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Institutional Gaps in Agonistic and Communicative Planning Theories. Critical Implications of the 'Systemic Turn' in Deliberative Democracy Theory

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Abstract

The paper critically reviews communicative and agonistic planning theories from the viewpoint of a systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory. While the approach reveals complementarities between the theories, it also argues that each theory is vulnerable to criticism because of an 'institutional gap'. The theories are found to complement each other in addressing planning conflicts at different dimensions. Communicative planning theory deals with conflicts between different stakeholders' interests in planning processes. Agonistic planning theory, in turn, concentrates on conflicts from a more ontological dimension, related to the (implicit) conflict between hegemonic and marginalized discourses and related identity-forming processes of inclusion and exclusion in planning policies and governance. The institutional gap of communicative planning theory is argued to reside in its focus on situational deliberation that largely ignores the institutional dimension of rules and norms of democratic conduct. Agonistic pluralism, in turn, does engage with the dimension of democratic institutions, but in an overly critical manner, making it difficult for agonistic planning theory to address the dynamic interplay between institutional reconfiguration and policy stabilization in planning. This is argued to be the institutional gap of agonistic planning theory. The paper calls for further work in the field of planning theory to incorporate a systemic approach to deliberative democracy and thereby tap into the dialectics of institutional and situational dimensions of planning.

Keywords: Conflict ▪ Consensus ▪ Democratic institution ▪ Hegemonic discourse ▪ Situational deliberation

Institutionelle Lücken in agonistischen und kommunikativen Planungstheorien. Kritische Implikationen der „systemischen Wende" in der Theorie der deliberativen Demokratie

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Beitrag werden kommunikative und agonistische Planungstheorien aus der Perspektive einer systemischen Wende in der Theorie der deliberativen Demokratie kritisch aufgearbeitet. Während der Ansatz Komplementaritäten zwischen den Theorien aufzeigt, wird auch klar, dass jede Theorie aufgrund einer „institutionellen Lücke" anfällig für Kritik ist. Es wird festgestellt, dass sich die Theorien bei der Behandlung von Planungskonflikten auf verschiedenen Ebenen gegenseitig ergänzen. Die kommunikative Planungstheorie befasst sich mit Konflikten zwischen den Interessen der verschiedenen Akteure in Planungsprozessen. Die agonistische Planungstheorie wiederum konzentriert sich auf Konflikte aus einer eher ontologischen Perspektive, die mit dem (impliziten) Konflikt zwischen hegemonialen und marginalisierten Diskursen

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und den damit verbundenen identitätsbildenden Prozessen der Inklusion und Exklusion in Planungspolitik und Governance zusammenhängen. Die institutionelle Lücke der kommunikativen Planungstheorie entsteht durch den Fokus der Theorie auf situative Deliberation, die die institutionelle Dimension von Regeln und Normen demokratischen Verhaltens weitgehend ignoriert. Der agonistische Pluralismus wiederum setzt sich zwar mit der Dimension der demokratischen Institutionen auseinander, jedoch in einer allzu kritischen Weise, welche es der agonistischen Planungstheorie erschwert, das dynamische Wechselspiel zwischen institutioneller Rekonfiguration und politischer Stabilisierung in der Planung zu thematisieren. Dies wird als die institutionelle Lücke der agonistischen Planungstheorie gesehen. Der Beitrag ermutigt zu weiteren planungstheoretischen Arbeiten, die einen systemischen Ansatz zur deliberativen Demokratie einbeziehen und damit die Dialektik von institutionellen und situativen Dimensionen der Planung erschließen.

Schlüsselwörter: Konflikt ▪ Konsens ▪ Demokratische Institution ▪ Hegemonialer Diskurs ▪ Situative Deliberation

1 Introduction

The critical debate between communicative and agonistic planning theories has a history of 20 years. Initially, agonistic planning theory, building on Chantal Mouffe's agonistic democracy theory, distinguished itself from communicative planning theory by building on conflict as the basic condition of planning, instead of consensus. However, the later development of communicative planning theory has made this distinction rather obsolete, as the centrality of conflict and the remoteness of consensus have been acknowledged there, too. When viewed in relation to developments in democracy theory, this theoretical distinction was not initially clear, and now some even argue that communicative and agonistic planning theories should not be held as mutually alternative but as complementary (Bond 2011; see also Pløger 2018).

In this paper, our main focus is not on the exclusiveness or complementarity of the theories *per se*, but on the biases that they both have regarding their conceptualization of institutions of democratic planning. With institutions of democratic planning, we refer to patterns of formal and informal norms held in society, including legislation and deep-seated cultural values, that condition and legitimize democratic conduct in planning and related public governance. As we aim to argue in our theoretical study, communicative and agonistic planning theories both have 'institutional gaps', which are differently located.

