2009

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Planning Theory

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REALIZING PLANNING'S EMANCIPATORY PROMISE: LEARNING FROM REGIME THEORY TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

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Abstract   This article informs communicative action theory with insights from urban regime theory. The synthesis proposes a model of planning that is more comprehensive in its treatment of the linkages between planning and governance and helps advance the creation of network power, emancipatory knowledge, empowering subjectivities, and spaces of solidarity. The article then discusses the merits of these insights in the context of a categorization of planning into traditional, democratic, advocacy, and incremental approaches.

Keywords   communicative action, emancipatory knowledge, empowering subjectivities, network power, regime theory, spaces of solidarity

Any serious theorizing about urban planning today needs to take account of its political and practical dimensions. The aim of this article is to inform communicative action theory, a framework that has become prominent in the planning literature, with insights from the literature on urban regime theory, which has made important inroads into understanding the nature and workings of governance coalitions. The new synthesis, emerging from a comparative analysis of the two, proposes that the creation of network power, emancipatory knowledge, empowering subjectivities, and spaces of solidarity constitute basic aims of planning, and suggests ways of progressing in their attainment. By suggesting

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that we can benefit from informing communicative action theory by urban regime theory, the aspiration is to inch closer to a model of planning that is more comprehensive in its treatment of the complex linkages between planning and governance, and between planning's normative and empirical aspects. Since regime theory has its roots in the discipline of political science, my other aim is to expand the dialogue between theoretical explorations in the fields of urban governance and urban planning.

Before finding insights from one theory to inform the other, it is important to recognize the critical dimensions underlying such a fusion. Although fundamental world-views of both the communicative action theory and the urban regime theory are different, they could be coalesced in a broader sense, where one is complementing what the other is lacking.[1] Regime theory primarily stemming from political science has a sound grounding in analyzing the dynamics of power imbalances. Communicative action theory in planning builds upon the role and importance of communicative practices in planning. Communicative planning practices, however, do not happen in a vacuum and they have to deal with the dynamics of governance. Major criticisms of communicative action theory involve its lack of proper consideration of power issues. By drawing from regime theory the aim is to add value to the communicative action theory and bridge the gap between theory and practice as evident in the difficulties faced by communicative action in practice.

In order to inform one theory with the other, I analytically compare critical dimensions of power, knowledge, subjectivity, and space. This comparative analysis recognizes the fact that both theories have underlying normative agendas. All theory is to some degree normative, that is, being infused with values and embedded within social and historical contexts (Allmendinger, 2002). However, the infusion of communicative action theory with the philosophy of Jürgern Habermas and the American pragmatists, among others, has rendered it with a moralizing, normative mission around the notion of communicative rationality (Hillier, 2003). Regime theory's value, on the other hand, has mostly laid on its being empirical, explanatory, and of 'exogenous' value to planning theory (Allmendinger, 2002; Feldmann, 1997; Lauria, 1997a, 1997b).[2]

I start by briefly discussing the fundamentals of regime theory and communicative action theory, identifying strengths and weaknesses. I then compare the theories on the basis of their treatment of power, knowledge, subjectivity, and space as essential dynamics in both governance and planning. I identify potential synergies between the two theories and use them to suggest how planning can enhance its practice-guiding and socially emancipatory goals. I then discuss the merits of these insights in the context of a customary categorization of planning into traditional, democratic, advocacy, and incremental approaches.

Regime theory and urban governance in the United States

Urban governance in the US has experience significant transformations in recent decades. US cities have faced measurable changes in their demographics, economics, and modes of governance (Howard et al., 1998). Many

cities have witnessed regime transitions fueled by significant shifts in their electoral base (Whelan et al., 1994) and tightening budgets, among other factors. Conditions and responses have, of course, varied from city to city. As a result, there is a rich literature on governance models that aims to explain the composition and functioning of the varied urban regimes in the US. Among the most prominent models are the elitist and growth machine approaches (Hollingshead, 1949; Hunter, 1953; Logan and Molotch, 1987; Mills, 1959), the pluralist (Banfield, 1961; Dahl, 1961), the hyper-pluralist (DeLeon, 1992; Savitch and Clayton Thomas, 1991a; Yates, 1977), and the corporatist models (Savitch, 1988; Schmitter, 1977).[3] However insightful these models are in describing specific instances of urban governance dynamics, they nonetheless lack the capacity to explain change and its trajectory. The devolution of government, and the rise of private–public partnerships as a matter of policy also constituted facts unexplained by the theories at hand. This further compelled students of cities to commit to research in the hope of generating more insightful theories as to why particular governance coalitions form or persist, and on devising guidance for appropriate and effective planning and governance (Banfield, 1961; Pierre, 1999; Savitch and Clayton Thomas, 1991a).

Regime theory can be seen to offer a substantial response to this challenge. It asks the empirical question, in Lauria's words, of 'how and under what conditions do different types of government coalitions emerge, consolidate, and become hegemonic or devolve and transform' (Lauria, 1997b: 1–2). It is thus concerned with the issue of cooperation and co-ordination between government, the business community, and civil society (Stoker, 1995). Any worthwhile analysis of regimes thus need to take stock of the informal arrangements that both constrain and complement the formal workings of government in liberal democracies, where the role of private enterprise in steering economic decisions is paramount. The reports on Dallas and Atlanta, by regime theory's 'forefathers' Elkin (1987) and Stone (1989), respectively, are early classic examples (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Stone, 1989; Stone and Sanders, 1987).

Mossberger and Stoker (2001) distill Stone's work in the late 1980s and early 1990s to some constitutive elements of regimes. Regimes thus are groups that have access to institutional resources, bridge between private business and government, are stable arrangements that maintain their cohesiveness, and have distinctive policy agendas. The basis for consensus in regimes are 'selective incentives', meaning that regime member groups need not exhibit total agreement over issues, but that a proven record of results from collaboration suffices for the maintenance of the arrangement. The authors themselves develop a framework with three general categories of regimes: organic, instrumental, and symbolic. Organic regimes maintain the status quo, while instrumental ones push for specific projects and agendas, and symbolic ones aim to achieve change in ideology or image.

