Urban planners between profession, management and democracy

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Introduction

Debate about the new role for planners resulting from recent developments in planning stands central in the planning literature. In practice, there is talk of new planning forms such as project planning, market planning and process planning, and in the theory about communicative and collaborative planning, interaction planning, corporate planning etc. The new forms of planning challenge the traditional authoritative expert role and raise requirements regarding new interactive roles for planners, where they must increasingly interact with the diverse actors in the city and include values that are otherwise outside of 'professional planning'.

The debate about new roles for planners bears a normative mark, where there is warning against the planner remaining in the traditional role as a utilitarian modernist rationalist (Healey 1999) as well as against the planner alternatively following the tendency towards corporate planning and being included in a new role as e.g. market planner (Gleeson and Low 2000). Instead, arguments are forwarded for new planner roles, where the planner must support an emancipatory and progressive urban *politics of difference*, that provides the planner with a transformative role as a radical planner (Sandercock, 1998, p. 178), and that the planner must support a communicative and collaborative form of planning that provides the planner with a democratising role (Healey 1999, p. 545).

The article presents the results of a research project about the new roles for urban planners inspired by the discussion above. Which roles does the urban planner assume in practice? How can these roles be developed into democratising roles? These are the questions addressed in the article in hand. Obviously, no general answer is possible; answers can only be provided in relation to the context that the urban planners find themselves in. This article deals with the conditions and roles in Danish urban planning. The answers drawn from the Danish context are interesting: (1) because the developments in Danish planning and the conditions are more collaborative than in most other countries, and (2) because Denmark has a long tradition for civic participation and involvement in planning. One must assume that this provides a good basis for developing the role of the planner in a 'democratising' direction.

The research project produces several interesting results, which are elaborated upon in this article.

First, a new role development towards increasingly interactive planner roles amongst the Danish urban planners can be observed, but there is great variation in the manner in which this interactive role is formed. Several different variants of the interactive role are developed, all of which are regarded as relevant in contemporary urban planning. It becomes apparent that the planners deliberately (or not) contribute to the construction of the new role(s), even though they do not always experience it in this manner. The role development can be regarded as a construction site in which there is ample opportunity for the planners to be the co-constructors of this new role. The purpose of this article is to clarify this opportunity to act and encourage increased reflection amongst urban planners about the role development.

Second, the role development and its variants have different consequences for the democratic foundations of the planning. The democratic aspect does not stand equally clear in the planners' respective perceptions of their roles, and it becomes apparent that they – more or less deliberately – employ different understandings of democracy to legitimise the formation of their own role. The purpose of this article is therefore to debate the democratic aspect in the role development as well as

contribute to the discussion concerning the planners' democratising role. In this connection, the role of the planner as *meta-governor* is presented.

First, however, the planning context for the planners is presented, including description of how the Danish context follows the general developments in planning in the Western European countries as well as how Danish practice deviates from this development. Next, four different role elements in the new interactive planner role are presented; elements that are observed amongst the Danish planners. Further discussion focuses on the democratic consequences of the planners' network formation and, finally, a role development is introduced for the planners as meta-governors in order to support the democratising role.

Urban planning under new conditions

Description can be found in the planning literature that since the 1980s, planning in the Western European countries has generally shifted from central, 'plan-steered' planning to a new form of planning in which one abandons faith in the capacity to steer and regulate the development of the urban centre from a public planning centre. In many cases, regulation, control and big plans have created problems for the development of the urban centre on the grounds that they have blocked the capacity of the city or town for dynamic urban development. Instead, up through the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s, a new, more flexible project planning based on ad-hoc projects developed that grows up from below and outside of the public, from e.g. citizens, interest organisations and private financial interests. Working together, the public and private urban actors find the solutions to the local problems (Dear 2000: 121-24, Hall 2000: 26-29, Sandercock 1998: 30). These descriptions of project planning also largely characterise the Danish development, particularly since the mid-1980s (Kjærsdam 1995, Sehested 2002a).

The new form of planning is exercised as part of a regulatory situation generally referred to as *governance* and which represents a consequence of New Public Management reforms that have marked the public organisations in most Western European countries. Whereas planning was previously exercised in a centralised and profession-dominated public bureaucracy based on hierarchy, rules and order (government), the new planning plays out in numerous different policy networks across public and private boundaries (horizontal governance) and across levels of public decision making (vertical governance) (Rhodes 1997: 37-39, Kooiman 1993: 3-4, Stoker 2000: 18, Heffen et al. 2000: 5-7). In the various policy networks, the urban community's array of interests and values emerge and are developed, and this is where the mutual impact between the actors transpires for consensus to be achieved (Freestone 2000: 10, Healey 1997: 65-68). This development can clearly be recognised in the Danish public sector and in Danish planning (see e.g. Bogason 2001, Sørensen 2002, Sehested 2002a and Kjærsdam 1995).