As regards communicative planning theory, the institutional gap lies in the theory's focus on situational deliberative processes, which tend to overlook the role of public norms that condition and legitimize these processes. In turn, agonistic democracy theory *does* connect to the dimension of democratic institutions, but in an overly critical way – pointing to the need for an institutional reform, to better engage marginalized actors and ways of political action. Drawing on this theory, agonistic planning theory has difficulties in capturing the dynamic interplay between institutional reform and stabilizing policy actions.

In building our argument, we address the systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory. It appears to incorporate agonism into a broader theoretical framework of deliberative democracy. This theoretical project acknowledges the crucial role of agonism in opening the political realm to marginalized forms of political action and activism on various platforms of mini-publics. On the other hand, the systemic turn emphasizes the role of democratic institutions in structuring deliberative processes and leading them to closure in the form of political decisions. Thereby this theoretical project highlights the limitations of agonistic democracy and its scepticism about the institutional orders of politics that it dismisses, despite their stabilizing and enabling role which is essential for a democracy.

In this paper, we discuss this critical approach to agonistic democracy theory, in relation to its implications to planning theory. The systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory reveals the need to develop communicative planning theory further, too, as regards the latter's approach to institutions of democratic planning. The paper points out that the two theories operate at essentially different levels: communicative planning theory at the policy level of everyday politics, and agonistic planning theory at the ontological level, where the realm of conflict (or consensus, equally) is the very system within which decisions are made in everyday politics. The systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory provides a viewpoint where the dynamic interplay between the two levels can be captured.

We begin our theoretical examination by discussing communicative and agonistic planning theories in relation to their sources of inspiration in democracy theory (Section 2). Next, we introduce the viewpoint of the systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory (Section 3), which we then utilize in critically discussing the institutional gaps in both agonistic and communicative planning theories, each in turn (Section 4). Finally, we indicate a direction for the further development of democracy-promoting planning theory, in view of the insights drawn from the systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory (Section 5).

2 Communicative and Agonistic Planning Theories and Their Origins in Democracy Theory

Since the late 1990s, communicative planning theory has been criticized for its focus on consensus (e.g. Tewdwr-Jones/Allmendinger 1998; McGuirk 2001; Mäntysalo 2002; Bengs 2005; Purcell 2009). With its reliance on the Habermas-inspired idea of consensus to provide legitimacy to political decisions, it has been claimed to be idealistic, utopian, even naïve, in the face of the power struggles, structural domination and organizational complexities of actual planning practices. Particular criticism of this focus on consensus has been voiced by agonistic planning theory, which draws on Mouffe's (2000; 2005; 2013) agonistic democracy theory. Mouffe abandons the Habermasian idea of political discourse as communicative action that depends on a certain type of rationality or reason to provide legitimacy. On the contrary, she turns this notion upside down, claiming that there is no foundation of reason or rationality for political action, such as Habermas's (1984) communicative rationality, to provide general criteria for seeking consensus. Instead, according to Mouffe, the essence of politics is dissensus: constitutive antagonism between adversaries that cannot be bridged by imposing an allegedly universal model of reasoning or rational communication as a basis for political deliberation. Reasonings behind a claim may be raised in political debates, but, for Mouffe, no form of reasoning is given a fundamental role. Assuming any given model of reasoning to be universally valid in political action, assuming it to enable a search for consensus, and assuming it to legitimize political action when motivated by this search, is thereby viewed as domination. Any political consensus that draws on a certain notion of rational communication would marginalize those political voices that do not subscribe to this, if any, notion of rationality as their ontological basis. According to Mouffe (2000), such consensus is inclined to push genuine political conflicts outside the political arena and thereby make our society vulnerable to extreme movements and groups that choose to bypass the democratic system and influence political decisions by other means. Hence, any consensus thus derived would be illegitimate. What, instead, ought to be acknowledged as the legitimate circumstances of political action is irrevocable dissensus.

What is to be done, then, to deal with this dissensus? In agonistic pluralism, according to Mouffe, each political actor respectfully acknowledges the others' different stances to issues, thereby 'domesticating' their mutual antagonisms into agonistic relations of respectful and open dialogue that is not pressured by the idea of reaching closure through consensus. This argumentation also forms the basis of agonistic planning theorists' critique of communicative planning theory and the latter's reliance on the notion of consensus.

