



*Transformative Spatial Governance: New Avenues for Comprehensive Planning in
Fragmented Urban Development*
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Transformative Spatial Governance: New Avenues for Comprehensive Planning in Fragmented Urban Development

Abstract (English)

Urban development is fragmenting: Entrepreneurial planning strategies involving a wide range of actors have been replacing managerial public sector-led approaches. While scholars lament the dissolution of social and spatial interventions, disconnected property-driven projects, as well as multifaceted social initiatives, are mushrooming in cities. This dissertation seeks a new approach to create forms of comprehensiveness amidst the complex spatial governance practices underpinning fragmented urban development. It stipulates the need for a new conception of comprehensiveness based on the creation of possibilities for linkages between fragmented city-building endeavours. Furthermore, it argues that transformative spatial governance structures are pivotal to allow city-building endeavours to flourish and simultaneously place them into firm but flexible and adaptive frameworks to avoid fragmentation's negative effects and externalities. Spatial governance is considered transformative when its institutional patterns change on the basis of concrete, area-based city-building endeavours. To this end, the dissertation identifies and engages with a recent body of literature that centres around transformation and structural change in planning and governance. A systematic review of existing literature reveals the neglect of private sector actors as elements in instigating scholars' desired structural changes. Therefore, this dissertation distinctly considers property-driven development formations as instigators of structural change and explores their linkages to micro-scale social efforts. Toronto in Canada and Amsterdam in the Netherlands serve as research settings. The analysis suggests that public sector planners can crucially influence urban development, not in the traditional sense of being in command but by creating possibilities for linkages between fragmented actions in spatial governance.

Summary (English)

Urban development is fragmenting: Entrepreneurial planning strategies involving a wide range of actors have been replacing managerial public sector-led approaches. While scholars lament the dissolution of social and spatial interventions, disconnected opportunity-driven development projects are mushrooming in cities. Moreover, multifaceted initiatives - enhanced by shifts in public policy towards active citizenship and self-responsibilisation - adjust, or become more vocal about their claims to, the built environment in line with explicit social objectives. This dynamic form of contemporary urban development characterised by the sheer complexity and multitude of fragmented efforts stands in stark contrast to modernist ideals of comprehensive planning, in which public sector planners imagined themselves in a position of ultimate control. Nonetheless, the desire for comprehensiveness in planning remains strong.

This dissertation seeks a new approach to create forms of comprehensiveness amidst the complex spatial governance practices underpinning fragmented urban development. Neoliberal transformations are considered as a cause of institutional fragmentation in wider *spatial governance* structures, allowing diverse sets of actors and organisations to come together in delineated development formations. These formations are conceptualised as *city-building endeavours* and shed light on how actors' close-knit interactions and relationships increasingly blur the boundaries between public, private and civil society sectors. Existing literature, however, exhibits a compartmentalised engagement with fragmentation and particularly approaches property-driven projects and social initiatives either as entirely separately, or automatically treats them as inherent adversaries. It is not advocated for a reversion to modernist comprehensive planning principles. Instead, the dissertation stipulates the need for a new conception of comprehensiveness that is based on the creation of possibilities for linkages between fragmented city-building endeavours, as well as between these endeavours and wider spatial governance. Conceptually, the notion of *transformative spatial governance* is modelled, understanding spatial governance as transformative when its institutional patterns change on the basis of concrete, area-based city-building endeavours. It is argued that this form of transformation is pivotal to uphold a spatial governance structure that allows city-building endeavours to flourish and simultaneously places them into a firm but flexible and adaptive framework to avoid fragmentation's negative effects and externalities.

To this end, the dissertation identifies and engages with a recent body of literature that centres around transformation and structural changes in planning and governance, stemming from scholars' discontent with contemporary processes of neoliberalisation: The fact that public sector planners and planning organisations both interact with and participate in variegated city-building endeavours, which can have various and contradictory objectives, is considered as a major source of the prevalent sentiment in scholarly literature that planning practice is losing its grip and substance. However, the literature's scattered occurrence, use of different terminology and multiple assumptions, not always clearly articulated, diminish its potential to develop into a distinct research area. Additionally, a systematic review of these accounts reveals the neglect of private sector actors as important elements in bringing about the scholars' desired transformations.

Therefore, this dissertation distinctly considers property-driven development formations as instigators of structural change and explores their linkages to micro-scale social efforts. Toronto in Canada and Amsterdam in the Netherlands, as well as their respective planning systems, serve as research settings in which the analyses of this cumulative dissertation take place. Utilising hermeneutics as methodological underpinning allowed for a continuous shift between, and a combined analysis of, existing planning practices and normative theorising in the research design, data collection and analysis. Furthermore, hermeneutics emphasises the context-embedded nature of social relations and context-specific interpretation of social phenomena, while allowing for a rigorous scientific analysis. The adopted institutional perspective provides an understanding of the elements and conditions that turn some, but not all, endeavours into 'game changers' by altering existing spatial governance arrangements.

In Toronto, the focus lies on the role of space in creating linkages between microscale social efforts in the disadvantaged low-income area Jane-Finch, as well as on a comparative analysis of Jane-Finch and the inner-city neighbourhood Regent Park. The former reveals how different spaces carry important community but also commercial functions for local entrepreneurs through which linkages are created and relationships established, and provides an explanation for the lack of systematic spatial interventions despite their potential to amplify the impact of social efforts. The latter unravels conditions for the creation of linkages between property driven developments and community concerns from a public policy perspective by comparing divergent institutional arrangements and actor constellations in two areas: one commercially viable for and one unattractive to private property development. In Amsterdam, the focus lies on the creation of linkages through intangible learning transfers of public sector project managers, gained through their interaction with property industry actors. The empirical analysis discerns the obstacles faced by project managers operating in a context which on the one hand is characterised by flexibilization, institutional fragmentation and the accommodation of private sector interests, and on the other hand by a tightening regulatory framework in relation to the production of housing at the municipal level.

Despite their path-dependent and contingent nature, it is found that *spatial governance* in Toronto and Amsterdam accommodates fragmentation through complex and dynamic relationships between various actors, whose roles extended beyond traditional or stereotypical perceptions. The involvement of private sector actors and wider state-market relationships in land and property emerge as crucial pre-conditions for *city-building endeavours* to develop alternative institutional relations that were not marginalised but actively incorporated in overarching arrangements. Hence, the development of new forms of collaboration between private property and other actors in area-specific developments, and particularly their connection to micro-scale social efforts, should be at the core of attempts to restore substance in planning.

The dissertation provides new impulses and perspectives on the basis of which planning scholars and practitioners can initiate action. Highlighting spatial governance complexities illustrates that fragmented urban development is neither the fault of the individual planner, nor entirely the result of a neoliberalising spatial governance structure that lies entirely out of the control of social agents. The analysis suggests that public planners can crucially influence urban development, not in the traditional sense by being in command but by creating possibilities for linkages between fragmented actions in spatial governance. The substance of planning, it is argued, can be found in fragmentation. It requires, however, that practitioners drop outdated ideals of comprehensive planning and shift their approach to the creation of linkages; it is the planning scholars' task to support them in this pursuit: the transformations which scholars desire in planning practice require concurrent evolution in planning thought.

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