In a comprehensive revision, Davies (2002) traces the conceptual roots of regime theory to the neo-pluralist critique, by Lindblom and others, of pluralism's 'unrefined' notion of equal access to power. But Davies also points to the theory's roots in structural Marxism, and draws parallels between Stone's

conception of the perpetual tensions between economic liberalism and political democracy and Poulantzas's notion of the state as a bearer of 'class forces' (p. 4). This multifaceted basket of influences has been crucial to the popularity of the approach and its current level of academic prominence. In Mickey Lauria's words,

> [regime theory] appears to have gained the dominant position in the literature on local politics precisely because it dispenses with the stalled debates between elite hegemony and pluralist interest group politics, between economic determinism and political machination and between external or structural determinants and local or social construction. Rather, urban regime theory provides a robust conceptual framework that views these as false dualisms. (Lauria, 1997b: 1)

The contention made in this article that regime theory is strongly empirical in nature is not meant to suggest that its protagonists do not have large normative goals in mind. Indeed, regime analysis is, in Elkin's project for example, exemplary in its commitment to the 'commercial republic' and its attempt to reconcile its conflicting principles of liberalism and democracy (Davies, 2002).[4] For Stone, the point of regime analysis is understanding how one can build more equitable regimes, and understanding how regimes geared towards goals other than business development, such as in his studies on education coalitions, fare (Stone et al., 2001). A gap exists, however, between the description of regimes and what need be done to inch closer towards its normative ideals. Others, such as Ward (1997), have made similar observations about the shortcomings of empirical analysis. In Ward's view, this has lead to a deficit in explanatory power. In a similar critique, Mossberger and Stoker (2001) label regime theory as a 'multifaceted concept' rather than a theory per se. Furthermore, the very way the description of regimes was carried out, through the construction of regime typologies, makes it difficult to understand causal and structural relations belying the formation of regimes.

Despite its shortcomings, the regime theory framework is particularly acute in suggesting a road map towards the ideals of the 'commercial republic' or 'good society' – equity and efficiency (Elkin, 1987). The attention to particularities of regime politics stems from regime theory's unique perspective on the nature of social reproduction and the role of power. Social and political structures are, in Davies's words, the medium and outcome of the reproduction of practices. The following excerpt from Stone best describes the approach:

> There is no all-encompassing structure of command that guides and synchronizes everyone's behavior. There is a purposive coordination of efforts, but it comes about informally . . . *a regime is empowering* . . . a means for achieving coordinated efforts that might not otherwise be realized. (Stone, 1998: 25, emphasis in original)

This understanding of social reproduction operationalizes Stone's critique of structuralist Marxism by rejecting the framework of elite social control. Regime analysis thus necessitates the attention to the 'practices of cooperation' in order to understand the differential hold over resources, the reproduction of ideologies, and success in capitalizing on opportunities. If the Marxist notion

of ideological hegemony is rejected, agents are seen to be motivated by their own socially conditioned appreciation of the opportunities involved in agreeing to partake in certain regimes, or what Stone calls 'narrow cognition' (Davies, 2002). This, as Stone illustrates, grounds 'the need to promote enough co-operation and coordination for the diverse participants to reach decisions and sustain action in support of those decisions' (Stone, 1998: 27). This cooperation can be both formal and informal. In the context of the United States, where decisions of urban dimensions are made at different levels in a fragmented manner, the importance of informal networking is magnified. Regimes that benefit from diversity and flexibility are thus more likely to persist.

Cooperation, however, is usually achieved at significant costs, such as in the resources expended in promoting it (Savitch and Clayton Thomas, 1991b). In addition, achieving cooperation requires commitment to a set of relationships, and those commitments limit independence. Forming coalitions is thus difficult, and community actors are not always willing to pay the costs. Because centrifugal tendencies are always strong, achieving cooperation is a major accomplishment and requires constant effort and selective incentives. There is no single formula for bringing institutional actors to cooperate. In a sense, this is an argument for key players in regimes to take proactive lead roles in reducing the costs of compliance and maintaining focus on goals, which may contradict with the ideal of open, non-coercive debate, as we shall see in the case of communicative action theory in the next section.

But, at least in Elkin's elaboration, Marxian influence is discernable through the focus of regime theory on issues of political economy. This lingering Marxism might explain the focus on notions such as practices and systemic power, and less so on other factors in the formation and maintenance of regimes such as the role of common vision and the role of organizational narratives. In his critique of the theory, Ward (1997) contends that narratives 'strengthen institutional cooperation', and in a sense regimes are 'naturalized' when they represent themselves as the entities to undergo development in their own scripted (but popularly accepted) histories of urban progress.

Ward is but one observer who has been critical of the regime framework. Lauria (1997b) also faults regime theory for under-theorizing the connections between economic and political agents in their wider institutional contexts, for inadequately conceptualizing scale at the expense of extra-metropolitan constraints, for basing individual decision-making on rational choice theory, and finally for inadequately theorizing capitalism aside from the division between state and market (Lauria, 1997b). Sites adds: 'regime theory's emphasis on political leadership, coalition building, and policy form, at the expense of other factors of urban analysis, underestimates the obstacles to genuinely progressive, community-oriented urban development' (Sites, 1997: 536). The other factors that Sites considers are the impact of economic restructuring, federal retrenchment, interest group pressures, changes in the local real estate market, and community mobilization. Leo suggests that instead of regimes, it may prove more useful to think of combinations of local, regional, national, and global coalitions constituted to address different sets of policy concerns (Leo, 1997).