The first planning theorist to take steps towards agonistic planning theory was Hillier (2002; 2003). In her view, agonism in planning means that the actors may find certain planning issues agreeable while respectfully agreeing to disagree on other issues (Hillier 2002: 254–255). However, this notion reveals that Hillier is not only following Mouffian agonism but also fusing newer ideas of deliberative democracy theory into her argumentation. She was influenced especially by Gutmann and Thompson (1996) who proposed the idea of situated agreement instead of 'universal consensus' as the goal of deliberatively democratic conduct, and, as a last resort, the idea of merely agreeing to disagree. Indeed, deliberative democracy theory has shifted from the early Habermasian and Rawlsian notions of taking consensus as the normative justification of deliberative democracy. Instead of focusing on the societal grounding of deliberative democracy, it has turned its attention to how arguments can be publicly justified in situational contexts, and how the sources of justification can be identified varyingly in such circumstances, including even non-deliberative mechanisms, such as mutually reciprocal bargaining or negotiation, or voting on an irreconcilable issue between cooperative antagonists. Accordingly, the conception of reasoning has expanded to incorporate, besides morally or factually vindicated argumentation, also other forms of conveying meaning, such as expressing emotions (also non-verbally), giving testimony, storytelling, rhetorical persuasion, drafting scenarios and everyday talk (Hendriks 2009; Elstub 2010; Mansbridge/Bohman/Chambers et al. 2010; Mansbridge/Bohman/Chambers et al. 2012).

Arguably, such a more practical approach to deliberative democracy has characterized communicative planning theorists' work since the early days. Similarly, Habermas was not their sole source of theoretical inspiration, as they also drew on pragmatism[1], Giddensian structuration theory[2] and complexity theory[3] to reach a better conceptual balance between deliberative ideals and practical difficulties in the political processes of planning. Thus, they had no illusions of consensus as an achievable target in planning. It was rather used as a yardstick for identifying unnecessary use of power in planning, while maintaining alertness to the different understandings and social-cultural backgrounds of the different stakeholders (Forester 1989; Healey 1992).

Furthermore, even Habermas himself has maintained that

[1] especially Forester (1989) and Forester (1993) on Schön and Simon; Sager (1994) on Lindblom.

[2] Healey (1992), Healey (1997).

[3] especially Innes and Booher (1999).

consensus is not a goal that can be reached in practice, but that it is to be taken as a counter-factual yet unavoidable ideal that legitimizes certain normative criteria for a rational discourse. In addition, even though the standard reading of Habermas has given considerable weight to the consensus-orientation in Habermas's philosophy, there are also Habermas scholars who argue that Habermas could be just as well read as a theorist who encourages the public to challenge the established consensuses in society with rational arguments (White/Farr 2012; see also Chambers 1995; Mattila 2020). As recent research on communicative planning theory has shown (Mattila 2020), Habermasian philosophy should not be seen as portraying rational deliberation primarily in terms of a consensus-building process but rather as "an unending process of contestation" (Markell 1997: 378).

Therefore, even though the distinction between consensus- and dissensus-driven approaches may appear as rather clear-cut in Mouffe's political-philosophical attack on the Habermasian (and Rawlsian) initial groundwork of deliberative democracy theory, it is revealed to be much less so when Mouffe's ideas are related to later developments of deliberative democracy theory, and especially when their implications for planning theory are outlined (Bond 2011). The ideas of agonistic and deliberative democracy theory were already fused at the outset of agonistic planning theory development, with the main focus on respectful dealing with planning conflicts, probing opportunities for situational agreements or reconciliations in planning processes, and maintaining alertness to power implications when arranging participatory planning processes (e.g. Hillier 2002; Gunder 2003; Hillier 2003; Pløger 2004; Bäcklund/Mäntysalo 2010; Mäntysalo/Balducci/Kangasoja 2011; Mouat/Legacy/March 2013). A more recent theoretical analysis of agonistic democracy theory and its planning-theoretical implications by Bond (2011) rather seeks to argue for the complementarity of agonistic and communicative planning theories.

Be that as it may, our focus is on the insufficiency of both agonistic and communicative planning theories, even if taken together. As we aim to reveal through our theoretical examination, each theory has an institutional gap. The institutional gap of communicative planning theory lies in its concentration on situational deliberation that overlooks the institutional dimension of public norms of democratic conduct.[4] While agonistic planning theory, in turn, does address the institutional dimension, its own institutional gap lies in the critical stance of agonism to institutions, hindering the theory from constructively approaching the dynamic interplay between institutional reconfiguration and policy stabilization in planning.

3 The Systemic Turn in Deliberative Democracy Theory and the Institutional Gap of Agonism

Mouffe's main motivation in advancing agonistic pluralism stems from viewing political consensus not as a broad agreement reached, but as an indication of a hegemonic discourse that is prone to depoliticize its fundamental ideological choices, treating them as taken-for-granted truths and commonsense views. Neoliberal political ideology is representative of such a contemporary hegemonic discourse, as it takes competitiveness and economic growth as self-evident frames for identifying issues and agencies, and institutionalizes managerialism as a model for efficient public governance. In Mouffe's view, such institutionalization of consensus politics needs to be replaced by political action that can reach beyond the boundaries of the prevailing regime and those it identifies as stakeholders, to the marginalized actors and their alternative views. The political system needs to be able to absorb genuine antagonism, even protests and passionate expressions of will (such as the Occupy Movement and Greenpeace campaigns, or demonstrations, public banners and boycotts) outside the conventional forums of politics, to avoid extremism in its divisive excesses. Some kind of re-institutionalization of politics is therefore necessary to allow antagonism to challenge hegemonic discourses that maintain the political status quo, and, further, to encourage a move from antagonism to mutually respectful agonism between adversaries, not enemies.

