Reframing strategic spatial planning by using a coproduction perspective

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Abstract

There is growing evidence that the problems, challenges and opportunities that our cities, city-regions and regions are facing cannot be tackled adequately by traditional spatial planning. One of the key challenges for planning in this respect is to analyse critically what type of planning is suited as an approach to deal – in an innovative/emancipatory and transformative way – with the problems and challenges developing and developed societies are facing. An expanding literature and an increasing number of practices all over the world seem to suggest that strategic spatial planning may be looked upon as a possible approach. But at the same time critical comments and reactions are raised on the theory and the practices of strategic spatial planning. This paper uses the theory and practices of coproduction to reframe strategic spatial planning. It first looks for a deeper understanding of the meaning(s) of coproduction as it emerged in different contexts and different intellectual traditions and then introduces coproduction as an immanent characteristic of a more radical type of strategic planning. Coproduction combines the provision of public goods/services needed with the building of a strong, resilient and mutually supportive community that could assure its members their needs would be met. This implies changing the perceptions and the approach of many professionals (public and private) about how plans, policies and public services are conceived and delivered, with the objective of enabling the (structural) change needed in an open and equitable way. The paper relies on a selective review of critical planning literature and the author's experience in practice.

Keywords

Coproduction, strategic planning, power balance, equity

> …I consider it [change] fundamental, and because I believe that if one were convinced of the reality of change and if one made an effort to grasp it, everything would become simplified.
>
> Bergson, 1992: 131

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People feel each other, perceive each other, turn toward or away from each other […] always perceiving others and adjusting to them.

Louise Bourgeois, 1997 (cited in Crone and Schaesberg, 2008: 91)

Introduction

This paper calls for the fair, equitable transformative practices that are needed to cope with the continuing and unabated pace of change driven by the (structural[1]) developments and challenges. As argued elsewhere (Albrechts, 2010), this call constitutes a severe challenge for planning. What type of planning is up to dealing with the (structural) challenges ahead? A growing literature (Healey, 1997, 2006, 2007; Albrechts, 2004; Motte, 2006; Balducci et al., 2011) and an increasing number of practices, all over the world, seem to suggest that strategic spatial planning may be looked upon as a possible approach able to cope with the challenges and able to embed structural change. But at the same time, critical comments and reactions are raised on the theory and the practices of strategic spatial planning and calls are made to go beyond western realities and practices. A crucial element in this respect is the way in which people are excluded or included in planning processes and the way the relationship between people – technologies of government, norms of self-rule (Roy, 2009) – are organized. Problematically, a wide range of these relationships are being compressed into a one-size-fits-all concept 'citizens participation', which doesn't seem to provide the equal and reciprocal relationship between the state and citizens so much aimed for. Indeed, practices in different parts of the world demonstrate that while rights may be written in laws even violent protest will not guarantee appropriate delivery of services.[2] Hence, in different contexts and in different intellectual traditions, the search for organizing the relationship between (all) actors in a more open and equitable way led to a more likely successful coproduction approach and engagement between the state and (all) citizens[3] (Whitaker, 1980; Parks et al., 1981; Ostrom, 1996; Cahn, 2000; Corburn, 2003; Joshi and Moore, 2004; Bovaird, 2007; Mitlin, 2008; Boyle and Harris, 2009; Time Banks, 2011; Watson, 2011). A scan of the literature on coproduction reveals that different versions of coproduction have emerged independently, as illustrated by the work of Ostrom and her colleagues in the 1970s at the Universities of Indiana and North Carolina (Whitaker) and the work by the human rights activist Cahn in the 1980s. For both it proved to be difficult to get a broader acceptance of the concept. In the first decade of this millennium the concept has re-emerged in theory as well as in practice, mainly as a response to the challenges in the global south context (Loeckx et al., 2004; Van den Broeck et al., 2004; Roy, 2009; Watson, 2011). Mitlin (2008) illustrates with cases of the Orangi Pilot Project (Pakistan), SDI (Slum Dwellers International), FEGIP, a federation of local residents' associations in Brasil and the Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia the use of coproduction as a political strategy of grassroots movements.

In the west traces of the concept appear, amongst others, in the 1991 Toronto Development Plan (Milroy, 1992), the partnership in the UK between Nef (the New Economics Foundation) and Nesta (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) (Boyle and Harris, 2009) and the Belgian National Booster Programme 'In

search of effective public involvement in transport planning 1998–2000' (Belgian Federal Office for Scientific and Cultural Affairs; Albrechts, 2001). Bovaird (2007) illustrates, with case studies in Brazil, France and England, how coproduction has played out in practice.