A particularly insightful critique of the regime literature, and one which proposes a roadmap for a fruitful application of this theory, is found in the work of Mossberger and Stoker (2001). In a sense, the authors want to save the theory from a loss of explanatory power that can follow its loose and indiscriminant application. Mossberger and Stoker identify parochialism, misclassification, degreeism and concept-stretching as 'pitfalls' of conceptualization that make comparative analysis practically impossible. Briefly, by parochialism they refer to the casual use of the concept; by misclassification the identifying of regimes in partnerships that do not satisfy some elemental characteristics (such as the private–public nature); by degreeism the lack of a robust criterion to determine whether a regime actually exists; and finally, by concept-stretching the relaxing of criteria to account for broader phenomena. Keeping in mind these pitfalls, Mossberger and Stoker consider that the main contributions of regime analysis have been in reorienting the power debate and in facilitating the analysis of politics beyond the formal institutions of government.

In response to some of the aforementioned criticisms, Cox suggests that regime theory would be strengthened by an understanding of the mechanisms of cooperation, which he sees as being assumed rather than understood (Cox, 1997). In here, the insights of communicative action can be of help. Similarly, important for the purpose of this article, Cox criticizes the absence of a perspective of space in regime theory, where space 'remains something of a backdrop to the analysis rather than a set of relations that is actively mobilized by agents' (p. 105). For example, local governments depend on a local tax base, and developers tend to be circumscribed to particular markets due to local knowledge and reputation. In addition to place-dependent social relations, ingredients to cooperation such as relations of trust can lock agents into particular local arenas, so that locality-specific rules regulating exchanges can become local competitive advantages or disadvantages in-and-of themselves.

Communicative action theory revisited

The communicative action 'school' of planning theory, if one may use that designation, emerged in the 1980s–1990s with an emphasis on the transformative nature of social processes at the urban and regional levels (Forester, 1980, 1989, 1993a, 1999b; Godschalk, 1992; Innes, 1992, 1995, 2004). This perspective, based partially on the work of philosopher Jürgen Habermas,[5] his predecessors in the Frankfurt School, and contributions of American pragmatists, focuses on the notion that carefully designed, participatory processes involving multiple stakeholders can help create consensus on critical social issues and foster the political will to bring about change (Irazábal and Neville, 2007).

This approach has since had a strong grasp on the planning field, bringing attention to the processes of communication, deliberation, and knowledge production in planning. Communicative and collaborative planning draw on models of planning that are interactive, discursive, conflict-mediating, and consensus-building (Sager, 2002). The theory has received significant scrutiny and criticism in planning literature. To complicate matters more, theorists

within this tradition, such as John Forester, Patsy Healey, Jean Hillier, Charles Hoch, Judith Innes, Seymour Mandelbaum, Jim Throgmorton, Margo Huxley, Thomas Harper and Stanley Stein, Ray Kemp, Tore Sager, P.M. McGuirk, and others, often advance significantly different strands of argument (Verma and Shin, 2004; Watson, 2002; Yiftachel and Huxley, 2001). For instance, the strand of 'critical pragmatism' (Forester, 1989, 1993a; Sager, 1994) puts relatively more emphasis on rationality and the questioning approach of critical theory,[6] while the collaborative planning of Healey (1997, 1999) and Innes and Booher (1999) focuses more on the processes of consensus building (Sager, 2002; Verma and Shin, 2004). Collaborative planning of the Healey (1997) variety draws upon critical theory, structuration theory, as well as elements of cognitive psychology. Healey's interpretation differs from that of Forester (1989, 1999a) and others who subscribe to the communicative position (Allmendinger, 2002). While both draw upon the communicative theories of Habermas, Forester complements this with pragmatism while Healey draws upon Giddens's theory of structuration. Meanwhile, consensus building of the Innes variety has roots in practices and theories of mediation, alternative dispute resolution, and interest-based bargaining (Innes, 2004; Innes and Booher, 2000).

Today, one of the biggest challenges facing planning is to articulate a common understanding of social problems in a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic world. In outlining their support for the communicative action approach, Patsy Healey and others regard scientific rationalism, moral idealism, pure relativism, and democratic socialism all as insufficient or inappropriate to address this challenge. As an alternative, Healey turns to Habermas's 'intersubjective reasoning' (Campbell and Fainstein, 1996; Healey, 1996). In practical terms, this does not make the task any easier, though. For a process to be 'communicatively rational', a number of conditions laid out by Habermas must be met: all stakeholders must be involved, they must be empowered and competent, and 'ideal speech conditions' must be approximated. That is, within the content of the communication there must be no domination by any party, participants must put aside all motives except that of reaching agreement, and criteria of comprehensibility, truth, rightness, and sincerity must be present (Sager, 1993). The parties must also have equivalent degrees of communicative competence, and not be hindered by deception, self-deception, or self-serving strategic interaction (Dryzek, 1987). Needless to say, attaining these conditions is a major, if not an altogether utopian task, and in any given situation the conditions can only be approximated.

Evidently, communicative planning, whether of the strand of critical pragmatism (Forester), consensus building (Innes), collaborative planning (Healey) or dialogical planning (Harper and Stein, 2006), does not assume the ideal speech situation is always going to be attainable, but strive to counteract communicative distortions when feasible, promote equal opportunities, and help to build support for a reasonably effective and fair plan (Forester, 1993a). This is clear from Healey's (1999) reworking of Habermas's approach to communicative action in an institutionalist perspective, and from the framework for evaluating collaborative planning developed by Innes and Booher (1999; Sager, 2002).

However, it is not all so clear whether the communicative action approach universally demands the inclusion of, and an openness to, 'others' (Forester, 1989; Sandercock, 2003). This is a challenging standard of inclusion to attain, yet the success of communicative action would remain questionable inasmuch as 'the concrete differences of marginalized persons are ignored or erased by the public realm of discourse' (Sim, 1999: 213). The work of Iris Marion Young, which proposes norms and conditions for inclusive democratic communication under circumstances of structural inequalities and cultural differences, is insightful here and could effectively enhance the communicative action framework (Young, 2000).