[4] Here we make a distinction between theories of collaborative planning and theories of collaborative governance, the latter usually having an institutional dimension. Collaborative governance theories typically start from the assumption that collaborative governance practices should be institutionalized in public sector decision-making and led by public sector organizations (Ansell/Gash 2008). Those who are in favour of early-Habermasian versions of communicative planning theory have been critical of this model, because Habermasian thinking entails a juxtaposition between the public and the state. Early Habermasian philosophy thus suggests that public participation is likely to lose its critical edge when merged with the formal decision-making structures of the state and managed by the public sector organizations (Huxley 2000; see also Mattila 2020). This suggestion is reflected in many pioneering communicative planning theorists' critical distance to institutions – such as Forester's (1989) or Sager's (1994). However, the line between collaborative governance theory and communicative planning theory is not easy to draw. Patsy Healey and Judith Innes, for instance, have distanced themselves from Habermasian planning theory over time, adopting the aforementioned starting points of collaborative governance theory.

According to Metzger (2018: 183), this reformist approach to the institutional order of the political system distinguishes Mouffe from the other two main political philosophers of postpolitics. While Mouffe is seeking to reconfigure the institutional order, Jacques Rancière aims to constantly disrupt it, and Slavoj Žižek wants to overthrow it once and for all. However, Mouffe is quite vague on how the political system ought to be reconfigured. Some sort of institutionalization seems to be needed for safeguarding the normative principles of liberty and equality on which agonistic relations of mutual respect rely. Although Mouffe denounces the idea of *rational* consensus, she does acknowledge that a basic consensus is needed on the institutions constitutive of democracy that uphold its key ethical-political values (Mouffe 2005: 31; Mouffe 2013: 7). Understood as "floating signifiers" (Bond 2011: 169), the concepts of liberty and equality are subject to varying approaches and interpretations, so that there is perpetual 'conflictual consensus' about their implementation, but as fundamental democratic principles they are not to be questioned: "The pluralism that I advocate requires discriminating between demands which are to be accepted as part of the agonistic debate and those which are to be excluded. A democratic society cannot treat those who put its basic institutions into question as legitimate adversaries" (Mouffe, 2005: 120). "Adversaries do fight – even fiercely – but according to a shared set of rules [...]" (Mouffe 2005: 52).

While safeguarding liberty and equality for political engagement, the institutional rules would need to afford the emergence of informal and everyday spheres for non-established actors to express emotion and anger, and contest pre-given conceptions of the 'common good', as forms of legitimate democratic action. However, Mouffe offers little guidance as to how this could be achieved in practice (Bond 2011). Arguably, this is also the main reason why agonistic planning theory has not matured during the past twenty years into a proactive normative theory on what ought to be done to make planning agonistic in practice.[5]

More than she would like to admit, Mouffe's ethical-political principles reflect her commitment to basic ideas similar to those held in traditional constitutional democracy theory (Moroni 2019: 10). As an example of correspondence, Bond (2011) mentions Seyla Benhabib whose work draws on similar ethical-political stances of liberty, equality and reciprocity, rooted in centuries of political-philosophical discourse. However, whereas Benhabib and other deliberative democracy theorists have offered guidelines on how these principles could be achieved in practice, Mouffe is prevented from doing so, due to her broader understanding of political action that embraces direct action, protest and informal collectivities alongside institutional forms of democracy.

The most recent 'systemic turn' in deliberative democracy theory aims to broaden the view of the democratic system to such spheres. Whereas deliberative democracy theorists have usually avoided the inclusion of non-deliberative forms of political action in their theorization, such as protesting and other forms of direct action, the systemic view takes a broader look at such instances from the contextual point of view of the democratic system. Instead of focusing on their democratic qualities as isolated events or arrangements, this approach examines them as subsystems that influence the democratic system as a whole. What may appear as a non-deliberative political phenomenon in its own terms, may contribute positively to the deliberativeness of the whole system of democracy (Mansbridge/Bohman/Chambers et al. 2012). A protest event or a (social-)media-utilizing pressure group may bring to light grievances in the institutionalized arrangements of public forums and conventional understandings of interest and agency formation in different political themes – much like Mouffe has pointed out.

