential in order not to jeopardize the very power of this type of action that has its origin, in the last instance, in the collective recognition - through communicative rationality- of the contradiction between the two reasons mentioned above.

For at the time of the decision on or adherence to these actions, we may call them “subversive actions”, the lack of subjective sincerity and normative correction will infallibly lead to the infiltration in it of a latent strategic rationality compromised to reduction/expansion processes.

The preservation of subjacent communicative rationality at these moments is not at all trivial because, unlike communicative action, the actions opposed to the “reduction/expansion dialectics” does not exactly have as purpose a mutual understanding between life-world agents and those of systems – the realm of instrumental reason and reduction/expansion processes. At the moment of interaction, subversive actions apparently resemble some “instrumental acting”: speech acts, not as mere communication, but with an objective - which is subversion - and needs of certain means to reach it.

In other words, observing the two moments of gestation and the realization of subversive actions, its “hybrid” character appears because it needs, at first, to assure the communicative rationality to elaborate the “social transformation” (Santos, 2003, p. 29). This author “solves” these problems by two forms of reason: a metonymic and a proleptic one which seem to involve some “planning” afford. We shall argue, that these “problems” have to and can be solved by the same actors who create their experiences in their own “rationale”.

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In Habermas' terms, this "hybrid" character (between communicative rationality and latent strategicrationality) of "subversive" acting as speech acts would allow us to take advantage of ambiguities of thelanguage itself to create, purposely and "communicatively" misunderstandings aimed at subverting actionscreated through an instrumental rationality.

We believe that social subjects´ daily life is full of these "deviations" of understanding and theproduction of intentional misunderstandings that protect the communicative rationality of the advances ofinstrumental rationality. This is not an open fight between these two rationalities; but of a real daily"subversion" of rules, orders and guidelines in the private and - why not – public sphere, which are imposedto people's lives by the systems.

Here, as well as in the case of subversive action in the public sphere, it is not a matter of enteringinto a "symbolic struggle" between different conceptions or proposals, or eventually to "win" such a dispute.

Subversive action not necessarily must arise prepared by great mobilizations and movements of communication and mutual understanding, but condition of sincerity and correction has to be minimally assured.

In this way, that two problems of extreme fragmentation or atomization of the real and the problem, derived from the first, of the impossibility of giving meaning to social transformation will be "solved" on the basis of the daily experiences and within its own logic: the articulation of collective actions (as speech acts and intervention) against the realm of the logic/dialectics of time reduction/expansion. Without any need of some external actor to create "reciprocal intelligibility between the experiences of the world" (Habermas, 1990).

### 3 EVERSAY LIFE, SPATIAL PRACTICES, AND THE PRODUCTION OF (SOCIAL) SPACE

In the previous item we postulated, more implicitly than explicitly, that there is some "force" in everyday life that does not permit its submission - at least totally - to the dictates of an abstract/instrumental reason, to bureaucratic demands and to a "commodification" of life's vital manifestations. Without intending to open a debate with authors who believe that in neo-liberal societies this possibility no longer exists (Dardot and Laval, 2014), we shall show here, briefly, the arguments of those authors who defend this daily life force and its opposition against instrumentalization and transformation into a commodity.

In fact, Certeau (Certeau, 1998, p. 42) sees the basis for social transformations in daily life's potentiality through its manifold manifestations of cunning and anti-discipline. Opposing Foucault's "networks of surveillance" and "microphysics of power" approach, he recommends that it is more urgent to discover how society is not reduced to networks or the microphysics of power:

*that popular procedures (even "tiny" and daily) play with the mechanisms of discipline and do not conform to them except to change them; that "ways of doing" form a counterpart, on the side of consumers (or "dominated"?), of the mute processes that organize socio-political ordering.*

The author realized an entire research to find out what rules obey these tiny daily operations that are "fragmentary, relating to occasions and details, insinuated and hidden in the devices of which they are the ways to use, and therefore devoid of ideologies and its own institutions." (Certeau, 1999, 42).

In his critique of Foucault, Certeau points out that this neglect of the cunning of groups and individuals and their everyday anti-discipline leads this author to replace

*the analysis of the apparatuses that exercise power (that is, the institutions that are locatable, expansionist, repressive and legal) by means of "devices" that "vampirize" institutions and clandestinely reorganize the functioning of power: "tiny" technical procedures acting on and with details, redistributed the space to transform it into the operator of a generalized "vigilance". (Certeau 1998, p. 41)*

As showed above, even using other terms, Habermas identifies similar forms of resistance and anti-disciplinary deviations from productions of purposive misunderstandings which protect a "communicative rationality" against the advances of an "instrumental rationality". In general, there is no apparent struggle between these two reasons, but a real daily subversion - that is, anti-discipline and disobedience - of rules, orders and guidelines in the private sphere, which are imposed by systems on people's lives.

