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Politics, planning, and ruling: the art of taming public participation

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ABSTRACT

Public participation is still a democratic challenge to city and municipal governments. Numerous studies have suggested experiments on participative processes, and conflictual consensus is seen as the best outcome of planning's politicization, it is fair to ask if this is not accepting planning's position as depoliticizing public participation. This article studies the governmentality around public participation formed by law and institutional regimes on participation and democracy, and how a dispositif ensemble is forming and framing the structure and content of the public participation process.

KEYWORDS

Agonism; dissensus; decision; politics; planning



Introduction

To analyze 'regimes of practices' means to analyze programmes of conduct which have both prescriptive effects regarding what is to be done (effects of 'jurisdiction') and codifying effects regarding what is to be known (effects of 'veridiction'). (Foucault 1991, 75)

In Norway, the public has a legal right to 'a say' in planning, when they are affected by a planning proposal, and the municipality or the proposer of a plan is obliged to organize a public hearing. Public participation is a time-limited process and a meeting around a pre-given plan that limits what is to be discussed. Cities have guidelines for a communicative and deliberative public planning process (e.g. PBE 2019), but participation is still considered a democratic challenge because the public does not feel that they can change much in the plans (Falleth and Hanssen 2012).

Numerous studies have suggested experiments on participative processes to overcome a democratic deficit (e.g. Agger and Löfgren 2008; Healey 2008), and lately the potential of having a process of making a 'conflictual consensus' has been widely discussed (Mäntysalo, Saglie, and Cars 2011; Metzger, Allmendinger, and Oosterlynck 2015; Mouffe 2005, 2013). Acknowledging the implied depoliticization of planning being a staged participation, a focus on new ways for 'citizens to be political' seems timely (Legacy et al. 2019, 277), in particular if public participation has only become a legitimization of decisional politics (Grange 2016; Purcell 2016).

A praxis like planning 'assume[s] an organization or "system" within which they operate, but not vice versa' (Deleuze 1988, 29). A planning governmentality and its dispositional power reside in and are constituted by forces like the law, giving a formal praxis and line of decisions that frame how professional knowledge, private and praxis morals, sense of place and scene, and tactics and strategies can emerge.

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Public participation is a meeting around a spatial plan, and the public is meeting a governing dispositif emerging from ‘the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of ... power’ (Foucault 1978, 2007, 108). A dispositif ensemble is in its plainest definition ‘a network formation of knowledge and power relations’ (see Foucault 1980, 194) that ‘disposes, arranges, and assembles ... “the right disposition of things”’ (Panagia 2019, 716) (on dispositif politics, see Althusser 1983, 2000)

The case explored in this article recounts how a governmentality dispositif rules a planning process and tames public participation. The article thus explores a regime of praxis regarding participation emerging around a planning process related to urban renewal and area regulation (a new land-use plan). The focus is to explore how a ‘public’ planning process is conducted by developing a consenting ensemble of actors, giving legitimacy to the plan. These actors not only represent individual interests, but are, if the process joins them in consent, an ensemble constitutive to a hegemonic knowledge power supporting the plan. The content outcome of the meetings will determine the next step in the planning process – debates on public meetings. Mapping invited parts, agenda, discourses, and the professional knowledge fields mobilized, the case illustrates how the city rules and operates in practice within the frames given in the planning and building act.¹

The first section explores the discussion of participation as governmentality, seeing public planning as the act of ‘conducting conduct’ (Foucault 1991). The second section outlines why the dispositif analysis can inform how an institutionalized participatory process governs local participation. The third section concerns how public participation is ruled in the city of Oslo. The fourth section follows this perspective, exploring a pre-public planning process in the Karlsrud neighbourhood in the city of Oslo. The fifth part analyses how this pre-public planning process stages a spatial dispositif as the power-knowledge relation, disposing of the order of ‘relevant’ knowledge and issues in relation to the dialogical process and as ‘relevant’ issues for the coming public participation process.

Participation as governmentality

Planning studies on participation still mainly focus on the deliberative institutionalization of the participatory process, including the institutionalization of agonism (e.g. Bäcklund and Mäntyselä 2010; Innes and Booher 2010). It is, however, important to ask how politics and planning respond to a problematization of a political agenda and/or plan. How is consent about a plan made? And how do the city and the planning office act to construct meaningful consent for participants?

The question of power is always pertinent to planning studies (Metzger, Soneryd, and Hallström 2017), and this implies the need for the study of the micro-physic power praxis done by planners and planning offices within a public planning process. The ‘what is actually done’ may include the use of formalities, the rationality of the planning discourse, (mis)use of statistics and calculations to support a strategy or alliance, and so on (see Flyvbjerg 1991). Not only will formalities like the law and the guidelines be a tool ‘decontesting a range of potential alternatives’ and be an attempt ‘to fix the meaning of political concepts’, but they are also a potential way to try to secure that public participation ends up as ‘a reconfiguration of the internal, structural features of ideology’ (Davoudi, Galland, and Stead 2019, 4).

The planning law not only prescribes a formal organization of planning but indicates ‘how such power is performatively enacted’ (Metzger, Soneryd, and Hallström 2017, 210) by prescribing how citizens can have a say. There are also national and local guidelines on how to encourage participation and how the public can have a say (PBE 2019).