On the other hand – and this is less pronounced in Mouffe's rhetoric – the institutional rules on liberal, equal and reciprocal democratic conduct are there to foster critical observation of possible biases of various mini-publics, regarding their constellation, inclusiveness, jurisdiction, issue coverage, etc. Thereby the different subsystems of the democratic system, at micro and macro scales of democracy, can be seen to perform reciprocally as platforms for critiquing and improving the deliberative quality of one another. According to Mansbridge/Bohman/Chambers et al. (2012: 2), the systemic approach enables the overcoming of problems of scale in deliberative democracy theory. It expands the focus of analysis beyond an individual site, be

[5] According to Kühn (2021: 154), the "[...] main weaknesses of agonistic approaches are that they have not learned from the failure of conflict moderation and mediation approaches in the past, they do not discuss tools or procedures for dealing with conflict, and for these reasons they are not able to show ways for realizing agonistic planning in practice." The criticism is apt in many senses. However, it appears to approach the conflict between hegemonic and marginalized discourses as if it were a dispute at the level of everyday politics and thus solvable. Insisting on a resolution of conflicts that are ineradicable indicates a confusion of levels. Indeed, everyday politics is much about cooperation, reconciling different interests and seeking a satisfactory agreement. In turn, antagonisms at the ontological level of 'the political' (Mouffe 2000; Mouffe 2005) have the potential to render visible alternatives in terms of discourses, practices and structures – everything that (re)produces the framework for everyday politics in which planning is done and situational agreements are sought.

it face-to-face or in parliamentary deliberation, and also allows the study of deliberations that develop between these sites over time.

A common assumption has been that the more local the realm of deliberation is, the better the opportunities for deliberative democracy (see also Purcell 2006). But, the closer your relations to your fellow deliberators are, the more difficult it is to distance yourself from narrowly formed and self-regarded interests. As Mansbridge's (1983) studies reveal, reaching agreement appears easier in local and small groups than in large groups with more impersonal interaction, but often the reason for this is the wish to avoid disagreement that is feared to jeopardize existing and future friendships. People may thereby hold back good arguments to avoid being rejected by their local or ideological community. Herein lies the problem with Healey's version of communicative planning. Her theory relies on the conception of deliberating subjects, who are embedded in local cultures and values. As such, Healey is not willing to superimpose more generally valid, institutionalized or institutionalizable norms on deliberating local publics (Healey 1992; Mattila 2016). The 'systemic' perspective, in turn, views these mini-publics in relation to larger scale democratic bodies and institutional norms that constrain and enable their democratic processes (Mansbridge/Bohman/Chambers et al. 2012; Moore 2017).

Interestingly, the systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory builds on Habermas's later work (Habermas 1996; see also Mattila 2020) where he presented a 'two-track' idea of deliberative democracy, combining the informal spheres of deliberation among 'weak' publics and formal legislative deliberation (e.g. Mansbridge/Bohman/Chambers et al. 2012; Moore 2017). While problems are identified in the informal spheres of deliberation, in Habermas's (1996: 306–308) view, they ought to be decided upon by formal bodies of decision-making in the 'procedurally regulated' public spheres, such as parliaments. Highlighting the dual role of the institution of law as both demanding obedience to its norms and asking for their legitimation from its subjects, Habermas aims to settle theoretically the uneasy relationship between the public realm and democratic institutional structures, with an understanding that in practice this relationship would need constant re-settling.[6] Thereby he approaches deliberative democracy as structured dynamics between the informal realm of public opinion formation, on the one hand, and the parliamentary institutions of will-formation, on the other hand.

The informal realm of public opinion formation is crucial to enable constant evaluation and criticism of the government by the governed. It has several democratic effects: forming new issues and identities, enabling critical scrutiny of democratic institutions and institutionalized policy processes, and requiring justification from political authorities (Moore 2017: 106, 111). There is no ultimate consensus regarding beliefs on human ends and values, and citizen empowerment is necessary to enable public discourse on these. However, according to Moore (2017: 61), this is precisely why it is also necessary to submit to common rules: "You should obey someone 'in' authority not because she is wise or right, but because she has been put 'in authority' by an established procedure". The eventual authority to make decisions must rest with the people, exercised via the institutionalized democratic process.

According to Salet (2019), the public norms of democratic institutions are general in the sense of morally indicating 'what is appropriate and what is not', whereas situated deliberations in various political forums are about claims and actions. While contestation at both levels is necessary to tease out justifications, the actions of deliberation have to rely on the institutional norms of appropriateness: "[T]hey would run wild without simultaneous orientation on the ongoing institutionalization of public norms […]" (Salet 2019: 263).