Expanding on the communicative action model and applying it to the specific realm of urban planning, Innes and Booher have connected the theory of deliberative democracy with network-based policy-making to arrive at a 'new paradigm' of public participation within collaborative planning institutions (Innes, 1995).[7] In their 'collaborative model', they contend that 'planning should be done through face-to-face dialogue among those who have interests in the outcomes, or stakeholders' (Innes and Booher, 2000: 18). They reach results 'not by argument, but by cooperative scenario building, role playing and bricolage – piecing together the ideas, information and experiences all members have to create new strategies' (p. 19). Recently, Innes and Gruber stressed again the importance of dialogue, which they say, 'must be self-organizing and authentic in the sense that what people say is sincere, comprehensive, accurate, and a legitimate representation of the stakeholders' interests' (2005: 183).

In collaborative planning, a good plan 'is one that responds to the interest of all stakeholders and creates joint benefits. A good plan produces learning and positive relationships' (Innes and Gruber, 2005: 183). Innes and Gruber differentiate this outcome from the one produced by what they term 'the political influence style' in planning. In the latter approach, a good plan 'is one that has the support of all powerful players. It is the sum of the individual interests of these players rather than a vision of the region' (p. 182). The authors do recognize that the political influence style in planning is 'typically dominant' in many policy and planning arenas. Yet, this approach 'is rarely taught to professional planners or policy analysts. *It is not even considered "planning"* as those two professions see it' (p. 181; emphasis added). This is exactly the paradox that this article addresses – repositioning the attention granted to political influence as an element of planning from its current status as a semi-ignored or under-theorized element ('not even considered "planning"') to a more central role in planning theory and pedagogy through more explicit analysis and understanding of urban governance dynamics. This move should shed light on how to move from plans that support the individual interests of powerful players to those that promote a vision of the region based on the creation of joint benefits, learning, and positive relationships for all stakeholders.

There are many 'insider critics' – such as Healey, Fischler, and Sager – and 'outsider critics' of communicative action – such as Flyvbjerg, Huxley and Yiftachel, and Fainstein (Verma and Shin, 2004). Fainstein, for example, criticized the focus of communicative action on process at the expense of a concern

with outcomes, and charges that it is moralistic without being critical (Fainstein, 2000). In response to this criticism, Innes argues that outcomes are not only measured in tangible results, but in learning and social capital that stakeholders can continue to tap into beyond the process at hand (Irazábal and Neville, 2007). 'Sometimes agreements are the least of the outcomes of successful processes' (Innes, 2004: 8). Besides, she claims, consensus building is not doomed to produce the lowest common denominator solutions to planning problems, another critique advanced by Fainstein and others. Rather, it often results in outcomes that are more than the sum of the expectations that stakeholders came to the negotiating table with.

As another outsider, Bent Flyvbjerg (1998) has strongly criticized the understanding of power used by those drawing on Habermas's theory. Using a Foucauldian concept of power instead, power, in Flyvbjerg's framework, is inevitably present and cannot be done away with through a communicative process. The purpose of understanding planning practices is therefore, for him, to unveil the 'dark side' of planning, that is, 'the tactics and strategies of power so that its abuses can be countered' (Watson, 2002: 180). Roy adds to this view, stating that '[f]eminist dissenters, in particular, have rejected the idea of objective rules and the possibility of communication free of domination' (Roy, 2001: 119). As a rebuttal, Innes argues, however, that external power differentials are not deterministic as consensus building processes result in the production of 'network power' – 'power that grows as it is shared and is not a zero sum game' – which allows for greater and longer empowerment of all stakeholders (2004: 13).

A different critique from 'outsiders' contends that dialogic planning processes might not be as fair and democratic in practice as suggested by communicative planning theorists (Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000; Yiftachel and Huxley, 2001). In particular, Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger find it 'ironic that a process concerned with transparency in communication seems to impose assumptions upon the process, such as a view of participatory democracy as being inherently "good," representative democracy inherently "bad"' (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998: 1977; in Sager, 2002: 377).

Some empirical research from planning practice has demonstrated that the ideals of communicative rationality and consensus-formation are difficult to achieve (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 1998; McGuirk, 2001; Tewdwr-Jones and Thomas, 1998). Habermasian-framed consensus formation processes often fail, Gunder (2003) points out, because Habermasian theorizing is predicated on a belief that an ideal communicative situation can create transcendental understanding and agreement for all participants. In reality, Hillier and others claim, actors may see little benefit in behaving 'communicatively rationally' when strategic, instrumental power plays and manipulation of information could result in more favorable outcomes for themselves (Hillier, 2003). In effect, there are certain conditions that need to be in place for communicative planning practices to be effective. Skillful facilitation of the process and stakeholders that have both something to give to and something to gain from other stakeholders are key.

Drawing on these two models, regime theory and communicative action, I explore in the following section the potential for their complementarities. As a basis for comparison in theories that have largely evolved in two different realms – governance and planning – I propose a framework of common driving factors in the dynamics of governance and planning – power, knowledge, subjectivity, and space. These factors are critical to each of the two theories in question and they address governance and planning issues simultaneously. These four factors are also the primary basis on which these theories have been either criticized or praised.

Power, knowledge, subjectivity, and space

Power

Power is the capacity to make things happen ('power to' or 'network power'), make others do things ('power over'), or prevent things from happening ('preemptive power'). Different modes of power may be in operation simultaneously. That is, in order to govern, there are occasions in which it is necessary to exercise some *power to* or *network power* (gaining a capacity to act, or to act cooperatively and to mutual benefits, respectively) and *power over* others (controlling others' actions). This is accomplished, as DiGaetano and Klemanski concede, 'either by defeating them (dominating power), persuading them (bargaining power), or precluding them from the decision-making process (preemptive power)' (DiGaetano and Klemanski, 1999: 22; see also Irazábal, 2005; Rast, 2006).