Planning is a tool for ‘the governmentalisation’ of societal development to be part of ‘a series of specific governmental apparatuses (appareils)’ and ‘series of knowledge (savoirs)’ giving form to the ‘administrative state’ (Foucault 2007, 108–109). Since the nineteenth century, the classical definition of government by Le Perrière has dominated political ideology. He said that government

is ‘the right disposition of things, arranged so as to lead to a convenient end’ (Foucault 1991, 94). Convenience is not a neutral or objective end. The state became a state of ‘tactics’ (103), and Foucault finds several outcomes of tactical governing in his analysis of, for instance, ‘biopower’ (2007). He outlines the upcoming of ‘the state of justice’ involving ‘obligation and litigation’, ‘the administrative state’ which is ‘corresponding to a society of regulation and discipline’, and ‘the governmental state’ concerned with ‘population’, its density, and its ‘distributed’ territory (2007, 1–57).

All over Europe at that time a type of society ‘controlled by [an] apparatus of security’ evolved (Foucault 1991, 104). Security politics conducted by the administration apparatus are about prevention and predictability. The major concern to governments from the nineteenth century was to improve health and security by discipline. The development of disciplines like hygiene and schools included reflections on ‘how to govern oneself, how to be governed, by whom should we accept to be governed, how to be the best possible governor?’ (Foucault 2007, 88).

The act of conducting ‘the conduct of conduct’ not only included affecting ‘the way in which one conducts oneself’, but also ensured ‘an effect of a form of conduct’ useful to society (Foucault 2007, 193). This became a major endeavour for politics and the state, and not only as a conduct of people through coercion. It is rather ‘the conduct of conduct’ by ‘working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs’ (Foucault in Dean 1999, 11) to work through body-minds by normation and normalization. Government thus means using both inner forces and cognitive forces to engage people actively in their own normation and includes the state using institutions like schools and health care as a disciplinarian apparatus (Althusser 1983).

Governmentality is a mode of governing from specific ‘forms of thought’ and ‘different mentalities of government’ (Dean 1999, 16). A ‘good government of the state’ includes being able to ‘affect individual conduct’ (Foucault 2007, 94) through ‘customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking’ (96). Governmentality is about the securitization of political and planning praxis, making things accountable by having certain forms of rationality imbuing praxis and thinking. Or said in another way, following this line of argumentation, public participation is ‘a treatment of the uncertain’, and planning is an apparatus to secure ‘the form of normalization’ that can undo uncertainty (Foucault 2007, 11). There is in planning ‘a fundamental relationship between the law and the norm’ (56) visible in, for instance, guidelines on how to govern participation.

Planning as governance

An institutional agency like planning is supported by a power-knowledge dispositif including the law, hegemonic planning discourses, forms of deliberation, a land-use plan, formal regulations, a decisional apparatus, givens and prehensions of ‘the right way of doing planning’. This institutionalized dispositif ensemble forms the ruling praxis and dialogues of the event (Foucault 1982, 196) together with the power to organize the participatory process and its content. How these forces are intertwined is not always visible or straightforward. Dialogues and interests are part of a tactical or strategic planning and politics as well as actor alliances. Although participants meet a politically accepted plan, they do not (necessarily) know the specific origin or creator of the dispositif ensemble constitutive to the content of the plan. As a dispositif, the plan ‘establish[es] a system of relations between elements’ answering ‘an urgent need’, the need for urban renewal. The ‘nature of connections’, ‘the interplay of positions and modifications of functions’ emerging from this – interests, tactics, economic alliances, etc. – are, in Foucault’s studies, generative to a double process of ‘functional overdetermination’ and ‘strategic elaboration’ emerging from matters in question and forces in play (Foucault 1980, 194–195).² The dispositif ensemble constitutive to the plan (in particular, law, politics, growth strategies), and how the participatory dialogue around it is organized, is a way ‘to structure the possible field of action of others’ (221). The effect is to be found in how it is ‘realized, integrated and distinguished by its effects’ (Deleuze 1988, 37).

So, any *dispositif* always exists and has effects from and with reference to a wider plane of *dispositifs* (for instance, national law, governing national interests, ideologies, etc.) and is intertwined with other *dispositif* ensembles not necessarily visible. If one were to study, which is not done here, planning's '*dispositif* genealogy', that may include a system of property rights, morals, ideas of justice, power alliances, or strategic tactics actualized at a particular time and context. The planning *dispositif* that the public meet is legally subordinated established societal judicial relations, and the content may be modified, changed, or superimposed differently within the different contexts in which it is actualized. To be precise, the legal right to public participation is institutionalized, but its mechanisms (e.g. law), elements (e.g. co-meeting dialogues, language), and materialities (documents) are related to space where they surface.

There are only *dispositifs in action* as it is a never-ending relation between emerging forces that are constitutive of a *dispositif* ensemble. In this study, the planning law and the planning and building act are constitutive 'operators' or 'mechanisms' within a political *dispositif* ensemble of tactics and strategies that frame and form the plan and the planning process. But the details, parts, and means of the plan may be questioned by other *dispositif* ensembles, for instance, by an 'economy and profit' alliance between land-owners and business. The planning law is used by politics to impose a particular *dispositif* ensemble on the planning process – a land-use plan, a line of meetings, participatory rights, guidelines, and so on – that can work as 'a process of functional over-determination' and a 'directory' to decisions made along the process.