Case studies on coproduction by Ostrom, Cahn, Roy, Bovaird and Mitlin cover a wide range of service sectors (such as housing, education, health, sanitation, water supply and sewage treatment) and different versions of the concept. This paper aims to use the theory and practices of coproduction to reframe strategic spatial planning in a more radical way. Therefore, it first looks for a deeper understanding of the meaning(s) of coproduction as it emerged in different contexts (west and global south) and different intellectual traditions (rights-based versus needs-based). It then constructs a frame for a more radical type of strategic planning by using discourses and practices of coproduction as they emerged in very different parts of the world. In this way, coproduction becomes an immanent characteristic of strategic planning. The paper then, briefly, reflects on some consequences for planning and the planner. The paper relies on a selective review of critical planning literature and the author's experience in practice.

Coproduction: nature, origin, characteristics

As already mentioned coproduction emerged in different contexts and in different intellectual traditions. Below we distinguish different strands of interpretation. Generally speaking, it goes from coproduction in the delivery of services to coproduction as a political strategy. It will be argued that coproduction of citizens and grassroots organizations is needed for individual changes in behaviour (Whitaker, 1980), for more effectively managing some initiatives/issues/projects but also for the dynamic that encourages transformative practices. In this way, coproduction responds to real needs: it prepares citizens and grassroots organizations for a more substantive engagement with the political system (Mitlin, 2008: 353).

From producing public goods to empowerment

In the 1970s (Time Banks, 2011), political economist and later Nobel prizewinner Elinor Ostrom saw that public goods – like education, health, or infrastructure services such as water and sewage treatment – were very often assigned to government agencies to produce, while citizens were given the passive role of consumers and clients. Her ideas emerged when she was asked to explain to the Chicago police why the crime rate went up when they exchanged the beat for patrol cars. Moreover, she studied various situations where citizens had been actively involved in producing public goods and services of consequence to them, such as the construction of sewage systems in the *favelas* of Brazil, schools in Nigeria, neighbourhood alert patrols in ghettos, and recycling in Brazil. Out of her research she saw that citizens need not be passive and she came to the conclusion that coproduction was often the missing ingredient that only citizens could provide. Ostrom (1996: 1073) defines coproduction as 'the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service is contributed by individuals who are not "in" the same organization.' Joshi and Moore (2004: 40) refine this definition to suggest that 'institutionalized

coproduction is the provision of public services (broadly defined to include regulation) through regular, long-term relations between state agencies and organized groups of citizens, who both make substantial resource contributions'. Somewhat similarly, Bovaird (2007: 847) defines user and community coproduction as 'the provision of services through regular, long-term relationships between professionalized service providers (in any sector) and service users or other members of the community, where all parties make substantial resource contributions'. For Ostrom (1996:1079) 'coproduction implies that citizens can play an active role in producing public goods and services of consequence to them. Coproduction is one way that synergy between what a government does and what citizens do can occur.' It implies equal partnership between professionals and clients – not to consult them more, or get them to sit on boards, but to use their skills to deliver services, policies, plans or projects. 'Hence, no government can be efficient and equitable without considerable input from citizens' (Ostrom,1996: 1083). While traditional politics sees policy implementation as the mechanical carrying out of decisions made by 'higher authority', for Whitaker (1980: 241) 'coproduction implies the possibility that citizens might influence the execution of public policies as well as its formulation' and 'actors interact to adjust each other's expectations and actions' (Whitaker, 1980: 242). As all public agents and all citizens are viewed as decision makers in such a system 'laws and rules should not be seen as prescribing a specific course of action. Rather they are frames within which people make decisions' (Whitaker, 1980: 242; Forester, 2010a, b). They serve as 'benchmarks against which to assess the wisdom of alternatives, but they do not determine behavior; neither do frames prescribe fixed outcomes' (Whitaker, 1980: 242). While Ostrom and Whitaker focus on the benefits of coproduction to service delivery in the context of reducing state expenditure Edgar Cahn (Cahn, 2000; Boyle and Harris, 2009; Time Banks, 2011), who independently created his version of coproduction, provides an opening to more fundamental political issues. Cahn's version of coproduction, like Ostrom's, was built on the core insight that citizens have a role to play in producing public goods. There were some important differences, however. Coproduction as conceived by Ostrom looks at how citizens directly contribute to a public good which the government or another organization has been called upon to supply. Coproduction, as laid out by Cahn (Cahn, 2000: 22–36; Time Banks, 2011) had two different aims in mind at the same time: for the agency, it was the public good in question, but for the community it was building a strong, resilient, mutually supportive community – one that could assure its members that their needs would be met. In Cahn's version, coproduction is the interaction between these two separate goals. For Cahn this interaction is critical. 'Together, the interacting goals set up dual, but complementary sets of dynamics to ensure that public goods being supplied by the agency are more effective, or that the need for government services is greatly reduced' (Time Banks, 2011). Something that Ostrom and Cahn shared was the discovery that coproduction was much harder to get accepted than they could ever have imagined.