Project planning and governance are therefore useful concepts when attempting to comprehend recent developments in Danish planning; however, the developments in Danish planning also unfold within unique contextual conditions that are important to understand in order to fully comprehend the role development of Danish urban planners. Denmark is one of the countries in which the general development does *not* unambiguously move from Government to Governance and from Plans to Projects, as otherwise described above. Scharphf (1994: 41) has coined the expression "governance in the shadow of hierarchy" as a means of characterising the general development in the public administration in several European countries, which is also a relevant description of the Danish context.

Comparative studies of public administration also conclude that Denmark typically is placed in a group of western European countries characterised by decentralisation, corporatism and consensus and where only certain aspects of New Public Management have been implemented. The most important reform trends are a dynamic of radical decentralisation of politics and administration within a large public sector, internal managerialism in public organisations and only a modest marketisation and privatisation (Premfors 1998: 141-159, Pollitt et al. 1996: 397, Peters and Pierre 1998, Pollitt and Bouchaert 2000). Furthermore, there has been a tendency towards reform aimed at the democratisation of public institutions (Sehested 2002b). This is elaborated upon in the following.

The Danish public system is characterised by decentralisation and pronounced local autonomy in the counties and municipalities. Over the course of the past 20 years, this decentralisation has continued to the individual public institution and citizen-/'user' organs, meaning that in a number of areas they now operate independently within the framework of an overriding political management by objectives (Klausen 1998). An extensive municipal reform is scheduled to be implemented in Denmark in 2007 whereby the municipalities and counties will become fewer but larger and even more administrative tasks will subsequently be decentralised to the municipal and institutional levels. In other words, there is a lengthy tradition of granting independence to public bodies of administration, and New Public Management has supported this tendency, though it has not initiated it. This has meant that urban planning has largely been attended to on the local level, and with the impending local reform in 2007, the urban planning tasks on local level will be increased.

Despite numerous reforms, the Danish public sector has retained a great degree of public regulation, but in new forms, whereby authority has increasingly spread to institutions, organisations and citizens with the help of new organisational forms such as boards, councils, partnerships etc. Denmark has a long tradition for creating close working relationships between public and private actors, and this collaboration has sooner been marked by harmony and consensus than conflict and competition, as often seen in other countries. However, the interaction between public and private actors has increased significantly since the 1980s, where an increasing number of activities are attended to in organisational forms athwart the public and private boundaries. That which is new is that actors from the private business sphere are also included more actively in the close interplay (Ejersbo and Greve 2002). We also see this in the urban planning area, where corporations, investors and entrepreneurs increasingly participate in close collaboration with e.g. municipal and state actors.

At the same time, the Danish Planning Act is renowned for a very early emphasis on civic participation and involvement in the planning. The principal regarding obligatory civic hearings in planning processes was already written into the legislation in the 1970s. Since that time, the principle has been emphasised and developed in the legislation. This has typically occurred through formal written hearings, where interest organisations and professionals in particular have expressed themselves, but also through civic meetings in which everyone has the right to speak (Kjærsdam 1995: 112-8). Throughout the course of the 1990s, many citizen and user organs were created as required by law in the areas of public institutions and policy; these organs represent potential actors in the planning processes.

In general we find a Danish context where urban planning is exercised on a decentralised local level involving numerous local actors. These years there are a considerable pressure on the planning at

local level in order to involve many of the city's actors in the planning. This pressure also becomes apparent in that The Danish Local Government Association has suggested that the municipalities in the course of the 2007 reform create a "Democratic political committee" in the local governments to ensure the further democratisation of all local government policies (Kommunernes Landsforening, 2004).

That which also is unique about the Danish planning context is that faith has not been entirely lost that the public can maintain the general sense of control over both society and urban centre, thereby creating a greater sense of cohesion and equality in the Danish societal and urban development. Despite the project development, the Danish urban planning continues to function within a relatively hierarchically dominated Planning Act and within the frames of political goals and visions in local governments. On that background, it might be possible to speak of planning between hierarchy and network or about projects in the shadow of plans and visions, which is the more correct description of the planning situation in Denmark.