If the public planning process is seen as one of 'conducting the conduct' of others, the process becomes 'a normation rather than a normalization' process (Foucault 2007, 57), a normation of ways of doing and thinking emerging from actors being disciplined according to a given agenda and the tacit 'rules of the game'. Actors participating have to become part of a 'shared symbolic space' that will tame, marginalize, or eradicate opposition. The law on participation and guidelines are tools to ensure that this happens. This 'shared symbolic space' is thus a normation distributed by rules of participation, formal structures for deliberation, an agenda not to be questioned, and hegemonic discourses not to be discussed. Planning's instructions on participation and processual guidelines secure a disciplinary normation that 'consists in trying to get people, movements, and actions to conform ... to [a] norm' (57). A shared symbolic space thus stands out as a *dispositif* power 'for arranging things' by shaping a 'series of connections' between elements (Foucault 2007, 37).

If deliberation is a mechanism to secure a political predictability through consent, public participation in planning is 'the specific conditions under which particular entities emerge, exist and change' (Dean 1999, 20). The self-disciplining capacities from morals, ethics, and experience are also crucial to the outcome of such a process as well as to the shared understanding of 'what is going on'. A public planning process is, however, not made to make participants capable of working with problematizations of planning *praxis* or its *politisation*. Critique is excluded, for instance, by the procedural frame of planning decisions and/or by arguing that there is a need to coordinate interests against other interests.

There is a *governmentality* to planning, and it builds on, for one thing, 'institutions, procedures, analysis and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise' of a 'specific, albeit very complex power'. Secondly, 'the line of force' framing public participation comes from 'a series of specific governmental apparatuses (*appareils*) and from 'a series of knowledge (*savoirs*)', and thirdly, it is a process conducted within the frames of 'the administrative state', for instance, the national law on planning (Foucault 2007, 108–109). It is 'the system of correlation between juridico-legal mechanisms, disciplinary mechanisms, and mechanisms of security' (Foucault 2007, 8) that makes planning 'a regulatory apparatus (*appareil*) that prevents' things from going wrong and ensures that things 'will work properly' (Deleuze [1986] 2004, 69). Following Michel Foucault, planning is a *techne* (a certain way of doing using techniques like procedures and a certain vocabulary) and *ethos* (a regime of truths, norms, morals) (see also Flyvbjerg 1991; Forester 2008; Healey 2008; Laws and Forester 2007; Legacy 2016; Mäntysalo, Balducci, and

Kangasoja 2011; Metzger, Soneryd, and Hallström 2017; Van Wymeersch, Oosterlynck, and Vanoutrive 2018).

Planning's judicial dispositif of decision

The Planning and Building Act in Norway prescribes that citizens have the right to public participation (§ 5-1) and a public hearing and inquiry (§ 5-2). The law further says that all affected parts must be informed and have access to relevant documents and information. The public participatory process is supposed to pay particular attention to weak voices. The voices are defined as 'groups', indicating first that having 'a voice' means citizens need to organize their voice in order to be powerfully represented and second that only those defined as 'affected organized interests' will be informed and invited.

The Norwegian Planning and Building Act formally has two mandatory demands for the public planning process (based on Ringholm, Nyseth, and Hanssens 2018):

- *Public announcement* giving people information about the planning strategy and place of public meeting. This is to be done no later than 30 days before political considerations.
- *Consultation and public scrutiny*, including information to those affected by plans and a timeline for hearings (six to eight weeks).

There is no regulation on how to organize public meetings and hearings, but participatory communication is restricted to the public meeting, information sessions, and workshops. This means that 'the statutory requirements do not give local actors a high degree of influence in the planning process' (Ringholm, Nyseth, and Hanssens 2018, 5) or on plans and decisions.

At this level, the way to make a complementary space between participants is dependent on the signifying effect of 'the right to participate and have a voice'. The limited form and praxis of public participation seems to rely on some socio-ontological claims: (1) the existence of a collective subject 'wanting' to conform to society's disciplinary rules and habits, norms, and laws; (2) people will act reasonably and be governable, being a collective of norms and values; and (3) people want and always seek time-rational behaviour.

Even a disciplined communicative process needs a rhetoric, the first step most often undertaken is to make a plan programme describing 'what alternatives will be touched [in the planning process] and the need for evaluations' (BYB 2018, 4). The plan programme thus states the agenda and knowledge to which participants have to adhere. This is because, so the rhetoric goes, 'we want to give people the possibility of giving *relevant* input' (4) (*italics added*). The plan-programme thus pre-describes what kind of information people will receive from the planning authorities and the plan decisions to which the public debate has to adhere. As is said, the efficiency of what is to be informed to the public is a matter of the information given 'at the right time' (4). The 'right time' involves, in other words, a tactical choice.

The case studied in this article is about this process. This kind of plan-programme seems not to fit with the city councillor for urban development, when she says, 'it is those living in the local environment that know best what the area needs'.³ But it fits with the newly established public communication office saying, 'it is easy [for the public] to mistake or confuse participation and participation in decisions'. The city planning democracy is built on that 'after all, we live in a representative democracy'.⁴

Public participation is so seen one-way politicized process, in which participants are made aware of 'the premises of the plan, content and consequences' and 'the relation between the plan and the building act, and what it is possible to affect within the process different levels' of planning and decisions (BYB 2018, 6). Participation is from this position subjugated to a governing system making the plan, deciding who is participating and who is not, and a planning process leaving decisions to politicians and not to the local milieu. The ones that 'know best'

are not the ones who decide because, after all, ‘we live in a representative democracy’ (BYB 2018, 6), and this kind of democracy delegates the power to decide to a system of political power.