The problem of agonism and similar ideas of democracy is that they downplay the crucial role of binding collective decisions by the formal institutions of representative government in the democratic process. The systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory brings them back into focus, addressing the very tension in the theory of democracy that, on the one hand, emphasizes the importance of political resistance, and, on the other hand, acknowledges the necessity of equipping democracies with formal powers of legitimate coercion (Moore 2017: 31, 180–186). Rather than being driven by resistance, such an approach aims to incorporate resistance into the democratic system. In this vein, "[…] when interests or values conflict irreconcilably, deliberation ideally ends not in consensus but in a clarification of conflict and structuring of disagreement, which sets the stage for a decision by non-deliberative methods, such as aggregation or negotiation among cooperative antagonists" (Mansbridge/Bohman/Chambers et al. 2010: 68). For Warren (1999), such a democratic system would rely on 'warranted trust' in its institutions by the citizenry; meaning the structuring of the institutions so as to provide transparency and tools for them to be challenged, including those positioned as authorities and trusted individuals.

Hence, the systemic approach to deliberative democracy reveals what Moore (2017: 112) calls the "agonistic bias" of the Mouffian discourse: "[…] a tendency to identify democracy itself with practices of critique and contestation and

[6] For Mouffe (2005), such a systemic attempt to reconcile the rule of law and democracy is fundamentally impossible (see also Mattila 2020: 21).

'opening up' of issues to public scrutiny". In the planning context, this normative project of politicizing existing policy orders could mean, for instance, being open to conflict in participatory planning processes and embracing dissensus as an opportunity for thinking differently (Bond 2011: 179). However, this project offers little guidance on how to reach closure at the other end of the process, in the form of actual decisions. In this sense, the agonistic understanding of democracy is both broad and narrow at the same time: its broader understanding of democracy enables reaching critically beyond formal liberal institutions and idealizations of deliberative democracy, but, at the same time, this critical focus is narrow in downplaying the role of democratic institutions in enabling legitimate functioning of decision-making processes. This "institutional gap" leaves it unclear how democratic institutions ought to be structured to fulfil the agonistic principles (Kühn 2021: 146). In turn, the systemic approach emphasizes the role of democratic institutions in structuring deliberative processes and enabling them to reach closure in the form of political decisions.

While a well-functioning democratic system needs to subject its institutional norms and rules to critical contestation by various informal publics, and make reforms when necessary to keep them in pace with societal development, these norms and rules also have a necessary function in providing institutional continuity for its decision-making. This is especially true for public planning. If, for Mouffe (2005: 18), each policy order is to be seen as a temporary and uncertain articulation of contingent practices, planning is still expected to provide an apparatus for closing contingencies and providing certainty and permanence (Pløger 2018: 270). Whereas agonistic policy is based on conflict and adversarial relations, planning, as part of public administration, in turn, is based on a need to reach agreement. According to Pløger (2018: 269), "[p]ublic planning is politically legitimized as a way to avoid endless disagreements". Kühn (2021: 153) argues similarly: "At the end of all planning, participation, and negotiation processes, there is inevitably a need for political decisions to be made". Agonistic planning theories attempt to employ a normative premise of turning conflict into a productive force towards justifiable decisions, but Kühn claims that these theories have failed to identify conditions under which conflict could become such a productive force. It is indeed the institutionalized rules acknowledged by the actors that are key for the realization of such conditions. As noted by Kühn (2021: 147): "Theoretical statements concerning the influence of institutionalized rules of planning procedure on the course of conflict are therefore necessary, but do not yet exist." According to him (Kühn 2021: 148), this is the "blind spot" of agonistic planning theories.

Does this apply to communicative planning theories as well?

4 The Institutional Gap of Communicative Planning Theory

Communicative planning theories have drawn on deliberative democracy theory, initially especially on Habermas's earlier work, but more recently also on later developments of the theory, especially regarding ideas on situational agreement (see Mäntysalo/Jarenko 2014). For example, Forester (1999; 2009; 2013) has moved on to study the practical skills and other resources that planners utilize when they mediate various controversial planning processes. He is interested in how planners use contextual opportunities in aiming for situational agreement, focusing on concrete planning solutions and their benefits. His shift of attention from general ethical-political principles to situational opportunities of communicative planning is aptly expressed in this quote: "Parties in conflict may disagree about what the Bible means and what their sense of the Creator requires of them, *and* they may nevertheless agree about where to place the stop signs on the roadway" (Forester 2009: 6, italics in the original).

Healey has somewhat similarly looked for contextual opportunities in actual planning cases dealing with conflicting interests. For her, a consolidating resource between the stakeholders may be the place they share as an object of planning. "What may unify people from diverse backgrounds is that they share a physical place in which they live and work, and they often share a concern for the future of this place, despite having different 'moral orders'" (Healey 1997: 124). In her more recent work on strategic spatial planning, she has further built on the idea of the resourcefulness of shared places, in forming "communities of inquiry" and mobilizing attention through collaborative strategic framing (Healey 2009: 448).