Some western experiences

In the UK an emerging partnership between the Nef and Nesta focuses on developing the evidence base on coproduction (Boyle and Harris, 2009). For this partnership,

coproduction shifts the balance of power, responsibility and resources from professionals (governments, powerful actors) to individuals, by involving citizens in the construction of their own places. It recognizes that citizens are not merely repositories of need or recipients of services; they are assets (Cahn, 2000: 87–111). 'Coproduction means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change' (Boyle and Harris, 2009: 11). 'Coproduction plans and delivers in mutually beneficial ways and acknowledges and rewards local "lay" experience while continuing to value professional expertise' (Boyle and Harris, 2009: 15).

A growing awareness that if participation is everything, it may in fact be nothing called for conceptual clarity. So, the research project 'In search of effective public involvement in transport planning in Belgium'(Albrechts, 2001) analysed cases in different parts of the world. In one case, the 1991 Toronto Development Plan (Milroy, 1992), a sound balance was found between formal representations and direct input of different citizens' voices in the planning process. This was done with the 'coproduction model'. Coproduction, in the Toronto context, means that citizens as well as politicians accept that their involvement is legitimate. Conditions – in fact securing the rights of citizens – for coproduction in the Toronto Development Plan were:

- individuals and groups must be able to valorize a position that allows them to have an impact in an independent way;
- that – in a reasonable way – stakeholders can use the means that governments devote to the development of a programme;
- the government (politicians and administration) assures the involvement of stakeholders (citizens) in an inclusive and fair way.

Case studies in England and France (Bovaird, 2007) illustrate some of the most salient ways in which coproduction is having an impact on public services, from the planning and design stages to service delivery and evaluation.

Coproduction as a grassroots strategy

Mitlin (2008: 347) locates coproduction 'within a broader struggle for choice, self-determination and meso-level political relations in which citizens both seek an engagement with the state and also are oriented towards self-management and local control over local provision in areas related to basic needs'. She defines coproduction as 'a political process that citizens engage with to secure changes in their relations with government and state agencies in addition to improvement of basic services' (2008: 352). In this way, she recognizes the role of power and conflict in the relationship between the state and the poor. She argues that 'the nature of groups arising from a coproduction process appears to offer particular benefits to the poor, extending political practice through drawing in new groups and persuading the state to respond positively' (2008: 353). Coproduction strategies can be understood as a modern response to the paradoxes of democratic will and practice and, as Joshi and Moore (2004: 45) suggest, it is wrong to see these

arrangements as 'relics of traditional arrangement'. Mitlin (2008: 340) explains the usual understanding of coproduction as 'the joint production of public services between citizen and state,[4] with any one or more element of the production process being shared'. However, it is increasingly being used by the urban poor as a way of politically consolidating their base and extracting gains from the state (Cahn, 2000). Mitlin (2008) argues that coproduction is different from standard 'participation' or 'partnership' arrangements. It is more effective than 'lobbying' or 'protesting' in terms of actually gaining benefits, 'it may be smooth and cooperative or it may take the form of a dialectic that yields parity only after a struggle because the process entails a shift in status that may be embraced or resisted' (Cahn, 2000: 31). A central difference with the usual understanding of coproduction is that citizens' organizations are strengthened and so provide a platform for a wider civic and political engagement. Indeed, coproduction looked upon as the organized practice that constructs and manages a 'civic realm' (Roy's term, 2009: 160) equips citizens' organizations to challenge, resist and comply state governmentality. In this sense a link can be drawn to Roy's concept of 'civic governmentality'[5] as 'a spatialized regime that functions through particular mentalities or rationalities. These include an infrastructure of populist mediation; technologies of governing (for example, knowledge production[6]); and norms of self-rule (for example, concepts of civility and vividness)' (Roy, 2009: 160).

Link with strategic planning

Although the cases by Ostrom, Cahn, Mitlin, Roy and Bovaird are specific to particular contexts which might not be widely generalizable, elements on the meaning and use of coproduction collected in this paragraph seem to open a prospect of equity (Ostrom, 1996; Cahn, 2000; Joshi and Moore, 2004; Bovairds, 2007; Mitlin, 2008; Boyle and Harris, 2009; Roy, 2009), working with conflicts (Forester, 1989, 2010 a, b; Watson, 2011), change in power relations (Cahn, 2000; Bovaird, 2007; Mitlin, 2008; Boyle and Harris, 2009; Roy, 2009), using coproduction as a political strategy (Mitlin, 2008), expertise as an integral and contestable part of a process (Boyle and Harris, 2009; Bovaird, 2007; Forester, 2010a; Roy, 2009) and a broader scope of possible futures (Whitaker, 1980). So it seems worthwhile to explore the added value of coproduction – as a strategy to secure political influence and to access resources and services – as a central concept in the theory and practices of strategic planning.[7]