Effective public participation makes a consensus or at least consent to the plan. To give consent is to give political legitimacy to the plan, and the predictability of its implementation is what counts politically. After adding international comparative research that shows politicians are ignoring facts that are ‘against their beliefs’,⁵ public participation is a process most likely not to change anything that is not already pre-decided politically and/or in the planning office. Instead of adjusting or rectifying their beliefs according to new knowledge, politicians seem to think that ‘in a complex world [of knowledge information, it is better] to let oneself be guided by one’s beliefs’ (see endnote 4) rather than contesting one’s knowledge and beliefs.

‘A shared symbolic space’ (Mouffe 2013) and a ‘right to a voice’ at a certain time are thus ‘techniques of normalization’ (Foucault 2007, 56). Public planning is a ‘governmentality’, ‘a governing apparatus’ consisting of ‘the ensemble formed by institutions, analysis and reflections, calculations and tactics that allows the exercise of this very specific power’ (108). This is an analytical perspective that points at a focus on the role and operation of discourses and their diverse elements.⁶

Public participation – a guided praxis

This case is about ‘the conduct of conduct’ and the governmentality guiding the constitution of a consent or consensus dispositif of knowledge, interests, and politics. It is a consent or consensus made through a participatory process of pre-meeting dialogues between invited parts before the plan is put forward for public hearing and comments.

Public participation is, as in this case, usually organized in Norway around three different kinds of meeting set-ups (PBEOP 2018, 11–12):

- A political-administrative working group at the city level. At Karlsrud, it includes 12 city departments and 13–16 professionals from the planning office, Department of Infrastructure, Culture, Renovation, Water and Climate, and the District Council Planning Office.
- A co-acting group (at Karlsrud, ‘Samspillgruppen’) with landowners (at Karlsrud, 5 landowners with 11 properties registered) (GG 2018, 2), local businesses, housing co-operatives, and community groups (e.g. the district ‘senior adviser’ group).
- A 2–3-hour public meeting (two or three in all).

Public participation is a formal, procedural, and debating process of short duration. Municipalities forward printed planning material to public institutions like libraries, send copies to neighbourhood councils, give newspaper notification of the start time and time of the hearing (mainly only one meeting), thus giving the public a timeline for meetings and comments. It is, in addition, possible to have a deputation go to the city authorities, and it is possible to make written complaints. The information level is high, as the city is given public access to plans and the case history on the internet (BYB2 2016, 3).

Using the net-based ‘project archive’ organized by the city planning office in Oslo on every planning initiative,⁷ we, on one side, have an archive that makes it possible to explore what different discourse formations are coming up during the process and which ones have become relevant to the actual planning process. The meeting minutes published in the case archive, secondly, show the connectivities – actors, discourse, and knowledge regimes – made and/or prioritized. The archive, by its timeline and documents, thus shows how public planning is *actually done*, showing ‘the development of a domain of acts, practices, and thoughts’ (Foucault 1986, 384).

Notes from the municipality further show that the city administration uses a diverse set of tools to include the public actively and affectively by, for instance, using charettes, workshops, sessions for children, seminars, and postcard actions (PBEMV 2012). The variety of tools, according to the city, allows the city to adjust the cooperation and communicative process, and it allows the city to

adjust public participation to what kind of information the planning office and the city want from the meeting. Sometimes the planning office calls for a meeting only to give local interest information about planning law, the agenda, and plans, and other times it is a formal public hearing on suggested plans. But, as it is said, ‘normally, participation is taken care of by written comments’ from the public, but it is also an obligation for the proposer of a plan to announce a timeline for the public hearing process (PBEMV 2012, 8).

According to the city Urban Development Department, participation in Oslo secures:

- That citizens’ experiences are given possibilities to be part of the participatory planning process based on sufficient information at the right time.
- That the opinion of affected parts is heard and part of the overall evaluation, and [it is] weigh[ed] when [the plan is] forwarded for political consideration.
- That citizens, businesses, the municipality, and the volunteer sector *recognize the common responsibility* connected to the challenges and development needs the city faces’ (PBEMV 2012, 4) (italics added).

The city council can in fact delegate planning work to the public, and that has been done occasionally but only on administrative matters (e.g. giving the reading and the making of decisions on public complaints to the local city neighbourhood council instead of making the decision in the city planning department) (PBEMV 2012, 8). The city planning department admits that the public influence seems to decrease over time, and it ends after 20 weeks of public participation (9).

The planning office seems very clear on the difference between participation and having a say in a decision. The public participates; politics decides. Another shortcoming to the participatory process is that it is a meeting around a physical plan. The meeting is, as such, disciplined by the hegemonic discourse on spatial planning (zoning of housing, businesses and services, recreational and social reproductive landscape). Furthermore, the public meets a professional sectoral assemblage on every planning issue (e.g. garbage, water, electricity, building regulations, urban development sectors) that adheres to political signals and the law rather than a dialogue about needs and the future.

The orchestrated public at Karlsrud

In this case, it is a meeting between local economic interests, land-owners, businesses, housing co-operatives, single homeowners. The aim of mapping the field of actors and interests is to show how a ‘shared symbolic space’ is built and thus offer a mapping of a ‘normation’ process: how to have actors conform to – give legitimacy to – an accepted political plan.

At Karlsrud the process is, as mentioned, running around making the plan programme. There has been a series of pre-public meetings with invited city actors – the ‘Samspillsgruppen’ (co-acting group). The pre-public meeting timeline is as follows (Table 1).