In the community power paradigm developed in the 1950s and 1960s, having power meant the ability to have people do something that they otherwise would not have done. As DiGaetano and Klemanski claim, pluralist, elite, and non-decisional theorists agree that political power is exercised 'to control or gain dominion over others. Differences among these community power theorists relate to the form in which power is exercised, not in what power is or why it is deployed' (1999: 19). In the context of regime theory, and as Davies (2002: 6) mentions, Stone's 'major contribution is his conceptualization of power as social production that derives from the interfaces between systemic and preemptive power'. Hence, 'the power struggle concerns, not control and resistance, but gaining and fusing a capacity to act – *power to, not power over*' (Stone, 1989: 227; emphasis in original). The strategic deployment of 'practices of co-operation' in the pursuit of small opportunities is this interfacing between systemic (structure) and pre-emptive (agency) power.

Communicative action theory on the other hand, grounded in the philosophy of Habermas, is heavily invested in the process of social learning. Power is conceived as being generated through 'cognitive politics' based on cognitive exchanges (debates on preferences, positions, and claims). In the collaborative planning model, this notion is centered around the ideal of 'network power': power grows as players build on their interdependencies (Booher and Innes, 2002).[8] Preemptive or preexisting power is not desirable and is to be

intentionally avoided or surrendered, as Margerum (2002) frames it as an obstacle to consensus building. Foley and Lauria (2000) show how preemptive power, manifested through conflicting visions and goals, can interfere the decision-making process in planning and block the ideals of communicative planning theory. Network power would be the most democratic and equitable form of power, requiring inclusion of all stakeholders and openness to social learning and cognitive politics. The strengthening and maturity of network power through trust may both inspire and provide the impetus for networking coalitions or regimes to engage in more complex governing and planning agendas as civic capacity and social capital grows. In a way, cooperation based on network power can thus create enduring regimes. These regimes, however, are not based on preemption, but on the contrary, on the fostering of inclusiveness and open dialogue. Various stakeholders in planning and governance processes can therefore strive to openly and explicitly acknowledge, account for, and redress social and spatial inequalities (Irazábal, 2005, 2009).

Regime theory can inform communicative action theory through better accounting for circumstances and processes in which power is constructed, maintained, and transferred among agents and institutions; and a more politically sophisticated understanding of power relations – responses to the question of who makes up the regime or coalition, how the coming together is accomplished and maintained, and with what consequences. Ideally, in a society rich in civic capacity and social capital, a social production model of power would strive to approximate the ideals of the network power model at the expense of one predicated on social control.

Knowledge

Knowledge refers to the data, information, and understanding generated about issues, objects, events, processes, people, and relations as a product of governance and planning dynamics. People come to arenas of governance and planning with their own situated knowledge (Haraway, 1991), individually and socially constructed through their education and experiences. Through dialogical and dialectical interactions, both individual and collective knowledges are transformed. The relations between knowledge and power are manifold and complex. Centuries ago (in 1597), Francis Bacon stated that 'knowledge is power'. More recently, Michel Foucault has popularized another reframing of the relations of power and knowledge in what he termed 'power-knowledge'. Foucault was also instrumental in reframing knowledge as socially constructed, constituting 'regimes of truth' that operate through the politics of discourse:

> Truth isn't outside of power, or lacking in power . . . Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as truth . . . the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth. (1980: 131)

In regime theory, there is strong emphasis on the legitimization of the situated knowledge of stakeholders, or 'narrow cognition'. Political resources are expended in promoting cooperation, but that goal does not necessarily

coincide with the ideal of mutual discursive understanding. The tensions between promoting social learning and the defense of (businesses and elites') privilege loom large. And the trade-off can have profound impacts on social inclusion and democracy (Lauria and Whelan, 1995). In the words of Stone,

> the greater the privilege being protected, the less incentive to understand and act on behalf of the community in its entirety . . . Thus, to the extent that urban regimes safeguard special privileges at the expense of social learning, democracy is weakened. (Stone, 1998: 38–40)

In communicative action theory, on the other hand, there is a greater emphasis placed on knowledge as social learning at the expense of the defense of privilege. Knowledge – understood as innovation, new heuristics, and shared meanings and identities – is produced by the conditions enabling network power: diversity and interdependency of agents, and authentic dialogue (Booher and Innes, 2002).[9] In addition, communicative action offers the potential for the production of 'emancipatory knowledge' through critical reflection and self-reflection (Habermas, 1981, 1971). Stakeholders thus free themselves from the constraints of uncritically assimilated assumptions and discriminatory views, and are able to challenge the influence of their leaders, politicians, and the media, and ultimately expand their choices and opportunities (Cranton and Cohen, 2000). Thus, emancipatory knowledge can destabilize old power-knowledge relations and subject new ones to critical scrutiny.

Among the potential cross-fertilization between regime theory and communicative action in the area of knowledge is a greater balance between the focus of regime theory on power (knowledge is seen as a product of power relations and the instrument by which agents exercise rational choices between the selection of incentives and the avoidance of opportunity costs related to cooperation) and communicative action on knowledge, as we probe the intersections of the concepts of network power and emancipatory knowledge. A new doublet – 'network power – emancipatory knowledge' – can be conceived as a normative tool that challenges the fatalism of the Foucauldian 'power-knowledge'. This new doublet has a distinct meaning in that power is not just any power but the power of networks, and knowledge is not any knowledge but the knowledge free from the constraints posed by uncritically assimilated assumptions and discriminatory views. When these two distinct entities – network power and emancipatory knowledge – come together, they produce synergistic power-knowledge that is larger and more productive than the sum of the parts.

Subjectivity

Subjectivity can also be referred to as subject identity. In governance and planning processes, it is complexly and unstably composed by the stakeholders' self-identity (who they think they are), their individual and institutional projects (who they want to become), the way they think others perceive them (projected self-identity), and the actual way they are perceived by others (socially constructed identities). Subjectivity plays a significant role in all governance

and planning processes, because subjects construct their interpretations of their own and others' roles in these processes and decide their values and courses of action based on what they think of themselves and their projects and what they think others believe them to be and expect them to do (Irazábal, 2007). In other words, 'the subject is the source of self-consciousness' (Sedgwick, 2002: 389). The debate on determinism and autonomy in the construction of the subject is a heated and multifaceted affair (Longan and Oaks, 2002). Marxist determinists such as Althusser, for example, claimed that the subject was a product of ideology, whereas the post-structuralist Foucault held that the subject was the product of relations of power. Others posit the subject as being fragmented, such as Derrida's 'positioned' subject constituted through difference, or MacCannell's (1992) hybridized, inventive subject negotiating the challenges of globalization (Bhabha, 1986; Oakes, 2005).