Coproduction as an immanent characteristic of a more radical strategic spatial planning

Challenges of strategic planning

Challenges for strategic spatial planning are: how to cope with equity, how to work in the face of conflict, how to work with actors 'in' and 'outside' the system, how to use the 'impossible'[8] as emancipatory imagination (Forester, 2010a; Monno, 2010; Moulaert, 2011 and also Lauria and Wagner, 2006; Mitlin, 2008; Watson, 2011; Yiftachel, 2006 for similar comments on planning in general). Moreover, the need for the legitimation of strategic spatial planning, the role of expertise and knowledge, and the need to introduce

transformative practices also constitute challenges for strategic spatial planning (Albrechts, 2010; Mazza, 2010; Forester, 2010a). As in 'traditional' planning (land use planning, zoning,[9] master planning), there are different types of strategic spatial planning. Strategic spatial planning is indeed not a single concept, procedure or tool. In fact, it is a set of concepts, procedures and tools that must be tailored carefully to whatever situation is at hand if desirable outcomes are to be achieved. A very traditional and basic definition (influenced by the military and business) of strategic planning is: defining and realizing a goal in the most appropriate way by using the available means. But to react to the challenges, a more complex and sophisticated type of strategic spatial planning seems needed. This type of strategic planning is not presented here as a new ideology preaching a new world order, nor as a mere substitute for other approaches (land use planning, zoning), but as an approach – tested in practice and by theoretical reflection – for creating and steering a better future, or range of better futures, for a place on the basis of a more hybrid mode of democracy that is open to diversity, equity and structural change (Ogilvy, 2002).

Frame for a more radical strategic planning

The emergent strategic spatial planning is looked upon as 'a transformative and integrative public sector-led, but co-productive, socio-spatial process through which visions or frames of reference, the justification for coherent actions, and the means for implementation are produced that shape, frame and reframe what a place is and what it might become' (Albrechts, 2010: 1117; Motte, 2006; Oosterlynck et al., 2011; Van den Broeck et al., 2010). Places become both the text and context of new debates about fundamental socio-spatial relations, about *thinking without frontiers* (Friedmann, 2011: 69), providing new kinds of practices and narratives about belonging to and being involved in the construction of a place and in society at large (Holston, 1995; Watson, 2011; Yiftachel, 2006). Therefore, strategic spatial planning needs a contextual understanding of power and material interests, of (leading) discourses and the constraints of a more-of-the-same attitude (see also proposition 4 by Huxley and Yftachel, 2000: 339). Public sector-led does not mean that, where needed, other organizations (such as NGOs or local development organizations) could not take the initiative, but the public sector, for obvious reasons, has always to be considered as a key actor. Indeed, if citizens – and especially the disadvantaged – are to address their issues, problems, challenges and views 'a level of engagement with the state is required to reform practices […] and to provide needed policies, actions, investments' (Mitlin, 2008: 339). A frame, in the sense of spaces of deliberative opportunities (Forester, 2010a), influences the way actors, in a coproductive process, select issues; the way they define problems, challenges, opportunities, practices; interact with the dynamics and tensions of a place and a situation; and shape actions (plans, policies, projects) as a result. As strategic planning aims to understand society as a continual reinvention of the socio-spatial and its mode of narrative and communication, one cannot confront complex dynamic realities (neighbourhoods, cities, city-regions) with a language designed for a simple, static top-down approach (Senge, 1990). Hence the need for ways of thinking and for tools, concepts and instruments that help governments, citizens and planners to cope better with challenges in an unequal, dynamic and complex environment (Winch, 1998).