If for Certeau everyday life is the place (or non-place, utopia) of cunning and anti-discipline, for Habermas it is in life world where the forms of living together (tradition, socialization and formation of personality) derive from a communicative logic of practices which suffer from tempted intrusions of (system) institutions. Both readings mutually reinforce each other.

Only to mention, briefly, another argument in favor of the potentiality of this "revolutionary force of daily life" is provided by Vaneigem (Vaneigem, 1967). For him this force seemed to have at certain moments in

history even the potentiality of inaugurating a new society. Albeit the examples delivered from him not being successful, they show that, beyond their origins in daily experience, it is necessary to overcome the perception of everyday perceptions as particular, and that a more profound rationality has to be revealed or recognized.

We agree with Vaneigem that this everyday life force can be revolutionary, in certain circumstances, and has the potential to transform entire societies. Even considered as “small, tiny or minuscule” on behalf of someone’s daily experiences, it can become “gigantic” when it is turned to a collective practice. To justify this statement, we have to direct our attention to the spatial practices which are determined and determinants of (social) space.

Therefore, with the intention to fulfill this promise, we choose as our theoretical reference Lefebvre’s conception of space as a social product.

In his conception of social space, Lefebvre (2013) confronts the elaboration of discursive space representations by certain specialists - architects, urbanists, planners – with, what he called the “spaces of representations” formed by people and groups permanently in their daily life and experiences. These spaces of representation, as a sort of emanation of people’s living experiences are not always discursively accessible.

*The representations of space express the dominant (ideologically hegemonic) perspective of that society regarding its social space always related to the social relations of production and the orders that have their origin in them. These spatial representations as the official comprehension of social space seek to impose their perspective on social experiences of that people whose spaces of representation are often at odds with them. Because, the spaces of representation may be linked to a more clandestine and underground side of social life which does not obey the rules of consistency and cohesion; its “maps” involve not so much reflection and reason, but passion and feelings. As Lefebvre says, these spaces (of representation) have an affective nucleus and embrace the places of passion, action and the lived situation and therefore implies time (Merryfield, 2002, p.90).*

Therefore, we discover here another intrinsic conflict/contradiction in capitalist societies. Maybe we can call this the “spatial dimension” of societal contradiction where one spatial representation tries to subordinate all those representational spaces which do not agree with the dominant version. A rather similar situation that we found in relation to the dominant (capitalist) instrumental reason of economic accumulation and political oppression which tries to subordinate life world processes to its order.

This intrinsic conflict of social spaces in modern (capitalist) societies emerges throughout history - and is expressed differently in certain periods - with the separation between perception, experience and conception of space, introduced in the Renaissance (see Lefebvre 2013). It characterizes the production of modern (social) space ever since.

The “connection” between the lived space (representational space) and the concept of space (representation of space) is spatial practice. These three “moments”, as Lefebvre calls it, in their contradictory configuration, constitute the triad which determines the dynamics and production of social space: spatial practice, space representation and representational spaces.

*Representations of space and representational spaces are ‘secreted’ by spatial practices which ensure that conceived and lived space coexist in dialectical unity. They secrete stability as well as contradiction. Spatial practices invariably relate to perception, to people’s perceived take on the world, on their world – particularly their everyday world. Spatial practices make sense (and nonsense) of everyday reality, and include routes and networks, patterns and movements that link together spaces of work, play, and leisure. ... They maintain societal continuity and ‘spatial competence’, and somehow mediate between the conceived and the lived, keeping representations of space and representational spaces together, yet apart ... (Merryfield, 2002, p. 90, author’s highlights)*

In a former comprehension of participatory, communicative or collaborative planning (Randolph, 2007), spatial practices task was providing mediations between the abstract representations and conceptions of

architects, urban planners and planners, and the lived spaces (spaces of representation) by those who are object-subjects of the process of transformation.

In our line of argument, we do not search the “mediation” capacities of spatial practices. On the contrary; in overcoming these above-mentioned forms of planning, we are looking for the subversive potential of spatial practices. This will be the case by those spatial practices when expressing and oriented by the representational space of a person or a group of people and will have the same potential of contestation as we found in the subversive (speech) actions.

This subversive potential of spatial practices can be directed against the domination of the representation of spaces – and the ones responsible for turning a certain representation of space dominant. And it has to be directed against space representations that try to expropriate the population of their spaces of representation - and, in some way, with this threaten also to expropriate their space practices. Without arguing here that these spaces constructed in the daily life must be untouched or absolutely preserved, they deserve to be considered as a potential for subversive action capable of organizing concrete actions in concrete contexts as concrete expressions of subversive actions - prepared by subversive speech acts.

#### 4 SUBVERSIVE ACTIONS AND THE SUBVERSION OF PLANNING – SOME NON-CONCLUSIONS

It needs to be made clear that subversive actions are not understood, in this essay, as “coup d’etat” ordered against order, law, government or system itself. Subversion seeks to de-structure and to annihilate, yes, actions that are directed against the above-mentioned life world processes – shrinking the present, enlarging the future and submitting representational spaces to dominant representation of abstract spaces. In a specific way, the understanding of subversion here proposed follows the comprehension elaborated in the context of anarchy and situationalism (Randolph, 2014, pp. 42ff). In its “natural way”, always present, the “subversive” capacity of the daily life – in time and space – acts against concrete manifestations of exploration, oppression and submission where and when it can be identified.