Healey's works are sometimes credited for having an institutional dimension, unlike other communicative planning theories, given that she uses the Giddensian agency/structure framework to indicate how local situated deliberations and networking generated in planning 'episodes' can trigger broader change in governance processes and cultures, while being also conditioned by the latter (March 2016; see also Healey 1997; 1999; 2003; 2004; 2006). Healey (1997) makes an important distinction between hard and soft infrastructures, both of which she deems necessary for collaborative planning. The hard infrastructure, which includes legal-administrative norms, is needed to manage power relations, so as to enable the emergence of horizontal spaces for situated deliberative planning dis-

courses. By soft infrastructure, Healey means the actual practices of collaborative planning. According to her, these practices ought to be shaped locally in accordance with the specific needs of the given conditions, and not determined by the generic rules of the hard infrastructure, which we here associate with the institutional dimension. Healey's (1997: 228–229) examinations on normative conditions for collaborative planning concern, e.g., rights and means of controlling the exercise of power, and as such they concern arrangements of public norms that we associate with democratic institutions (Heinilä/Pölönen/Belinskij 2021). Yet, even though standing out among communicative planning theorists in this respect, Healey's focus is more on 'organizations' than 'institutions' (see Moroni 2010; Mattila 2016: 360; Salet 2018a) as understood in this paper.

Similarly to Healey, Innes and Booher's (2010) theory of collaborative rationality builds on the Deweyan notion of community of inquiry, in a search for contextual opportunities for creativity and dialogue in each planning case. Inspired by research on complex adaptive systems, they perceive existing socio-institutional structures rather negatively, as frameworks that constrain spaces for more adaptive situational decision processes. Nonetheless, Innes and Booher also maintain that local dialogues and negotiations might lead to the later institutionalization of the successful collaborative practices, although the institutional level as such is not their main focus (see e.g. Booher/Innes 2002; Innes 2004).

Ultimately, the uneasiness of how communicative planning theory approaches the institutional dimension stems from Habermas's (1987) earlier lifeworld/system dialectic that conceives modern bureaucratic institutions and organizations as increasingly bypassing and distorting lifeworldly communicative action (Mattila/Heinilä 2022: 4). Thereby these instances are approached negatively as mechanisms that constrain deliberative public realms, both necessarily (to manage societal complexity) and unnecessarily (meaning illegitimate domination of the public realm by the government).

However, this attitude has made communicative planning theory vulnerable to criticism by agonists and other neo-Marxists, who claim that it neglects the workings of the structural forces that institutionalize hegemonic discourses, such as neoliberalism, underneath situational setups of deliberative planning processes (e.g., Bengs 2005; Purcell 2009; Gunder 2010; Allmendinger/Haughton 2013; Fainstein/Fainstein 2013). If the aim of the communicative planning theorists is to loosen institutional structuring mechanisms, perceived as the bureaucratic and paternalistic control of planning processes and civil society participation, it may inadvertently serve neoliberal interests. According to the neo-Marxist critique, the planning system is structurally inclined to facilitate growth and the accumulation of capital, and this status quo might only be advanced and further legitimized by communicative planning theory that focuses on situated deliberations and thereby neglects the role of institutional controls and guidelines. Then you may end up deliberating within the subtler frames set by the hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism.

Sager (2013) has addressed this criticism in his pursuit of 'reviving' communicative ('critical') planning theory. But his response, in seeking support for deliberative democracy in planning, does not really address the institutional level, but rather remains at the situational level of individual planning processes, by reconfiguring the planner's role. He devises a model of an activist planner whose task is to empower the weaker groups and thereby balance the power relations of the stakeholders and, at the same time, encourage deliberation between them. In Sager's view, planners ought to form alliances with radical civil society groups, to pressure powerful stakeholders, such as investors and developers, to come to the table and engage in 'real' deliberative processes.

While the communicative planning theorists' concentration on the situational planning contexts, and the planner's related role in advancing deliberation, has its merits, it misses the broader perspective offered by the most recent systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory. It neglects the enabling role that democratic institutions may have for deliberative democracy in the democratic system seen as a whole, even with its coercive functions (see Hytönen 2016; Puustinen/Mäntysalo/Hytönen et al. 2017). The approach of the systemic turn would be fruitful especially in tackling the agonistic and neo-Marxist critique discussed above, addressing not only situational resources but also institutional resources in advancing deliberative democracy in planning (see Mattila 2020: 23). The structural domination of hegemonic discourses cannot be properly counteracted at the situational level only, as it is a systemic phenomenon. As empirical research on the conduct of deliberative democracy also reveals, it is not the overt forms of domination in individual deliberative processes that pose the most difficult challenges in realizing deliberative democracy, but the subtle forms of structural domination that maintain inequalities and mechanisms of exclusion among participants and groups (Hendriks 2009). As argued by Hendriks (2009: 181): "The challenge for practitioners is to expand their efforts beyond designing out 'power-over' from micro deliberative forums, towards encouraging more generative forms of 'power-with' within the entire deliberative system."