When the pre-public meeting process in the near future reaches a suggestion for a plan programme regarding how the regulation process has to move on (who, when, how), the suggested programme is forwarded for political decision. And when the plan programme is politically accepted, the following will be organized:

- A public hearing for all citizens
- A decisional process on the land-use plan (regulated by law)
- A final political decision undertaken by the city council
- An implementation process governed by the planning office

This is a minimalistic democracy. The public only participate exactly as much and when the planning law demands (six to eight weeks). Single citizens are not part of the pre-meetings, nor

Table 1. Timeline and content of meeting.

| Time | Action |
|-------------------|---|
| 6.9.2017 | City council decides to revise the housing scheme in the Karlsrud area |
| 3.4.2018 | Planning office calling for pre-meeting at the city planning department with business interests and landowners |
| 4.4.2018 | Follow-up note from Department of Urban Development to the Urban Development Committee, including a note on 'possibilities on innovations from participation in relation to area regulation' |
| 24.4.2018 | Meeting with business interests and landowners at the city planning department |
| 4.6.2018 | Planning office calling landowners for meeting about the upstart plan |
| 28.6.2018 | Meeting with landowners |
| 6.9.2018 | Internal city administration invitation to departments to join the inter-municipal planning group for the project |
| 21.9.2018 | City council receives 'the take-off planning note for Lambertseter-Karlsrud' (not publicly available) |
| 22.10.2018 | The 'take-off' note is politically approved. |
| 28.11.2018 | The city council's 'Department of Housing and Urban Renewal' political notes on 'mapping area needs' at Karlsrud (functions) are launched for political debate |
| 14.12.2018 | The neighbour and landowners at Karlsrud, the government's planning department, the regional planning office, relevant municipal institutions, and local public organizations are notified about the plan |
| 13.2.2019 | The District Council at Nordstrand – the administrative apparatus for the Karlsrud-Lambertseter area – makes their approval, comments, and suggestions for the plan |
| 19.2.2019 | Invitation to local primary/youth school to have a one-day meeting guided by the planning office (19.3.2019) |
| 05.3.2019 | The city planning office publishes an invitation to name representatives to join the 'co-acting group' (Samspillsgruppen), sent to private landowners, housing co-operatives, and other local sports and volunteer organizations |
| 20.3.2019 | First meeting with businesses, investor interests, co-operatives, and local organizations to formally start the 'co-working group' under the city's planning and building department and led by the Planning and Building Etat |
| April 2019 | Website for comments and requests on information opened Workshop with invited participants |
| 15.10.2019 | The Council for Urban Development delivers the 'presentation of plan programme' for the Karlsrud area regulation to the city council |
| October 2019–2020 | Meetings with investors, technical research, revision of 'co-actor' agreement, revision of plan programme A number of requirements on 'insight' into and information about area registrations – for instance, on traffic and energy – are put forward by local actors and denied by the planning office with reference to 'an exception to the rule' on publicness |

is it a meeting between critics, experts, and the city planning office. This real world of 'public participation' is the power given to two forms of interests: investors and NIMBYs (single housing residents, communitarians, 50+ generations as the major housing landowners).⁸

Tensions may arise between these interests and values. At a pre-meeting in 2018, the landowners and investors not only put forward their property interests, but they had different interests with respect to how to revise the existing city 'small housing' plan to a more dense and high-scale plan (PBEMR2 2018). The investors and industrial landowners are asking for a higher density, while the single households wants the 'small housing' plan to count; a politically decided principle plan for the preservation of single housing and low-density, semi-detached housing in existing building areas.

The local NIMBYs – single and semi-detached housing, housing co-operatives – are primarily families and people who have lived in the area for a long time. Their view on community values is that it is a low-scale, low-density area, and this ideal is supported by the district council.⁹ The co-actors are defending their different kinds of property value, and some of the semi-detached and single-house householders have organized a Facebook site with a short video showing the difference in height between the block building suggested by the investors and the city and their low single-housing properties.¹⁰

One could argue that the city planning office, by starting a co-actor group, wants to have a common workspace for the city and affected people and interests. The councillor for urban development in Oslo applauds this kind of thinking by saying¹¹ that people living in the area 'know best what the place needs'. In praxis, however, the timeline shows the city focuses on governing and ruling rather

than engaging in dialogue. They invite organized local interests to make a strategic alliance with the city, and the meeting is used to make the city agenda clear both on ‘intention, goal, and premises’ for interests at Karlsrud (PBEOP 2018, 2).

The pre-meetings form alliances with powerful local investors, businesses, and housing co-operatives before the public see the plan programme. Such a process is not about dialogue, but it is to engage in planning political power as a formal democracy.¹² The planning and political rhetoric trust in a formalized ‘deliberative’ process mirrors a mistrust towards an open process based on co-decisions with affected people and interested citizens in general. This ruling is supported by a governmentality where the planning apparatus is used for ‘the conduct of conduct’ to secure political control through (at least) consent. For example, at Karlsrud small compromises on building heights have been forced through by the planning office, and when investors complain, the planning office claims the plan proposal departs from a previous landowner plan on density, housing scale, and area use (PBEOP 2018, 2). Consent organized!