On the other hand, postmodernists such as Lyotard propose an important role for language in the formation of subjects, with human agents as the source of meaning, and this sentiment of autonomy is also strong in the work of Butler, where the subject 'speaks' itself into existence and develops the capacity for action through language (Butler, 1997). Others also reserve for individuals great leverage in the quest for self-affirmation. For Touraine, subjectivity 'results from the necessary combination of two affirmations: that of individuals against communities, and that of individuals against the market' (Touraine, 1995: 29–30; in Castells, 1997: 10, his translation). For Manuel Castells, these subjects are produced through the construction of 'project identities' that redefine the social actors' position in society and hence seek the transformation of the entire social system (Castells, 1997: 8).[10]

In regime theory, agent relations are mostly explained based on rational choice theory. Thus, a regime reflects elite individual and institutional subjects acting on rational self-interest. However, as Davies (2001) mentions, the subject is not 'subordinate' to structures, as the determinists would have it, but is endowed with the capacity to reform them as she operationalizes them. When subjects come together in a regime, it is based on their own situated assessment of the benefits and liabilities of participation. In this sense, the rationality in 'rational choice' is 'bounded' by the subject's appreciation of the incentives and the reach of structural constraints.

Relations between agents in the framework of communicative action theory, on the contrary, are based on efforts to construct a shared vision. Stakeholders begin with – but move beyond – self-interest to achieve communicative rationality and sometimes 'emancipatory rationality', that is, self-reflection, learning, and emancipation from systemic oppressions (Booher and Innes, 2002; Habermas, 1996).[11] A commonplace misappropriation of Habermasian philosophy as it pertains to the theories of communicative planning is its dissociation from its philosophical roots in the Frankfurt School and American pragmatism. This fuels the misunderstanding that Habermasian philosophy is mostly concerned with communication at the expense of a self-emancipatory role (Verma and Shin, 2004). Renewed attention to this role for *Ideologiekritik*, or the critique of ideology, reserves a role for communicative action

as a catalyst for agents engaged in planning negotiations to realize their subjectivities.

A contribution of regime theory to communicative action theory in the area of subjectivity would be the awareness of and more systematic accounting for situated self-interest. The extent to which factors such as power, knowledge, race, ethnicity, gender, class, origin, or language and communication competency condition subjectivity will continue to be hotly debated. Regime theory would theorize that the formation of subjectivity occurs at the interstices of systemic and pre-emptive power, as the subject negotiates her interests in the process of social reproduction. The fulfillment of these interests through the pursuit of 'small opportunities' (Davies, 2001) resonates with the idea of a multi-faceted, 'hybridized' subjectivity that Butler (1997) speaks of. Awareness of such dynamics can allow stakeholders in planning processes and the facilitators of such processes to see the forest *and* the trees, that is, to strategically and explicitly pursue *both* small opportunities in the short term *and* larger, project identities in the longer term.

Space

Rather than being a mere background, space is both the subject of social con-testation and a pivotal element that shapes governance and planning process in their dimensions of power, knowledge, and subjectivities (Irazábal, 2005, 2008). However, charges of 'placelessness' and a-spatiality have been leveled at both regime theory and communicative action, as space is unsatisfactorily theorized in both frameworks (Yiftachel and Huxley, 2000, 2001). Take, for example, the question of subjectivity, which has recently found expression in primarily spatial, rather than historical, terms, as it is reconstituted through 'localized and contingent narratives, synchronicity, and *difference across space*' (Longan and Oakes, 2002, emphasis in original; Pile and Thrift, 1995). Oakes (2005) expands on the importance of space in theorizing subjectivity by claiming that the subject reflexively derives 'inventiveness and creativity' from its encounter with difference, and that this encounter must be situated in time *and* space. More to the point, if MacCannell's 'new cultural subjects' are to be conceived as struggling with the forces that render them 'stubbornly determined', as he argues they should be, then the subject must be linked to specific histories *and* geographies, and must be placed in the actual landscapes of social power that condition their experience of late modernity. As Kirby (1996: 35) remarks, it is necessary 'to view subjectivity as a place where we live, a space we are, on the one hand, compelled to occupy, and, on the other hand, as a space whose interiority affords a place for reaction and response'.

Although regime theory is concerned with explaining politics on the local urban level, it does not credit space with an active role in the construction of social relations. Neither does communicative action. Giddens's (1985) critique of the latter is that it is a 'grand theory' that 'pays no attention to the signifi-cance of webs of difference and connection over space' (Gregory, 2000: 132). In both frameworks, attention to the social construction of space – questions of how the built environment is imaginatively, discursively, and physically enacted

TABLE 1 *Power, knowledge, subjectivity, and space across communicative action, regime theory, and a revised planning approach*

	Communicative action	*Regime theory*	*Emancipatory planning (revised approach)*
Power	Network power, social capital	Power to, not power over, interplay of systemic and pre-emptive power	Network power
Knowledge	Social learning	Defense of situated knowledge	Emancipatory knowledge
Subjectivity	Rehearsed, evolving	Rational choice, strategic self-interest	empowering, layered subjectivities, respect of difference
Space	No specific spatial constraint	Manipulation of space as commodity	Spaces of solidarity, promotion of spatial justice

– remains lacking. Regarding space, thus, my proposal aims to strengthen both communicative action and regime theory with an appreciation of spatial empirical and normative dimensions. Empirically, accounting for the social construction of space from the local to the global, and its effects in matters of power, knowledge and subjectivities. Normatively, striving for the construction of spaces of solidarity at all these scales. These spaces of solidarity are the spaces where people practice and perform (Rose, 1999) network power, emancipatory knowledge, and empowering subjectivities. In this way, people's beings and becomings produce 'the material support of time-sharing social practices' (Castells, 1996: 411) that produce solidarity (the capacity and willingness to harmonize interests and responsibilities among individuals in a group, especially as manifested in mutual appreciation and in support and collective action for mutual projects; *Encarta World English Dictionary*, 1999) and strive to further socio-spatial justice (Irazábal, 2008, 2009).