Coproduction as an immanent characteristic

As illustrated in the previous section, traces of coproduction can be found in practices in different places of the world. The examples referred to by Mitlin and Roy are about the implementation of actual projects. This fits very well with the strategic spatial planning approach presented in this paper, as this approach does not just focus on plans but on change, on implementation, and considers plans as just one of the instruments to provoke or to manage change[10] and implementation. Coproduction, as conceived in the previous section, (Whitaker, 1980; Milroy, 1992; Ostrom, 1996; Cahn, 2000; Albrechts, 2001; Joshi and Moore, 2004; Bovaird, 2007; Mitlin, 2008; Boyle and Harris, 2009; Roy, 2009; Time Banks, 2011) goes a long way beyond consultation[11] so favoured by governments over the past decades. It is an antidote to the idea that we endlessly need to ask citizens' opinions, before handing the plans, policies and projects back to the professionals to deliver, since citizens are actively involved in the agenda-setting, problem formulation, the shaping of the content of policies, plans and projects and the delivery as well. This is in line with Ostrom (1996: 1083), who said, 'no government can be efficient and equitable without considerable input from citizens.' Moreover, 'coproduction cannot just be looked upon as delivery mechanism for services/goods. It also challenges more fundamental political issues through its implication for the distribution of power between citizen and state'[12] (Mitlin, 2008: 345). Coproduction, as a collective endeavour, is conceived here as a combination of a needs-based and rights-based approach; it is inclusionary (for those in and outside the system), intends to secure political influence and to change the status quo with specific projects, it combines local and scientific knowledge on an equal base, and it provides an interaction between the delivery of public goods (plans, policies, projects) and building strong, resilient, mutually supportive communities. In this way 'coproduction is part of a much broader shift that is emerging across all the sectors, and most obviously in those fractures between and in public and private. It blurs the boundary between producers and consumers, emphasizes repeated informal interactions' (Boyle and Harris, 2009: 22) and derives from a strong ethical sense (Moulaert, 2011). The rationale is that, by introducing coproduction as an immanent characteristic, strategic planning processes can dramatically increase their resources, extend their reach, radically transform the way they operate, and be much more effective. So, strategic planning as a coproductive process (Van den Broeck et al., 2010; Oosterlynck, et al., 2011) implies an open dialogue in which, on a basis of equivalency and without prior conditions, opinions, conflicts, different values and power relationships are addressed. It provides an arena (a space of deliberative opportunities in Forester's (2010a) terms[13]) where actors can articulate their identities, their traditions and their values. It must be emphasized that the concept of coproduction as described in this section is a normative and moral concept in its own right. This means that its content is given by certain ideals and principles, and these norms articulate certain values (for instance justice, equity, accountability). These values may be different from the perspective of the state, the community, NGOs. So, as argued later, we may expect conflicts, clashes between the different actors.

Legitimacy of strategic spatial planning

Acknowledging that accessing services is often reliant on large-scale capital investments (for example in waste-water treatment, in major urban projects), which can only be undertaken by the state, communities (especially the urban poor and the disadvantaged

in the context of the global south) sometimes choose to engage with local government on these issues. In any context the state (and actors who promote their interests through the state) comprises actors who have agency and power, operate within different rationalities, and take positions (individually or in coalition) even within the disciplining effects of laws, rules and regulations[14] (Watson, 2011: 14). It is clear that the representative government articulates merely political and not all values. So, apart from legitimacy stemming from a representative mandate, in strategic planning – looked upon as a quest, a collective process, a social construction searching for a new shared future (Healey, 2008) and specific outputs – legitimacy may come from its performance as a creative and innovative force and its potential/capacity to deliver positive outcomes and actually gaining benefits. As such, strategic planning is 'in' politics (it is about making choices) and it cannot escape politics (it must make values and ethics transparent), but it is 'not' politics (it does not make the ultimate decisions). If we accept that representative democracy is not a single completed thing but that it is capable of 'becoming'[15] in a new context and in relation to new issues at hand, then we may conclude that the more radical strategic planning does not reject representative democracy but complements it. It adds 'to the fullness of concrete human content, to the genuineness of community links' (Zizek, 1992: 163 about the very notion of democracy). Such a strategic planning process is adaptive to changing circumstances and evolves with knowledge (scientific and local) and conditions, and with new information. But this may not be at the expense of the weakest people and functions. Strategic planning can lead to (limited) agreements on actions, policies and projects (Lambert-Pennington et al., 2011; Saija, 2011). It accepts that the different actors have their own relative autonomy. It urges governments and strong (economic, social, cultural) actors to share power and responsibility. It therefore aims for a fundamental shift in the balance of power, not only between governments and citizens but also between different private actors (Boyle and Harris, 2009).

Framing specific outputs

Besides actions and implementation, a basic purpose of strategic planning is to develop visions/imaginations to frame these actions. The aim of envisioning is to broaden the scope of the possible (Zizek, 1999: 199 about the 'art of the impossible'), to provide a frame for decisions in view of a better future, to encourage hopes and dreams, to appeal to values, to challenge existing knowledge, conventional wisdom and practices. By introducing coproduction in an envisioning process actors 'assess together and co-construct spaces of possibilities or impossibilities' (Forester, 2010b: 172) and in this way conceive future states for themselves, their organization, their neighbourhood, their city or their region that are sufficiently clear and powerful to arouse and sustain the actions necessary for (parts of) these vision(s) to become a reality (Goodstein et al., 1993). In this way envisioning 'includes not only the views of the most articulate or powerful, but also the views of those who have been systematically excluded by structural inequalities of class, gender and religion' (Sandercock, 1998: 65) and, as an incremental, self-transforming process – a learning process – (Ostrom, 1990: 190), it gets an emancipatory potential. This implies that visioning may not be locked within the interstices of the state and the powerful actors in society. Friedmann (2011: 71) calls these 'leftover, marginal