The governmentality on public participation in Oslo is thus a two-way ruling: one way is by giving invited parties and the citizens a *subjugated position*, calling on them to act from a pre-given agenda and according to the (tacit) rules of the game. On the other hand, the planning office is for politics the *equipment* for a dialogue, that is, that a public meeting is the conduct of a dialogue from given political aims and goals. Public participation is a pre-scripted and orchestrated form of participation. It is, as the first quote says, a regime of practice based on ‘programmes of conduct’ prescriptive to what is to be and what is to be known. It is a meeting around a discursive hegemony.

Organizing a discursive hegemony

Karlsrud is a neighbourhood located in the Lambertseter district on the south-east side of the Fjord. Lambertseter was the first suburban neighbourhood built in Oslo in the late 1950s, including mainly blocks and semi-detached housing and a small shopping area. The co-operative financing the housing of the suburbanization later (2010) opened a huge shopping mall opposite the original centre. The new mall comprises a cinema, a library, and about 80 stores, cafés, and a restaurant.

The new Karlsrud regulation plan is supposed to respond to a need to revitalize the area by upgrading the old small industrial area between two metro stations (Lambertseter and Karlsrud). It is about 400 m of small businesses, like mechanics, grocery shops, small framing shops with a gallery, two fitness centres, and the above-mentioned huge mall connected to the Lambertseter metro station.

The planning area is on the one side of the main street crossing the Lambertseter site, and on the other side there are schools and a kindergarten. Heritage authorities have claimed historical interests in some of the industrial buildings (Figure 1), but at the time writing this article, this controversy waits for a more detailed decision regarding the land-use plan from the city council.

A representative minute from one of the first co-actor group meetings shows how investors ‘mark the territory’. The architects representing some of the landowners said that the landowners did not want to start again with a new planning concept, as they have already made one. The municipal representatives responded by saying, they were ‘concerned with a just share between



Figure 1. Industrial heritage at Karlsrud (Accessed May 16, 2020. <https://magasin.oslo.kommune.no/byplan/liv-pa-lambertseter-karlsrud>).

landowners' with respect to redesigning the area and the costs for landowners. Landowners also claimed their property rights, and that they expected their property border towards the new development to be respected (GG 2018, 1). Investor and industrial landowners furthermore said they wanted the meetings to be predictable and afford a legally binding planning process (PBEMR2 2018, 2).

At the second meeting in June 2018, the landowners presented an architect-drawn plan for the area development (PBEMR2 2018). This plan has become, it seems, a politically accepted plan. The plan has been used as the visual illustration of the architectural and functional plan for the area in the Department for Urban Development 'starting note' announced to the public (PBEOP 2018) (see Figure 2). As seen, this plan does not include heritage preservation.

The architect's proposal is based on what is called an 'area stability valuation' concerning the architectural structure and the need for densifying the area (PBEOP 2018, 2). The investors present the architect's proposal as *the plan*. They can do so because the plan builds on the investors and landowners having had a meeting with the city planning office on 'common interests', before introducing the architectural design and plan to the wider public (GG 2018). At the meeting, the minutes tell that some landowners also claimed the rights of the 25-year rent contract they have must be recognized.

As said, the largest investor and landowner in the area has added a huge shopping mall to the first shopping area built in 1957. This investor now argues for densifying both the old shopping area and the new shopping mall area rather than densifying the Karlsrud metro station area for recreational retail and shopping. The argument is that there is already a metro station at the existing Lambertseter shopping mall area that has made the mall a local social space. They, in fact, underline that the mall has become a public meeting place for the whole district (comprising five to six neighbourhoods) (GG 2018, 3). The same investor and landowner recently built a new housing area opposite the Lambertseter mall. The housing scheme follows international environmental certification (BREEAM), but there are no ecological climate ambitions or restrictions on car parking at the premise (e.g. by saying 'only climate-friendly cars allowed'). The shopping mall area now experiences heavy transport congestion, and this is one of the problems said to be solved by the new Karlsrud land-use plan.

The city planning office has been open to have landowners doing the research on the spatial and business potential of the area, and unsurprisingly 'the research' ends in a spatial concept plan building primarily on a concrete structure typology (blocks), spatial density (height), and what is called an 'urban street' structure, including a street floor for 'public' business, car parking, and walking access to the Karlsrud metro line (GG 2018, 5–6). They claim this will give a 'garden' atmosphere to the area (GG 2018, 5). It is an investment plan and not a development plan. Capitalizing on density, the landowners tactically follow the city in accepting a façade architecture and street-level shops that prioritize everyday shopping and a pedestrian area linked to biking and walking amenities along the road for traffic.

Although the outcome of the planning-office-organized pre-public meetings shows a one-sided spatial dispositif – zoning, density, functionalities – the agenda for a co-actor workshop meeting in April 2019 was announced as being about local knowledge, future visions, and the exchange of ideas (OFV-1 2019, 5). The first three rows in Table 2 shows how the planning office summarizes



Figure 2. Investor land-use plan (<https://www.estatenyheter.no/byantikvarens-vern-kan-gi-hoyhus-pa-lambertseter/244219>. Accessed January 30, 2021).