The emancipatory aims of planning

The analysis of power, knowledge, and subjectivity in regime theory is insightful for furthering communicative action's ideals of universal inclusion, democratic representation, authentic dialogue, social learning, and emancipatory knowledge. Emancipation is reframed here as the capacity of agents for becoming self-conscious of their roles in the reproduction of social practices and empowered for transforming them. In the context of planning, emancipation also refers to the attainment of socio-spatial justice. Only this understanding insures that the network power extolled by communicative action truly reflects the preferences of self-reflecting individuals converging on decisions

that advance collective opportunities. Also, an agent's recognition of her situated knowledge, or 'narrow cognition', is the basis for a productive process of social learning and subsequent attainment of emancipatory knowledge. Similarly, a renewed engagement of communicative action with the 'critique of ideology' as a basis for emancipation is intricately connected to an agent's understanding of her 'situated self interest'[12] and of the role of overbearing structures in shaping this self-interest and hence one's subjectivity. No less important, the understanding of the spatial situatedness of subjectivities, and hence the framing of interests, is also of paramount importance for progressing in the attainment of network power, emancipatory knowledge, empowering subjectivities, and spaces of solidarity. These factors, I argue, constitute basic emancipatory aims of planning. In what follows, I discuss how this recognition of the emancipatory aims of planning would bear on the traditional, democratic, equity, and incremental approaches to planning practice.

Susan and Norman Fainstein (1996) developed a framework of planning practice that emphasizes traditional, democratic, equity, and incremental approaches (see Table 2). Evidently, as these authors acknowledge, this categorization outlines a taxonomy of 'pure' types, and planning in practice is a messy, 'wicked' affair (Rittel and Webber, 1984).[13] This 'messiness' of planning in practice is obviated in the fact that these planning approaches can be pursued both simultaneously and sequentially in the same planning case, with varying degrees of focus. Nonetheless, such typologies are helpful abstraction of planning problems and processes in a way that illuminates, but evidently does not fully capture, the complexities of reality. Reconnecting with the emancipatory aims of planning as qualified by the insights from communicative action and regime theory redresses shortcomings of the traditional, democratic, equity, and incremental approaches.

Redressing the shortcomings of the traditional approach does not entail the discarding of the technocratic approach it espouses, but the acknowledgment that this situated knowledge is one of many socially constructed perspectives. Planners' situated interests, in this case a product of the constraints of competency, need be counterbalanced by the need of other stakeholders for self-realization. The collective assessment of the assumptions of technocratic reason would proceed from a critical assessment of the defense of privilege by the protagonists, opening avenues for the production of emancipatory knowledge. In this process of social learning, empowerment is the goal as stakeholders will be afforded the liberty to construct and exercise their subjectivities as they speak/participate.

An emancipatory and grounded model of planning would also further the democratic approach's goals of substantive participation. How network power, in the language of communicative action, can be nurtured at the expense of preexisting power relations becomes the crucial issue. The democratic process is substantiated as subjects learn how to identify forms of domination (systemic power) and assess their roles in their reproduction (pre-emptive power). As agents become more skillful in this effort, subjectivity is enhanced. Network power thus emerges as agents practice self-esteem and recognize the subjectivity

Type of planning	Traditional	Democratic	Equity or advocacy	Incremental
Political theory	Technocratic	Democratic	Socialist	Liberal
Who plans?	'Expert' planners	'The public'. In practice, those who can advance their interests.	Planners and community advancing the interests of the poor, racial, or ethnic minorities.	Non-planning. Policy-makers weighting marginal advantages of a limited number of alternatives for the short run.
Type of process	Top-down	Participatory: allowing 'all' voices to be heard.	Bottom-up or representative. Participation (of excluded groups) is an ideal but not a necessary condition.	Step by step, working out compromises among a multitude of interests. Atomized decision-making.
Objectives	Rational, scientific planning	Process (who governs?) is more important than results. Acting in the public interest: rule of the majority.	Results (who gets what?) are more important than process. Increasing equity, examining the distribution of costs and benefits.	Small or incremental changes from existing policies.
Conflicts	Planners are not free from class or special interest biases, so they end up serving particular social interests, generally fitting the predispositions of the upper classes.	Popular will can conflict with the interest of deprived groups. Dilemma: is there a genuine democracy without the representation of the interests of typically excluded groups?	Equity planning is not always democratic, since it will favor redistributional goals even in the absence of a supportive public.	Ends and means are not formulated, so decision-makers may not work out means to achieve socially desirable goals. Strategies to cope, but not to solve problems.

Source: Elaborated by the author from Fainstein and Fainstein (1996).

of others (Touraine, 1997). The grounding of the ideal of network power in the notion of the pursuit of both 'small opportunities' and larger identity projects makes for a sustainable linking of means and ends as survival of the

cooperative setup becomes hinged not only on procedural effectiveness, as the democratic approach would have it, but on the achievement of equitable and long-lasting results.

A renewed focus on the emancipatory aims of planning would also imply a revisionist assessment of the advocacy approach. Traditionally invested in the promotion of *outcomes* of social equity, the advocacy model has less to say about the procedural aspects of the planning *process* itself. Through social learning, a more inclusive, participatory process would be able to accommodate varying viewpoints without losing sight of the goals of social equity. The practice of advocacy, currently carrying adversarial undertones, would be subsumed under a more general effort to cultivate trust and reciprocity between stake-holders. The ideals of equity can be furthered through the pursuit of 'small opportunities', as these repeated engagements help build social and human capital, which are instrumental to the generation and reproduction of network power.