This planning situation and planning tradition creates a common background for the study of planner roles in the research project. Before presenting the planner roles, some brief comments will be made regarding method.

The study of roles

The role study is based upon a new institutional and constructivist understanding of roles. The new-institutional understanding of roles emphasises the significance of context for roles, and perceives roles as a part of an institutional meaning structure (Ejersbo, 1996, March and Olsen, 1989). This understanding of roles encourages the emphasis of the connection between roles and local governance in this role study, but also to weigh the planners' meaning systems. The constructivist role understanding perceives roles as socially constructed identification processes (Burr 1995, Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Poulsen 2005). Roles represent an accumulation of subject positions that are constructed and reconstructed in discursive processes whereby distinction is created to other roles. The role can only be understood by describing what it is not or how it is different from other roles. It is relationally constructed and under constant change through discursive practices. The role understanding sets focus on the construction process in which the planners create meaning with different elements in their role and with their surroundings and where they reject and exclude other opinions/meanings. The new-institutional role understanding points especially at studying the manner in which the planners *handle* their roles under certain context-dependent conditions and within general meaning systems, while the constructivist and discursive understanding also points to studying the planners' *construction* of their roles in this context; a construction that becomes particularly clear and also lends itself more to a situation in which more significant changes have occurred, e.g. in the organisational context and/or in the general perception of planning.

The role study was conducted on the background of qualitative interviews with urban planners about their daily work with planning, with a focus on special issues relevant for the role development. Examples are: which work assignments were prioritised and why? What did they do in the course of a day, week, month? How did they deal with different planning tasks, e.g. project realisation, management by objectives, civic involvement? Which collaborative partnerships did they create regarding a task? Etc.

The urban planners in the study all have the same function in the urban planning. They have central positions in the municipal administration and bear the responsibility for the general planning and urban development in their respective municipalities. These urban planners come from 10 specially selected municipalities in Denmark (large and small), all of which have carried out comprehensive reforms in their municipal organisation and regulatory thinking on account of decentralisation, New Public Management and democratic reforms. The planners therefore constitute *a critical case* in which the planning conditions are changed and where one knew beforehand that the planner role was in flux.

The role variants described below have materialised through the analysis of the planners' own descriptions of their work and action in practice.

Interactive planner roles

The urban planners agree that their work has shifted in character.

Previously the work consisted of detailed planning regulated by an authoritative centre of politicians and themselves as technical planning experts. The work was particularly directed towards the physical planning of traffic and housing. The planners had great influence in the planning process and the political planners were well known in the municipalities. Today, planning consists of a combination of presenting political objectives and visions and realising concrete projects developed together with many of the city's actors that are part of the various network relations. This produces new work for the planners, which can be divided in three different types of tasks:
- Collaboration and dialogue with many types of urban actors in new network organisations;
- Coordination and communication between the many projects and networks; and
- Management and development work, e.g. network regulation and sparring about the political goals and visions.

As one urban planner says:

> "I think that in the future, planning will consist of the local council setting political visions for the development of the municipality and that the citizens or other interested parties – if it is related to commerce – solve the planning work together."

Here we see the situation with planning between hierarchy and network described in concrete terms. The political goals and visions determined by the municipal council and the planning law form a broad framework around the numerous projects and network activities. In practice, in other words, plans and visions are to be combined with projects and network governance. The political planner is not an accepted role for planners anymore.

The urban planners also describe how the organisational framework has changed entirely. All planning work previously was carried out in the bodies of technical administration, which was a central regulatory actor in the urban planning, with large urban planning departments staffed with technical experts. These bodies of technical administration have now been minimised, and the urban planning departments are gone in many places. The general urban planning is carried out in the central municipal administration, close to the chief executive and the mayor, with input in the entire process from numerous community actors. As one planning manager says:

> "The planning has undergone quite a process. Twenty years ago, we had everything gathered in one department. Now the urban planning department is gone entirely, and the work is spread out."

On that background, all of the urban planners agree that they can no longer function in the traditional authoritarian expert role (or the role of the political planner) with their extensive professional bureaucracy behind them. They must all move in the direction of a more interactive role, but as regards the way they do this in practice, we observe considerable variation amongst the planners in the research project. This variation can be observed both in terms of the rationales and values that they support in their work and in the respective forms of network they form in order to carry out the planning work. This variation is illustrated in the following model.