Table 2. Workshop meeting 29 April 2019.

| Place qualities | Needs | Future visions | PBO summary |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 10 minutes city | Housing low density | Passable (soft traffic), movement, | Green urban space (parks, biological |
| Heritage | Business: preserve the | access | pluralism, multiple use) |
| Green area | existing small businesses | Green spaces (light, garden | Traffic (collective, ordered, |
| Different types | Social and cultural | parcels, biological pluralism) | protecting small streets) |
| of housing | infrastructure (a scene for | Mix functionality (housing/ | Walking connections (pathways, |
| Shops, a | music, schools, etc.) | business, mix housing, family | squares, walking zones) |
| shopping mall | Green public meeting places | friendly, urban destination) | Housing (Lambertseter high/ |
| Business, | (benches, etc.) | Belonging (community pride, | Karlsru low, garden city/town |
| collective | Safe traffic, more parking | good reputation) | houses, low density) |
| traffic | spaces | | |
| Safe | Safe 'soft' traffic | | |
| Sports, youth | | | |
| club | | | |

workshop suggestions from the meeting, and the last row shows how the first three rows are summarized by the planning and building office (PBO) itself (OFV-1 2019, 36–41).

What is summarized by the planning office (PBO summary) concerns spatiality, place identity, and the representation of place. None of the working groups have focused on urban qualities or the cityness qualities of the future Karlsrud area, although the need for 'a scene' is mentioned. They do not see the area regulation as an opportunity to try out green housing and planning, nor do people reflect on a suburban urbanity and the city-within-the-city potential of the area. Instead, as local landowners and investors, these invited participants frame short-term economic interests, housing co-operatives advocate communitarian interests, local small businesses represent anxiety about competition, and private homeowners represent sales interests.

The recommendations put forward from the summary (fourth row) end up in a pure spatial dispositif (functionalism, movement structure, zoning, low-density area design) and an aestheticisation dispositif (greening, low-density facades, first floor retail, and recreational zoning).

The table shows that the invited actors and the city wish to make a plan for suburban family life. This narrow agenda might in the end result in tension with capital investors who want high density and greater surplus profit. The PBO, for its part, sees the workshop as offering suggestions similar to the ones from the 2016 charette organized by the office that paved the way for the first politically accepted plan for the area (more green areas, more pathways, safe use) (OFV-1 2019, 41). This first charette and the pre-public workshops have not been about future visions, and the aim has not been to have a (self-) critical dialogue about, for instance, 'who will live in Karlsrud in 2050?' and 'why should they want to live here in 2050?'

The process so far has resulted in the co-actors consenting to a plan that builds on a spatial dispositif; a land-use plan. Given this and recognizing that public participation is part of making planning more efficient by a *coordination* of public viewpoints and beliefs with political aims and strategies, citizens' influence becomes minor and most likely non-existent. It may seem efficient to the city and the planning office to have a pre-public participation process with organized local actors, investors, and public authorities to elicit consent for plans. The hegemony of the spatial dispositif is necessary to avoid a process related to considering the future lives and social spaces at Karlsrud. By inviting them to make an alliance of interests and property values, the city can avoid a debate about the social space of life forms, life world, values, desires, hopes, and experiences. A spatial dispositif also avoids controversial themes like the climate challenges and cultural attractiveness of the place in, let's say, 2050. The only aim is to secure consent to a politically ordered spatial regulation plan, and the tool has been an assemblage of money interests and a plan for land use based on revitalization securing these interests.¹³

Ruling the dialogue between parts relies on a dispositif ensemble intertwining – among other forces – the law, guidelines, a hegemonic discourse but also the position to organize the pre-meeting group and the agenda. The analysis has aimed to illustrate how the primary aim of the dialogues is

to enforce a ‘shared symbolic space’ about the process, content, and agenda. A mapping of the arguments put forward by local actors and the ones taken into account by the planning office (the PBO summary) shows a pure land-use plan, the spatial design of the area, and functionality overdetermine arguments. The process aim is to gain political planning legitimacy. All workshop minutes are taken by the planning office.

Conclusion

The analysis has been inspired by Michel Foucault who says that he does not focus on ‘institutions’ but practices ‘with the aim of grasping the conditions which make these acceptable at a given moment’ (276). A regime of practice like the pre-public planning meetings at Karlsrud is organized to secure the plan’s ‘jurisdiction’ (what is to be done) and ‘veridiction’ (what is to be known). The study has tried to follow ‘what is actually done’ and ‘what is to be known’ to make a praxis with a given end. The tables are used to grasp a logic, a rationale, a hegemonic discursive alliance, etc. that has conditioned what is possible at the given moment. The Karlsrud process shows:

- A process structured as a governance process of pre-meetings that secures investor control over the land-use plan and the city’s planning political control of the spatial outcome against a future public meeting.
- The process has been organized around a ruling spatial dispositif governed by economy, profit, and local functionality.
- The business interests and the political wish for a land-use plan have formed a consent between actors; the public will meet when they are asked for comments.
- This public participatory process will not, as the pre-public meetings did not, touch upon the question of a strategic development of the area. The urban renewal is said to lead to a new urbanness, but what the constitutive forces to urbanness are is never debated.
- Neither will the upcoming citizen dialogue be looking at contemporary everyday life values, emerging life forms, visible or future, or the planning of ecological places.
- It is a process of capital first, organized power second, and public last.

The process explored has shown how a certain planning regime of praxis emerges ensembled around a spatial and juridical dispositif securing a land-use plan based on a functional spatialization of everyday life expecting certain norms and behaviours to emerge from this disciplinarian spatial micro physics.

Public planning is to the city of Oslo part of a regulatory regime and an apparatus which governmentality builds on, producing a hegemonic discourse and knowledge around a planning proposal before public debate (Foucault 1978, 119–123). The public meets a ruling regime of elements and mechanisms, including planning law, planning regulations, government guidelines for participation, administrative procedures, a formal procedural decisional process, a pre-public organized consent between major forces in the area, and an agenda saying what is on the table and what is not.