Incrementalism will always exist in our imperfect world of power differen-tials, scarce resources, and bounded rationality. In liberal capitalist societies such as the US, incrementalism is arguably the most prevalent of the planning approaches (even though many consider it non-planning), and is frequently an explicit or implicit constituent of otherwise traditional, democratic, and advocacy processes. An emancipatory planning approach purposely grounded in the dynamics of coalition building and nurturing would strive to turn incrementalism into a productive force that furthers social learning. As mentioned earlier, acknowledging and addressing the sources of stakeholders' 'narrow cognition' should be invested in furthering social learning, as agents become more mindful and inclusive of network power, emancipatory knowl-edge, empowering subjectivities, and the creation of spaces of solidarity.

Postscript

This article is an attempt to inform communicative action theory with relevant insights from regime theory, and to bring governance and urban planning theorizing synergistically closer to each other for thicker understandings of planning dynamics and for expanding capacity for emancipatory planning action. It is proposed that important common threads – power, knowledge, subjectivity, and space – are useful in weaving a meaningful comparison between the two theories and suggesting the transformation of commonplace planning approaches – traditional, democratic, equity, and incremental – by reconnecting them to the emancipatory ideals of communicative action theory and the equity ideals of regime theory.

Much research has been done on models of urban governance and planning in the US and beyond, and thus many defining features, strengths, and weak-nesses of both regime theory and communicative action have been given extensive exposure. Much less research has been done to put in productive conversation models of urban governance and planning in general, and regime theory and communicative action in particular. On the latter, this article has

identified relevant complementarities that point to rich opportunities for cross-fertilization. The signaling of this potential, however, does not mean to downplay the difficulties of reflecting on the models on a comparative basis, in particular given the fact that their theoretical nature differ. Nonetheless, despite the pitfalls and differences among these theories, there are promising possibilities in planning if communicative action were to strengthen and broaden its focus with tools of both theoretical and methodological political analysis derived from regime theory, creating richer and more productive planning and governance models for practice. In addition, the enrichment of communicative action by the redressing of its current flaws – and particularly its a-spatial framework – offers potential for a vast and productive area of research, and a promising tool for the enhancement of urban governance and planning practices in the United States and beyond. Since coalition and network politics are at the center of urban planning and governance practices, regime theory can be instrumental in analyzing the status of the civic capacity of urban communities and formulating productive reform. Simultaneously, communicative action can be synergistically strengthened by the contributions of this governance model in a way that normative and empirical theories become imbricated for the development of novel strategies for analyzing urban governance and planning experiences and conducting them in more democratic, equitable, and efficient ways.

This article does not claim the establishment of a new paradigm. Rather, the more humble contribution is in providing a layout with which to start thinking more systematically about the interrelations between governance and planning, and propose bridges that enhance our understanding and contribute to more effective use of and construction of power, knowledge, subjectivity, and space. It is hoped that this should guide planning theory and practice to capitalize on their potential by empowering planning stakeholders and facilitators to strive for achieving network power, emancipatory knowledge, empowering subjectivities, and spaces of solidarity.

Notes
1. In general, regime theorists use positivist assumptions and assumptions about the relative dominance of capitalist structure over agency, while communicative action theorists tend to be social constructionists who believe in the importance of individual agency and the potential for planning to be a transformative activity. In this context, communicative action theorists can be informed by the findings of regime theory about how power is exercised, as they concentrate their work on the ways that governance can be changed with new practices.

2. I concur with Davies (2001), however, that the goals of the regime theory's 'founding fathers' are also ultimately normative, as illustrated in Stone's concerns with social equity and Elkin's with elucidating the foundations for good governance in the 'commercial republic'.

3. The elitist and growth machine models predict that a resourceful private sector sets agendas for relatively weak political actors. The pluralist model highlights the strength of public leaders in bringing together mixed, diffuse, and sometimes competitive private actors. The hyper-pluralist model proposes economic diffuseness and ubiquitous political attenuation (Savitch and Clayton Thomas, 1991a: 247–8).

4. Elkin (1987) combines empirical and normative strands of political science to make statements about what cities are, can, and should be. Rejecting the idea that the goals of equality and efficiency are opposed to one another, he argues that a commercial republic could achieve both through appropriate urban political institutions that help to form the citizenry. For Elkin, the current institutions largely define citizens as interest group adversaries and do little to encourage them to focus on the commercial public interest of the city. He proposes new institutional arrangements that would be better able to harness the self-interested behavior of individuals for the common good of a commercial republic.

5. Habermas's theory of communicative action is based on speech-act philosophy, sociolinguistics, and a critique of positivism.

6. For further elaboration on the concept of 'critical pragmatism', please refer to Forester (1980) and Verma and Shin (2004).

7. Other communicative action theoreticians would not call this a new paradigm, as they see continuity between their ideas and their precedents (Forester, 1999a; Hoch, 1996; Verma and Shin, 2004).

8. Network power, Booher and Innes argue (2002: 225–6), is the most effective power in the informational age, which 'emerges as diverse participants in a network focus on a common task and develop shared meanings and common heuristics that guide their actions'.

9. Booher and Innes (2002: 226) explain that diversity should be 'consistent with the full range of interests and knowledge relevant to the issues at hand'.

10. Castells's example of a project identity is radical feminism, which not only challenges patriarchy but the overall patriarchal order of society.

11. Linked to the Habermasian concept of emancipatory knowledge, emancipatory rationality goes beyond practical rationality as stakeholders come to 'see beyond the accepted rationalizations in a society and the assumptions that interfere with insights' (Booher and Innes, 2002: 228).

12. 'Situated self interest' is based upon the notion of 'situated knowledge' developed by feminist theorist Haraway (1991). She suggests that each individual has a different interpretation of any situation or issue and thus different understanding of it.

13. Many other planning typologies have been proposed, see for example, Allmendinger (2002), Friedmann (1987), Innes and Gruber (2005) or Sager (1993). I select the Fainsteins' typology here because it provides a 'practical tool for the empirical analysis of actual planning-governance case studies' (Irazábal, 2005: 59).

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