5 Conclusion

This paper has reviewed differences and complementarities between communicative and agonistic planning theories in relation to the development of democracy theory and especially the most recent systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory. In view of the recent developments of both planning theories, it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of the simple consensus/conflict distinction, as both communicative and agonistic planning theories are concerned with handling conflicts. The difference is rather in the type, or level, of conflict addressed. For communicative planning theory, the conflicts discussed are essentially conflicts between different stakeholders' interests in planning processes. Agonistic planning theory, in turn, concentrates on conflicts on a more ontological level, related to the (implicit) conflict between hegemonic and marginalized discourses and related identity-forming processes of inclusion and exclusion in planning policies and governance.

In an important sense, the agonistic perspective complements the communicative planning theory approach, with its critical attention to the structural domination underneath individual planning processes. It brings into question whether there are ontological conflicts suppressed in the apparently agreement-seeking contemporary planning policies and related institutional rules, determining the ways in which the different stakeholders and their interests are identified in planning processes. Hence, while conflicts between interests may be resolved in a mutually agreeable manner between the stakeholders in a given planning process, this may only further reinforce the ontological dissensus about how planning processes are governed between those who are recognized as stakeholders and those who are not.

In this sense, agonistic planning theory views critically the institutional establishment of the planning system itself and the ways it is realized at the policy level, while communicative planning theory rather settles with searching for opportunities to increase deliberativeness at the level of situational planning processes within the existing system. With this focus on situational deliberation, communicative planning theory largely ignores the institutional dimension of public norms of democratic conduct, although especially Healey can be considered as a notable exception. When communicative planning theorists do address the institutional dimension, they tend to perceive the latter as constraining situational responsiveness in conflict resolution, rather than perceiving it as a productive resource. This is a biased approach to deliberative democracy, when viewed from the perspective of the systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory. As the latter takes a 'transcalar' approach to deliberative democracy theory, conceiving the informal and formal realms of deliberative democracy as mutually interdependent, complementary and reciprocally corrective, it reveals a crucial institutional gap in communicative planning theory.

While agonistic pluralism, in turn, engages with the dimension of democratic institutions, it does so in an overly critical manner. It provides political-philosophical argumentation for the necessity of their reconfiguration, but offers little advice on how this could be done in practice, and how institutional norms and rules on democratic conduct ought to be redefined to enable their agonistic questioning while facilitating decision-making. This aspect of agonistic democracy theory has become a major difficulty to agonistic planning theorists who have attempted to apply it in the political-administrative realm of planning. Constant contestation of the institutional frameworks of planning processes is considered problematic, given that these processes need institutional support to reach decision outcomes, and trust in policy constancy needs to be maintained. These demands lead to the hitherto unanswered questions of how planning institutions could work productively with contest and dissensus, and how the latter could be transformed into productive means of reaching legitimate planning decisions. This incapability to address the dynamic interplay between institutional reconfiguration and policy stabilization is the institutional gap of agonistic planning theory. After all, as a political-administrative realm, planning has a lot more to do with policy stabilization than institutional reconfiguration (or rather resistance), which is the bread and butter of agonistic pluralism.

To meet the insights of the systemic turn in deliberative democracy theory, further work on planning theory is needed. This poses the challenge of addressing the institutional dimension of deliberative democracy, and its interplay with the situational one. How can deliberative planning in situational planning processes be configured theoretically in its relation to institutionalized public norms of planning that both enable and constrain democratic planning conduct? How, in turn, can institutional norms of democratic planning be configured theoretically as being responsive to critiques emerging in planning processes? These questions call for a systemic view of deliberatively democratic planning that manages to tap into the tensional and dynamic dialectics of institutional and situational dimensions of planning. Such a view recognizes that the institutional norms of democratic planning should be responsive to critiques emerging in planning processes, also outside the deliberative processes. Institutional norms are not immune to change, nor should they be. Critique, in turn, is not merely about fault-finding and being adversarial, but it is, at best, a driving force for gradual change, providing input for the democratic process and arguing for changes at the institutional level. When changes occur at this level, they

also affect the level of everyday politics and planning, altering their normative environment of appropriateness and accountability. Alongside further studies on the most recent developments in deliberative democracy theory, such a planning-theoretical endeavour would benefit from familiarization with new institutionalism and related work on planning theory (e.g., Salet 2018b). In this regard, discursive institutionalism is especially noteworthy, as it does not view institutions as static constructs but as patterns of norms that evolve gradually and are responsive to changes at the level of policy processes (see Schmidt 2008; Shepherd 2018; Granqvist/Humer/Mäntysalo 2021; Shepherd 2021).

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