areas where social practice is inconsequential because it poses no threat to the basic con-figurations of power'. Envisioning questions knowledge[16] (Roy, 2010). If dominant modes of knowledge (causal, statistical) are incapable of envisioning the transformative (as the absolutely new), other modes of knowing,[17] other forms of thinking have to be developed (Grosz, 1999: 21). So envisioning does not claim to eliminate uncertainty with predictions; instead, it seeks to work with uncertainty as well as is possible, and to enable people to make decisions in view of a better future or futures. Envisioning is above all a state of mind (imagination and anticipation) that leads to behaviour (hope and will) (Godet, 2001: 8). Envisioning possible futures involves a conscious, purposive, contextual, creative and continuous process of representing values and meanings for the futures. In strategic planning, envisioning provides direction without destination, move-ment without prediction. In this way, it may enable a transformative shift, where neces-sary, to develop openness to new ideas, and to understand and accept the need and opportunity for change. Since the envisioning of discontinuous futures involves change, all the usual forms of resistance to change (and definitely to structural change) are pres-ent. To exclude envisioning and its inherently critical and emancipatory perspective is to condemn planning to an accommodation of the status quo. Without a utopian factor plans remain locked in unacceptable existing conditions (Harvey, 2000). At the same time, one has to avoid disembodying the present in favour of a utopian difference and one has to include the conflict, ambiguity and indeterminacy as constituent elements of planning and to consider the unintended and the unexpected as part of the model. The challenge is how to include the possibilities for change encountered in existing socio-spatial condi-tions, meaning that the present as well as future generations of citizens have the ability and the right to make their own histories by interpreting what a plan, policy or project means in light of their own experience (Holston, 1995).

Implications for planning and planners

Since the planning actions themselves are clear proof that planning is not only instru-mental, the implicit responsibility of strategic planners can no longer simply be to 'be efficient' or to function smoothly as a neutral means of obtaining given, and presumably well-defined, ends. Planners must be more than navigators keeping their ship on course. They are necessarily involved with formulating that course by taking a stand on substan-tive issues (Forester, 1989). As the values, interests and views of actors are different, we may expect conflicts and clashes between traditionally closed systems (governments, business) and the open systems linked to coproduction, and tensions between those embedded in the system (for instance politicians and planners), with access to the system (influential actors), and those who function outside the system (for example NGOs and community organizations) (Moulaert, 2011). This implies that 'strategic planners must have practical capacities to work in the face of conflict' (Forester, 2010a). Indeed, in many places practices of coproduction will enter into conflict with political regimes as public officials harbour doubts about the legitimacy of any sort of public decision-making other than representative government.

For spatial planners, more specifically, spatial quality and sustainable development (the goods and services in Ostrom's and Whitaker's sense) are key substantive issues.

They form the core of their discipline. In order to actively contribute to enhancing spatial quality and sustainable development planners must use all the power available to them and their imagination (Albrechts, 2008). Spatial planners capitalize on the 'locus' using the characteristics of space and place, the natural as well as the built environment, the socio-spatial structure, the flows and the spatial and social tissue. In this sense space gets its own relative autonomy. Coproduction helps to understand the full complexity of places and helps to broaden the scope of the possible answers. Space serves as a medium and as an integration frame for human activities. In this way, strategic planners have an active but not a dominant role in a coproduction process. All this implies an activist mode of planning (Sager, 2011 for an overview of activist modes of planning). For planners working in the system (government planners), an equity type of planning (Krumholz and Forester, 1990) open to local knowledge and where citizens and the disadvantaged become an equal part of the action seems suited. For planners working outside the system (NGOs, community organizations), only a radical type of planning (Sandercock, 1998: 97–104) makes it possible to work for structural transformation of systemic inequalities and to use coproduction as a political strategy.

In strategic planning conceived as a coproduction process citizens are looked upon by the state, planners and fellow citizens as hidden resources ('assets' in Cahn's, 2000: 88 terminology), not drains on the system, and no process that ignores this resource can be efficient (Lambert-Pennington et al., 2011; Saija, 2011). The transformative power comes when citizens who are usually on the receiving end are actively involved. Strategic planning no longer obsessively looks inwards to targets and procedures, but increasingly looks outwards to local neighbourhoods to create supportive socio-spatial places, seeking out local energy where it exists to help deliver and broaden policies, actions or projects and seeing citizens for what they can do, not just what they need (Moulaert, 2000). In this way, strategic planning urges contributions from those in the system as well as those outside the system and helps to stop us seeing actors in terms of 'us' and 'them'. This implies that those who are in the system or have easy access to the system, as well as those who are outside the system, have to decide collectively what the issues are, what actions are needed, what is possible in a plan, policy or project, and what is not possible. Unfortunately the social disintegration of neighbourhoods and changes in expectations about how to relate to neighbours has left many places without the kind of shared concern for the common welfare that supports public endeavours (Whitaker, 1980: 243). For a number of reasons transformative practices may need appropriate decisions and actions from the government (legal, investments, policies). Therefore, 'a level of engagement with the state is required to reform practices' (Mitlin, 2008: 339). So 'redefining the mission of the public sector is central' (Boyle and Harris, 2009: 17). Even though public decision-making has, in some parts of the world, become more participatory than in the past and authority in the west is increasingly decentralized, we have seen inequality grow at least in part as a consequence of governmental actions (Fainstein, 2010: 35). Therefore, a more radical strategic planning can only be true to its principles if it is backed by measures to make sure that everyone – not just those who are already better off, more able, articulate and socially advantaged – has the capacity to participate on equal terms[18] and affords equal value to different kinds of knowledge[19] and skills. Acknowledgment is needed that all actors are understood as potential contributors to all aspects of strategic