The interactive planner as:	Orientation towards:	Result:	In collaboration with:	Network forms:
Professional development manager	Professionalism and policy	The "beautiful" physical product	Professional network, political-administrative management	Closed and elitist network: those with expertise and the elected representatives
Manager	Policy and efficient implementation	The politically appropriate product	Political-administrative management, interest organisations, building contractors	Closed and elitist network: those who represent someone and those who have capital
Market planner	The market and competition	The financially feasible product	Private building contractors, political-administrative management	Closed and elitist network: the elected and narrow group of affected interests
Process planner	Establishment of communities and consensus	The right democratic process	Citizens, organisations, businesses, political-administrative management	Open and plural network: all of the affected interests and the elected representatives

(The inspiration for the role designations stems from e.g. Considine and Lewis 1999, Harris 1997, Kickert et al. 1997, Healey 1997b, while the content is drawn from the empirical analysis)

The four role variants illustrate the sphere of opportunity that Danish urban planners working with general planning exploit in their role development. Planners working in other contexts and with other responsibilities will have other opportunities. The four role variants are not to be considered as one role per person. Rather, the planners exercise the various role variants in different situations.

As indicated in the figure, the role variants are very different. On some points they can supplement one another, whereas in other areas they are opposites. The various role variants cannot all be combined without an almost schizophrenic result for the planner in question. In other words,

decisions must be made in the respective planning situations, which the urban planners do either consciously or unconsciously.

The professional development manager lies closest to the traditional expert role. The smallest step that the planners can take beyond the former professional role is to accept the politicians as their employers and as the correct political decision makers – i.e. do away with the enemy-like relationship between the expert and the politician – as well as begin to communicate in other forms than those that are purely professional. As one urban planner says:

> "There have been a number of weaknesses in the urban planning field – a sense that one was more democratic than the elected representatives; that one knew better than the elected representatives. Upon meeting, one could either brag about which policies one had got one's politicians to pass or be a little embarrassed about how stupid they had been as regards decisions made regarding planning."

The professionally appropriate product in the town is thereby equated with the politically appropriate product. However, this planner will fight to the end with his professionalism, as one says, and fight hard, but when a political decision is made, s/he will be loyal.

The manager lies the closest to the traditional administrator role that is well-known in a public administration. Here the urban planner especially orients her/himself in relation to the political regulation and attempts to decode the political signals in order to thereafter convert them into professional messages in the urban planning. The policy is strengthened for the benefit of the professionalism. As one urban planner says:

> "It has become more political. Today, we have to be very careful that we don't do something that can come to hurt the Mayor … if you cannot live with it, you have to find another work. Those are the conditions here."

Several of the urban planners are not entirely comfortable in this role, but they exercised it because they felt that it was expected of them by the municipal management.

The market planner is a new and foreign role variant for the urban planners. A very limited number of them exercised it, and they found it to be difficult to handle this role in practice; both because it lies so far from their traditional role, and because they were personally against the 'marketization' of the planning. As one urban planner says:

> "I have never experienced this kind of planning before as a planner, where you go out and make some mutually binding agreements – also on the financial level. Not as a planner."

The market planner is oriented towards the market mechanisms and focuses on the economic development in the town. The work here is about realising projects within the sphere of opportunities and engaging in dialogue with the private actors, e.g. regarding investments. This also requires familiarity with the logic and functioning conditions of the private businesses. The market planner believes that the public must accept co-responsibility for the city's dynamic and economic development and that it is the planner's responsibility to create close cooperative relationships between the parties with the necessary resources.

The process planner is again a planner role that is far from the traditional role. The process planner does not orient himself in relation to the product of the planning, as in the other role variants, but rather in relation to the process. The planner's job is to create good and democratic processes so that the relevant actors in the town are included and can work together to make decisions regarding the right urban development. As one planner says:

> "You can clearly feel that there is also interest from the political side in an increased degree of democracy. I feel that there is. They are more prepared to engage in dialogue with the citizens and participate in meetings as well as – at least to a certain degree – to make changes if there is a lot of opposition against some things. Whereas I feel that in the past, we were kind of raised over everything, and we did that which we believed to be the right thing to do."