Deliberation related to this planning political regime is that the public has a legal right to a speak, but the study shows how the powerful deliberation is when capital, landowners, co-operative interests, and investors meet and agree on the operative frame of the land-use plan and the planning process defined in the ‘plan programme’ (what is to be done, how, when, by whom). The later public participation becomes a process with a pre-given agenda which ensures that the public is only allowed to focus on planning selected political parts of the plan in question – in this case, a land-use plan and its spatial design. The public is to legitimate a spatial dispositif. Public participation this way becomes not only a meeting around a plan but a pre-given project outcome and not a meeting around a place development. The process shows a political economization of participation to make an alliance that will secure an effective public and implementation process. The

pre-public meetings will probably prevent time-consuming conflicts to become powerful within the public process and upon the implementation of the plan.

When the city planning office has pre-meetings with powerful interests, this makes citizens' participation a second-order participation. Organized interests have already gathered around their common interests, and the public meets a formalized policy, where investors, local businesses, and owner interests have given their legitimacy to the plan. Researchers on urban planning from time to time suggest new ways of doing participatory planning and sometimes suggest a process potential in opposition to the formal legal, time- and space-structured public participation favoured by politicians and planning authorities.

Although some of the claims for having public participation in Oslo may allude to an interest in the experience of space, the study supports Michel Foucault's statement that politics and public participation are the terrain of governing (Dean 1999). It is not an agora or an open space of dialogues on planning issues. It is not a meeting to debate planning discourses, planning theories, urban futures, urban development forces, site opportunities, everyday lives and their change of values and content, or the change of population, use, and habits in urban quarters or neighbourhoods.

The public's subjugated position at Karlsrud is a subjugation secured by a closed planning dispositif secured by law and a participatory dispositif on ruling by dialogue ('the conduct of conduct', like participation, is not the same as influence). The city prefers to organize pre-public meetings with economic interests, and the public is rarely, if ever, part of or in a position of power to be part of planning policies *in the making*. Public participation is never a blank board meeting but a top-down organized meeting framed by an already politically accepted discourse and interest alliances on the subject matter.

The planning law in Norway does not – and will not – secure an open democracy. It is used to secure political sovereignty to choose landowner interests as their 'partners' instead of being a platform for weak or critical voices. Public participation thus becomes a process of suppressing meaning that is not within the interest of capital, politics, and planning authorities. Compromises and deliberative and incremental planning satisfy the powerful, and a legally binding plan empowers city government and planning institutions. Public planning is not an agonistic democracy if that means seeing decisions as contingent and temporary 'solutions for now'. Planning is an 'equipment of power', and procedural public participation is a way to 'normalise' a political intervention, where there should have been a free public gathering to discuss a local future and area potentialities (Foucault 1996, 105–112).

Notes

1. Although this study is one of the first to map the line of meetings, agendas, and discourses active in a pre-meeting process in Norway, it is documented in many studies that planning lacks legitimacy with respect to participation because people feel a lack of influence (see, e.g. Falleth and Hanssen 2012).
2. On dispositif, I have benefitted tremendously from an ongoing conversation with Professor Emerita Jean Hillier, RMIT, Melbourne, on Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. I am, of course, responsible for the reading presented here.
3. Accessed 11 March 2019. <https://magasin.oslo.kommune.no/byplan/medvirkning-er-nokkelen-til-bedre-byutvikling>.
4. Accessed 1 March 2019. <https://magasin.oslo.kommune.no/byplan/bedre-medvirkning-ja-takk/>.
5. Accessed 1 February 2018. <https://www.information.dk/indland/2017/09/ny-forskning-afsloerer-politikerne-ignorerer-fakta-traekker-retning>.
6. Without any comparison but as inspiration, Foucault has done so, including the role of city planning in the politics of securitization (Foucault 2007, 1–53), but he also shows how "discipline" and "normalisation" perspectives are relevant. See the studies of city planning from "form to norm" and urban form as power imaginaries (Joyce 2003; Rabinow 1989; Sennett 1991). It is not the subject of this article, but the planning law and planning praxis have ontological, deontological, and teleological constitutive forces like communitarianism, identity, and rational human beings.

7. See <https://www.oslo.kommune.no/politikk-og-administrasjon/slik-bygger-vi-oslo/lambertseter-karlsruud-planarbeid/>. The archive offers plans, minutes, decisions, investors, businesses and citizens' suggestions or complaints about the project. However, there is also material on the site excepted from the public.
8. Despite the bad connotations of this word, it is the best acronym to point at both owner interests and their more moral-imaginary attitudes, like the fear concerning how change and density will affect their lives and interests.
9. Administrative unit led by elected local politicians primarily organizing the distribution of the budget decided by the city council for the area.
10. <https://www.facebook.com/bevarkarlsruud/videos/vb.955320221207242/1511888095550449/?type=2&theater>.
11. Accessed 12 March 2019. <https://magasin.oslo.kommune.no/byplan/medvirkning-er-nokkelen-til-bedre-byutvikling/>.
12. Accessed 12 March 2019. https://www.regjeringen.no/globalassets/upload/kmd/plan/medvirkningsveileder/h2302b_veileder_medvirkning.pdf (19–22).
13. The city is itself a major landowner: social housing, public institutions, kindergartens, schools, sport facilities, etc. As landlords, the city builds on free market conditions and not a co-operative strategy.

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