planning because 'hard distinctions between expert and lay, scientific and political order, and facts and values are rejected' (Bovaird, 2007: 423) and in order to bear on the implementation of actual projects, programmes and policies. Introducing coproduction as a central concept forces us to think in strategic planning processes about the underlying causes of inequality and how these can be tackled. This means changing the perceptions and the approach of many professionals (both public and private) about how plans, policies and projects are conceived and delivered, with the objective of enabling the (structural) change needed.

Concluding note

The more radical strategic planning described in this paper may take place beyond the boundaries of the planning profession and the planning laws and regulations. As it aims to secure political influence it is certainly confrontational, it is directed at change by means of specific outputs (plans, policies, projects) framed through spaces of deliberative opportunities. The approach developed and evolved by broadening the scope to practices in the global south, by linking theories and practices into processes and projects, and by constantly revising perspectives and actions on the basis of observing actual outcomes. In a world where actors are interdependent and have an albeit implicit reason to engage with each other, coproduction is considered in this paper as an engine of change that makes a difference between systems working and failing. Coproduction may strengthen the local organization base of citizens – specifically the urban poor – and increase their capacity to negotiate successfully with the state (Mitlin, 2008: 340) and other powerful actors. Coproduction introduces into the neighbourhood, city or region new identities and practices that disturb established histories. Opening up to the discourses and practices of coproduction emerging in very different contexts (urban poor in India versus citizens in Toronto), intellectual traditions (needs-based approach versus rights-based approach) and practices (provision of services versus securing political influence) forces us to engage with the realities of the urban poor, in the global south as well as in the west, and to include their experiences into planning theory and practice. Underlying this is the belief that the conscious or unconscious maintenance of citizens as passive recipients is not only a waste of their skills and time, it is also the reason why systemic change does not happen.

This paper has also argued that coproduction could serve as a vehicle to promote the rights of citizens and provide the public goods that are needed. The use of coproduction as a central concept for strategic spatial planning is looked upon as a process of becoming, a process of negotiating and discussing the meanings of problems, of evidence, of (political) strategies, of justice or fairness and the nature of outcomes. These outcomes must be well informed, just, feasible/possible (see notes 9 and 13 in this respect). Coproduction combines the usual concept of coproduction as the provision of public goods/services/gains needed and coproduction as a political strategy preparing citizens and grassroots organizations for a more substantive engagement with the political. In this way, it is instrumental in the building of strong, resilient and mutually supportive communities that could assure their members their needs would be met. This makes coproduction different from standard 'participation' (Mitlin, 2008).

Strategic spatial planning is not presented here as a panacea for all challenges, all problems; it is not meant as a substitute for other planning tools (such as land use planning or zoning). It is clear that strategic spatial planning, and especially the more radical version presented in this paper, needs a context (Ostrom, 1990: 192) and an intellectual tradition in which success factors (Needham, 2000) are available or can be made available. Strategic spatial planning, as presented here, shifts from an ontology of 'being', which privileges outcome and end-state, towards an ontology of 'becoming', in which actions, movement, relationships, conflicts, process and emergence are emphasized (Chia, 1995: 601; Chia, 1999: 215). The introduction of coproduction as an immanent characteristic embodies a social science perspective (Cahn, 2000: 29) and strengthens the socio-spatial character of the process. The legitimacy of strategic planning is guaranteed by a combination of its performance as a creative and innovative force, its potential or capacity to deliver positive outcomes and a formal acceptance by the relevant government level.

Coproduction, as a normative and ethical concept, is presented as an ideal to be aimed at rather than something that can be perfectly achieved. As coproduction requires a change to the status quo, with its introduction the world of planning and planners inevitably becomes more complicated and messy. However, it is in making planning issues and approaches messy that transformative practices can take place (Campbell, 2002: 351). It must be clear that the surrounding political regime enhances or inhibits institutional change needed for coproduction (Ostrom, 1990: 192).