When asking urban planners about which role they find to be the most appropriate today, most of them refer to the process planner. This particular role is often forwarded in the planning literature as the 'right' planner role in the future (see the introduction), and the Danish planner organisations also point at this role in the future (Byplanlaboratiet 2002). The role is also fitting in relation to the Danish democratic tradition for engaging in planning, even though we are talking about a more significant and new form of involvement. In practice, however, it is not nearly always the role that the planners exercise; partly on account of lacking knowledge and tools to exercise it – they do not know e.g. how they ought to include citizens in new ways; partly because it proves to be difficult – for not to say impossible – to fulfil in every planning situation.

The planner's problem is therefore that they argue for an ideal role as a process planner, but they do not actually believe that it can function in all planning situations. Instead, they assume the other role elements, such as e.g. the manager and market planner. Some experience them as roles that they are pressed to assume and which they do not appreciate, while others find the roles in question entirely necessary in the new planning.

The conclusion from this study is that the role development for the planners is quite varied and *must* be varied in order to solve the complex and diverse tasks facing contemporary urban planning. In the future, *a criterion for success* for the planners can therefore quite well be:

> how good they are at reflecting over as well as combining and balancing between these role variants in order to solve the planning tasks they are entrusted with.

The figure also indicates that the role variants build upon very different collaborative relationships and network forms. This has consequences for the democratic basis of the planning, as discussed in the following.

The democratic basis of the role development

As indicated in the model, urban planners have started to include different types of urban actors in the planning process; however, there is a great difference in the kind of urban actors included and in the form of networks.

It is amazing that three role elements in the interactive role have a tendency to support a closed and elitist form of governance. There are different explanations for the closed aspect: for the sake of professionalism (one must be an expert to know something about the town); for the sake of policy (one must be elected and represent something to participate); or for the sake of the economy (one must have capital to attain influence). But the consequence is the same as seen from a democratic perspective. It is the few – the selected and the elected – who come to participate in the planning and have an impact on the city's policies.

Closed and elitist governance can – in the worst case – support project planning in the form of management planning and corporate planning where the democratic political regulation sinks into the sand. Instead, professional experts from the public sphere steer together with the elite in the private business world, which attains extraordinary influence via councils, committees, partnerships and boards (see e.g. Dear 2000, Gleeson and Low 2000). In Danish planning, this form has dominated many of the large infrastructure projects and other mega-projects in large Danish towns, and the term 'mahogany board (i.e. table) meetings' has been used to characterise this planning (Gaardmand 1996). The urban planners in this study also believe that the greatest problem plaguing the closed network forms are a lack of legitimacy and broad support for the decisions made in the closed and elitist network.

In the best case, the elitist and closed network form means that one builds on the aggregative, representative democracy. In the *aggregative democracy* understanding, democracy is perceived as a tool for distributing power in the town (efficient decisions must be made for us all), emphasis is placed on the procedures and rules for decisions, emphasis on elections and representation as the central 'criteria for access' in a democracy, and the politicians are considered to be those responsible for thinking about the whole, the common good, and the citizens as being responsible for their own interest (March and Olsen 1989, Sehested 2002a). The representative democracy is also the formal foundation for democracy in Denmark, but ideal is one thing and practice another. Over time, diverse forms of participation have developed in Denmark, which provide access to participation in the political decision-making system for others than just the elected representatives. In the Danish context, the large interest organisations and volunteer organisations in particular have had special access by becoming directly integrated in the political decision-making system, for which reason Denmark is regarded as a corporative political system, as indicated in the above. This form of involvement has meant that habits, routines and traditions have developed over many years for dealing with the participation of these organisations in planning processes, while other actors encounter greater difficulty gaining access. However, the ordinary citizen has long enjoyed access in relation to planning in particular due to the unique legislation and formalisation of civic hearings, where they can be heard directly.

When the urban planners in three of the role variants only choose to include organisations and individual actors with capital – and find this to be democratically defendable – they are building on the Danish corporative and representative democratic traditions. At the same time, however, they emphasise that if we are to avoid regulation loosing grasp of democracy, then the planner must be the first to ensure that the municipal/local council becomes the central decision-maker and is closely involved all of the time; and for the second, to ensure that the rules in the Planning Act for inclusion via civic hearings are respected.

One can only agree with the urban planners that if these criteria are fulfilled, then the closed and elitist governance form must be regarded as being (aggregatively) democratic. But then we are also

talking about maintaining a form of democracy that is possibly about to become inappropriate for dealing with the increasing requirements regarding broad civic involvement in urban planning, and which also fails to solve the problem regarding the lack of acceptance in the greater population regarding the decisions made in closed networks. It is precisely these problems that the process planner attempts to deal with in the role development.