For example, urban social movements - such as those that broke out in June / July 2013 - may have had a “subversive” intent and oppose advances in the increasing dominance of exchange value in the city. As Melucci says: “I define analytically a social movement as a form of collective action (a) based on solidarity, (b) involved in a conflict and (c) breaking the boundaries of the system in which action occurs.” (Melucci 1985, p. 795, emphasis added).

Subversion, within the conceptual framework outlined here, can or must be understood as a permanent, everyday social practice that is part of the daily life of social agents when they become aware the permanent attempts to harm their life through abstract and instrumental logics. Ultimately, subversive actions and practices may be understood as counter-hegemonic when they seek to expand the present and the realm of representational spaces. It is worth to subversion what Vaneigem expresses at the end of his book about the revolt:

*The moment of revolt, which means now, is hallowing out for us in the hardrock of our daily lives, days that miraculously retain the delicious colours and the dreamlike charm which - like an Aladdin's cave, magical and prismatic in atmosphere all its own - is inalienably ours. The moment of revolt is childhood rediscovered, time put to everyone's use, the dissolution of the market and the beginning of generalised self-management. (VANEIGEM 1967; our highlights).*

In the previous items of this essay, by looking for a “new” planning as a subversion of previous forms, we tried to show that there are in the everyday life of people in contemporary societies potentialities of subversive actions, both in relation to a transformation of dominant temporal relations as well as of dominant spatial relations. Its first aim is to “defend” the everyday life against the imposition of a temporal logic, as a spatial logic of those societies that pursue to submit life to its abstract, instrumental and commodification dictates.

Finally, counter-planning - as a subversion of planning - appears in our argumentation as an emancipatory action of those whose everyday life is submitted and threatened by the shortening of the present and

whose space practices undergo transformations because of the dominance of the representations of space over their own spaces of representation. This first, reactive form of counter-planning can only be carried out by the very people who suffer or are threatened from the impacts of other forms of planning and their "dialectics" of shortening/extending the time horizons of planning and imposing representations of space colliding with their own spaces of representation. A second form can be seen as an active attitude of "counter-planners" towards the deliberate extension of the present and the extension of validity of their spaces of representation.

As a concrete form of opposition to the diffusion of instrumental and abstract logics in the world of life, for this counter-planning there is no "recipe" for its realization. Its dynamic seems more like a mobilization or movement, than an institutionally organized performance.

It is possible, for the moment and in the first approximation, to establish some characteristics. The agents of this counter-planning are people, groups, segments or even social classes who pursue common goals or strategies. They meet in a concrete situation or to counter threats of the present or weakening of spaces of representation or to. The scope of the actions of this counter-planning is contingent and will depend on the agenda itself drawn up jointly by those who have gathered around certain issues.

These "subversive" activities need not necessarily be clandestine in capitalist societies crisscrossed by contradictions and subject to permanent crises where even "counter-hegemonic" initiatives, as history shows, are essential for survival or renewal of the system. The "activism" of this "new" subversive planner, aimed at strengthening civil society itself in terms of increasing its autonomy and combating inequalities, may be possible at an infra-systemic level that does not immediately pose any threat to the order. Different from the understanding of "insurgent planning" which is, as reported by Miraftab (2009, p. 46) concerned to marginalized and oppressed groups and offers a critical analysis and understanding of the structural forces that marginalize and oppress population, counter-planning is not limited to these groups because of certain problems – on temporal and spatial basis – are more generalized in capitalist societies, especially in the neoliberal societies.

This is, as we have tried to show in previous works, what the very social dynamics in capitalism seems to allow without a direct confront which will easily be smashed down by the dominant forces (Bey, 1985).

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## ID 1623 | ROLE AND GOALS OF ONTOLOGICAL ANALYSIS IN UNDERSTANDING SPACE AND PLACES

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

Places are landscapes as seen from far away, places are cities lived from inside or cities imaged from outside: are they ecological ecosystems too? We intend to focus our attention on lived places. Physical places are complex entities. Nonetheless, we should first distinguish a concept of space from a concept of place. Each of these concepts has different declinations and for each declination there is a possible definition. From a cognitive or a designer's perspective space is instead conceived as something different, at least not explicitly a 3-dimensional subspace (Freksa et al., 2014).

A place is an interpreted space, a reasoned space, a space with feelings, a result of an aesthetic fruition of a physical space. We can define physical space as a set of mental images, spaces of representation, and the architecture of cognitive processes in vision theory. The essence of place lies in the quality of being somewhere specific, knowing that you are "here" rather than "there" (Rapoport, 1977) for example enclosure becomes a very important aspect of place-making which also seems, in some way, to be related to the concept of territory.