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. Societies are facing major developments and challenges: the growing complexity of society (rise of new technologies, changes in production processes, the crisis of representative democracy, diversity, globalization of culture and the economy), increasing concern about the rapid and apparently random course of development, the problems of fragmentation, the ageing of the population in the west, and young people and woman entering the labour market in the global south, the dramatic increase in interest (at all scales, from local to global) in environmental issues, the growing strength of the environmental movement, the longstanding quest for better coordination (both horizontal and vertical), the re-emphasis on the need for long-term thinking and the aim to return to a more realistic and effective method.
2. See SDI in South Africa, SPARC in Mumbai, Hezbollah in Beirut (Roy, 2009; Watson, 2011).
3. See Mazza (2009) and Holston and Appadurai (1996) in this respect.
4. Mitlin (2008: 345) stresses that research has focused on the contribution of coproduction to service delivery rather than looking at more fundamental political issues such as its implementation for the distribution of power between organized citizens and the state.
5. The idea of governmentality derives from Foucault's analysis of the rationalities and mentalities of government. Government, in turn, is conceptualized as the calculated direction of human conduct (Roy, 2009: 160). Her views are based on cases where she analyses strategies used by SPARC in Mumbai and by Hezbollah in Beirut.

6. On the basis of her research in Bangladesh and Lebanon, Roy (2010: 123–124, 175–176) rightly argues that we have to question the legitimacy and authority of the knowledge produced.

7. As it is impossible to understand material places and social nodes such as 'the neighbour-hood' 'the city' 'the city-region' and 'the region' in terms of a one-dimensional hierarchy of scales (Healey, 2007: 267; Balducci, 2008), strategic spatial planning cannot be reduced to one specific scale. See in this respect the active involvement of local communities through the use of innovative mechanisms such as pilot projects, competitions in the Strategic Plan for the Province of Milan (Balducci et al., 2011).

8. Zizek (1999: 199) argues that authentic politics is the art of the *impossible* as it changes the very parameters of what is considered 'possible' in the existing constellation.

9. Land use and zoning plans serve legal certainty and the market and not, or only in a limited way, more social objectives. As the objectives are too different; combining both in one instru-ment is extremely difficult and often impossible.

10. This is in line with Bovaird (2007: 847) who argues that references from literature in Europe and the USA illustrate that the concept of coproduction is not only relevant to the service deliv-ery phase of service management but also can extend across the full value chain of service planning, design, commissioning, managing delivering, monitoring and evaluation activities.

11. The Ostrom view on consultation is different from the Mitlin view. The former has a mere instrumental approach that focuses on how to improve outcomes in terms of the particular service being considered; by contrast Mitlin focuses on coproduction as a political process that citizens engage with to secure changes in their relations with the government and state agencies, in addition to improvements in basic services (Mitlin, 2008: 352).

12. A government may join a coproduction process for different reasons: a weak or unsuccessful state, or because it assumes that such a process can help to solve its problem(s) or realize its goal(s). So it will join – eventually – such a process, because it has an interest.

13. I am thankful to one of the referees who pointed out to me that Forester's Habermasian idea of deliberation (and particularly his concept of power) is very different from the form of engagement described by Mitlin with a Foucauldian concept of power.

14. In fact we suggest combining here a rights-based and a needs-based approach.

15. Other futures, virtual futures, a movement of differentiation, divergence and actualization of 'possible' in the light of contingencies that befall them. It implies understanding the concept of 'possible' in an entirely different way understanding the processes of production, and creation in terms of openness instead of preformism of the expected (Grosz, 1999: 28). See also Zizek (2005: 342): 'the moment democracy is no longer "to come" but pretends to be actual – fully actualized – we enter totalitarianism'; and Zizek (1992: 163): 'there is in the very notion of democracy no place for the fullness of concrete human content, for the genu-ineness of community links: democracy is a formal link of abstract individuals.'

16. Strategic spatial planning in a coproduction framework does not take scientific knowledge as given 'but seeks to reveal and deconstruct how science is conducted, communicated and used (Latour, 1979 cited in Bovaird, 2007: 423).

17. See mapping where Roy, (2003: 34) refers to the Unnayan report (Bauman et al., 2002: 28) and self-enumeration (Appadurai, 2001: 35). See also the Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan in the Philippines (Buhangin, 2012). This law implies the consolidation of the plans of the indigenous cultural communities and the indigenous peoples within an ancestral domain for the sustainable management and development of their land and natural resources as well as the development of human and cultural resources based on their indigenous knowledge systems and practice. The purpose of the plan is to identify and imple-ment programmes and projects to strengthen self-governance, alleviate poverty, protect the environment and cultural integrity, and build lasting peace and genuine development.

18.   See also Fainstein's (2010: 35–36) definition of equity.
19.   Corburn (2003: 420) argues that local knowledge can improve planning in at least four ways: epistemology, procedural democracy, effectiveness and distributive justice.

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