Only the process planner role variant works explicitly with the creation of a process of *open and plural governance* and thereby supports the direct participation in the planning. The traditional hearings – which are also required by law – and civic meetings are regarded as the "professionals' playground" in delimited parts of the planning process, and as exclusionary for the participation of many other urban actors. The process planner instead works with all sorts of new forms of inclusion in all aspects of the planning process in order to include as many people in the town as possible. However, the direct participation is combined with representative participation in order to create balance between the elected political system and direct civic participation; for the process planner places emphasis on the fact that one works within the framework of the political system, and that the politicians must make the ultimate decision. The problems emphasised in this role variant are to avoid excessive and possibly disappointed expectations from the side of the citizens about the extent of their actual influence and as regards what; as well as activating and involving the weakest citizens and their interests.

The process planner supports an entirely different form of project planning as well as an entirely different democratic perspective than the other role elements. We are much closer to the ideal pertaining to communicative planning on the basis of Habermas' ideal regarding the rational dialogue and reflection in open communicative processes in order to develop shared interests and achieving consensus about decisions (Forester 2000, Healey 1997b, Sager 1994, Harris 2002). And the role element largely builds on the *integrative understanding of democracy*. Here, democracy is understood as a goal unto itself; not just a means for distributing power. The objective is to develop the common best and achieve consensus-marked decisions so that broad support can be developed for the decisions. In order to achieve this, the citizens must be taught to actively be a part of the urban political decision-making processes. On that background, the dialogue processes and the direct participation of the general population in the many network organisations are the pivotal point in democracy. The politicians are almost regarded as power-hungry and must therefore be controlled by the population, while the citizens are perceived to be competent and responsible decision makers (March and Olsen 1989: 118, Sehested 2002a: 369). Of course, this is an entirely different understanding of democracy than the aggregative democratic perspective, and when the process planner argues for broad involvement via open and plural networks, this is the understanding of democracy that serves as the basis for her arguments. Seen from this perspective, making decisions in closed and elitist networks is regarded as being undemocratic; conversely, including as many persons as possible and providing full access to participation to everyone is regarded as the most democratic.

The aforementioned role elements build on an array of democratic perspectives and arguments when argument is made for the respective network formations. Reference is occasionally made to the integrative understanding, at other times to the aggregative understanding. However, both arguments have currency in the Danish planning discourse, as there is tradition in Denmark for a combination of these two perspectives. Nevertheless, a consistent observation made in relation to the urban planners is that upon encountering problems with the one form of governance or the other, they have a tendency to pull the planning process back to the classical representative

democracy: "then we have to get the planning back to the council". This is the case both when we believe that the weaker citizens' interests are overlooked by the stronger citizens in open, plural processes, e.g. in housing projects, and when the strong private financial interests generally capture the citizens' interests via closed, elitist networks, e.g. in large infrastructure projects.

However, the question is whether it is possible to find new democratic solutions to these democratic failures in the governance processes? Is it possible to develop a new form of network democracy that accounts for these problems? And which role can the planners play in the democratisation of network governance? As a conclusion to the article, a proposal is presented in which the urban planner acts as a democratic meta-governor.

Urban planners as democratic meta-governors

There is agreement in governance research that the development of governance has a tendency to undermine the institutions of classic representative democracy. At the same time, however, many point out that the development of governance can contribute to the development of new and more flexible democratic institutions (Rhodes 1997, Kooiman 2000, Jessop 2000). Argument is made that both in theory and practice, new forms of democracy are being considered and debated that could possible better deal with the development of governance. But we do not find any argument for radical changes to the western European democracies; rather, suggestions build on top of and expand the existing representative democracies and integrate values from both the integrative and aggregative democracy perspectives.

The purpose in this article is not to discuss new forms of network democracy, but instead to address the aspect of the new democracy and network discussions that relate to the planners' democratising role. This is where the expression regarding the democratic anchorage of governance networks plays in (Sørensen and Torfing 2005). For one could assert that in countries such as Denmark – countries with strong traditions for democratic participation – the democratisation of the governance in planning processes is entirely decisive for both the politicians' and citizens' acceptance of solutions and decisions that emerge via this form of regulation in the towns and urban centres, whether or not they are open or closed processes. And it is precisely the urban planners that can come to play a central role in creating the democratic anchorage of governance in the urban planning area. As mentioned above, this can occur in different ways and on the basis of different democracy perspectives. In the following, however, the object of discussion is a planner role as meta-governor in collaboration with the elected politicians in order to develop the representative democracy in the direction of a network democracy.

Sørensen and Torfing (2005) have written an article in which they discuss the democratic anchorage of governance by presenting four proposals for how this democratisation can proceed. They emphasise that this development must proceed via a dynamic, negotiated and context-dependent process (2005:16). Their proposals include different values about e.g. representation and participation, which obviously must always be the subject of discussion and further development. The four proposals are presented in the following, but discussed in relation to the planner's possible role as meta-governors in the new planning development.

First, democratisation can proceed via the exercise of *meta-governance* (Kooiman 1993, Jessop 2002, Sørensen 2002). Meta-governance is a new, indirect means of regulation, which can e.g. be regulation:

- via network design (decisions regarding who ought to participate, how the networks are to be structured, how one can support the weak participants and establish competing networks, etc.);
- via network framing (regulation via political goals and frameworks, allocation of financial and other resources, discursive frameworks and narrative histories); and
- via network participation (politicians and administrators participating directly in policy networks) (Sørensen and Torfing 2005: 6-9).

In practice, the administrators typically attend to this meta-regulation work, and this is also through for our planners in the research projects. However, if the democratic anchorage of governance is to be ensured, it is decisive that the representatively elected politicians generally attend to the meta-governance together with the planners (Sørensen and Torfing 2005: 7), and the planners must assume a new role as sparring partners and consultants for the politicians, and *together with* the politicians regulate via meta-governance (Poulsen 2005: 105-119). In other words, they must help the politicians to meta-regulate by e.g. providing suggestions and democratically grounded arguments for how the networks in the planning can and ought to be designed, which frameworks could be established and how the politicians and planners can participate in the networks.

The urban planners in this study exercise a very limited meta-governance. The most widespread means by which they do so is that they work with network design, though without combining with the empowerment of weak actors and establishing and supporting competing networks. They typically work with the establishment of frameworks in the form of the political objectives and economic framings, but not extensively with the establishment of frameworks via other supporting resources or via discursive and meaning-creating processes (e.g. story telling). Finally, they typically participate in networks in which they attempt to obtain influence and do not regard it as particularly decisive whether the politicians participate or not. To strengthen the role as a meta-governor the planners should develop more explicit strategies for meta-governance for both themselves and the politicians and make use of more varied instruments of meta-governance, especially empowerment and discursive framing.

Second, the democratic anchorage of governance can take place through attempts made *to ensure a broad basis for those participating* as representatives in governance networks so that they do not just represent themselves, but a larger community or group. This is the case, whether we are talking about elected representatives from the political system, from organisations, from local communities or the like. There can e.g. be talk of ensuring just selection processes, ensuring communication and information amongst representatives and their basis, ensuring that opportunities for alternative opinions and criticism of the representation can come forth, etc. (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005: 10).

Together with the politicians, the urban planners could contribute to creating opportunity so that the relationship between the represented and the representative becomes as close as possible, thereby providing broader democratic basis for opinions and interests. None of the planners in this study have assumed this meta-regulating work. However, if the planners in the future are to engage in a democratising role as meta-governors, it would be advantageous for them to attend to this work.

Third, the democratic anchorage can occur by *strengthening public accountability* in the governance networks. Sørensen and Torfing (2005:12-13) write that this requires guarantees regarding transparency in the network processes, assurances about access to public dialogue with the networks and assurances of responsiveness on the part of the governance network. The criticism

of the governance development in the literature on governance is particularly directed towards this latter point, as is also the case amongst the Danish urban planners in this study. As mentioned above, the term "mahogany board meetings" has become a widespread term in Danish planning, and it is exactly the closed group around the table that leads "secretive" negotiations about important political decisions and where nobody can be held accountable for decisions, which serves as the threat; the greatest threat against democracy in urban planning.

This task is particularly difficult but also very decisive in a democratic perspective. Planners and politicians have to find a balance between the self-regulation and efficiency in the networks and the request for transparency. They must attempt to make the networks and their work more democratically accountable without completely inhibiting the dynamic and efficient aspects of the form of governance. The planners in the study did attend to this task by formulating it as a problem but they had now solutions. In the futures planners as meta-governors have to work on different forms of solutions.

Fourth, the democratic anchorage of the networks can be strengthened by *internalising democratic rules and norms* in the networks themselves, i.e. by teaching the network participants appropriate democratic behaviour in the given context (Sørensen and Torfing 2005:13-14). There must be talk of relevant, generally acceptable and contingent rules and norms that are reached via negotiations, as the definition and the development of "a democratic code of conduct" is a politically normative project. Democratic "rules" and common discursive frameworks must be developed for e.g. "my interests" to develop into "our interests in the network", which must develop into "everyone's interests" in the city and society. Obviously, the work with the development of a democratic code of conduct must be attended to by the politicians in particular, though again with the urban planners as the helping hand.

Only the process planner from the model above regards this as important, whereas it is hardly included in the other role variants. If the planners as meta-governors have to create a better balance between the networks' work and the interests of the general population, thereby creating support for the decisions resulting from governance, this task is extremely central.

Concluding, the urban planner as a meta-governor has to attend to the task of democratising governance processes in urban planning. They have to be explicit about the democratic background for their planning work and together with the politicians make democratic strategies for the development of urban planning. In this article it is argued, that the planners especially have to attend to a greater variation in use of meta-governance instruments, ensure a broad basis for participation, strengthen public accountability in governance networks and internalise democratic norms and values in the networks themselves.

Upon considering the urban planners as meta-governors in order to democratize the new networks and planning forms, it is important to remember the article's empirical basis. First, it is a Danish planning context in which there is a reasonably great acceptance of public meta-governance in general, and secondly, the planners in this article works with general urban planning work in central administration of local governments. These planners have a position and working tasks that both make it *relevant and possible* for them to engage in the city's democratic meta-governance; while it is not necessarily the case for urban planners in other positions and with other responsibilities.

Conclusion

14

The role of the Danish urban planner has been under transformation over the last 10-15 years. This is due to the development of new planning forms in Denmark, where project planning and governance are new features of development, but continue to remain within the framework of an overriding public, hierarchical regulation via meta-governance. The urban planners in a Danish context must therefore attend to the planning "between hierarchy and network", and urban projects are developed "in the shadow of plans and political goals". On that background, the urban planners are about to shift into interactive planner roles in different variants, which are all regarded as relevant for solving the complicated planning tasks. The article has presented and discussed the various role variants presented in a role model, and the conclusion is that all of the role variants are relevant in the new complex planning situation. One important criteria for success for urban planners in the future will be how good they are at reflecting and balancing between the various role variants in order to solve their planning tasks.

The final section of the article has raised the discussion of the democratic consequences of the various role variants. Proposal has been made for a possible development of the interactive planner towards the role as a democratic meta-governor, where the politicians and urban planners work together to attempt to create democratic anchorage for network-based project planning. This illustrates a certain version of a democratising role, as suggested in the introduction.

In the introduction to this article, another proposal for the future planner as a radical planner was also briefly made, as e.g. Sandercock (1998) suggests. The question is how the planner as a meta-governor and a radical planner can interact?

The radical planner can be interpreted as a process planner in the role model in this article, which support the integrative network democracy, but also has a radical ethical and political dimension (see e.g. Forester 2000, Healey 1997, Sandercock 1998). Unlike the political planner in the 1970s, the radical planner is not supposed to tell people how the world and their city are supposed to be; instead attempting to change the structural and systemic inequalities in society by perceiving and understanding the dynamic in these inequalities, i.e. relating critically and at a distance to the world around them, as well as helping the weakest to clarify their wishes and needs and making them capable to change things themselves (Sandercock 1998: 178).

If the radical planner gives rise to the revolutionary planner, then there is a great difference from a meta-governor to a radical planner. The meta-governor is likely more of a reformer and attempts to impact the political system from within by engaging in close contact to politicians and other central decision-makers in society and the town. Work largely takes place on the background of an acceptance of the (post)-liberal plural democracy and its decision-making processes, as well as – as already mentioned – an expansion of the representative democracy in the direction of a more inclusive network democracy. When the urban planner is a meta-governor in close cooperation with politicians, s/he can e.g. not openly oppose a political decision made in the local council or gather a group of citizens to engage in conflict with the elected politicians.

The role as meta-governor could attain great significance for the planner role, which is subject to discussion in this article: the planner with responsibility for the general urban planning; while the radical planner role is easier to assume for urban planners employed for specific projects at a distance to the political system. The discussion of the development of the new planner role must therefore not just be based in the contexts of the various countries, but also in the planner's position

and planning tasks in the public system. This article has presented a proposal of how it is possible – despite being tightly couched as planner in the public political regulatory system – to work in a goal-oriented manner towards democratising project planning and governance development by making it more inclusive.

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