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Planning (in) the Next Century? On the Futures of Planning That are Already Here

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Abstract
What if the problem with planning was its very relation with normativity and future? In this article, we challenge the idea that "the future that we want" can be designed in the sense that planning has historically done—by imagining a future that should be sought by action in the present. In so doing, we explore the possibility of planning as a strategy to release the futurial, excessive presences that already exist in the present, through Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's notion of "fugitive planning," and Giorgio Agamben's idea of "destituent power."

Keywords
planning theory, planning futures, temporality, fugitive planning

Introduction

Planning the next century? This article takes step from a simple rhetorical gesture: transforming the call of this Special Issue—that is, thinking alternative planning futures—into a question on the very relation of planning *with* future. We take the call's suggestion to "be exploratory, creative, and provocative" at word, by means of directing the provocation toward the very discipline of planning: what happens if we question the very idea of planning as being a tool for the good? We intend to reframe the inspiration behind the call to "design better communities, cities, and society in the next century" by questioning whether better communities, cities, and society, and indeed "the long-term future that we want," are actually something that can be designed in the sense that planning has historically done, by fundamentally assuming that the way in which these are to be designed is something that is self-evident and consensual. To be sure, our endeavor should not be conflated or confused with (neo-)liberal arguments "against planning" and for spontaneous spatial order (Banham et al. 1969; see, for a recap, Klostermann 1985). Rather, we wish to question the wider sociotechnical imaginary within which planning is entrenched since at least two centuries, in its three main features: (i) a historicist, unilinear approach to time, combined with (ii) a supposedly "neutral" view of "public good" (though the latter has been object of fierce debate in planning theory—more on this below), and (iii) an "ontology of action."

Our proposal, in a nutshell, is about reimagining planning as the practice of opening the space for alternative possibilities, while, at the same time, differentiating our approach to recent engagements with insurgent planning. While we consider the latter a valuable critique and expansion of planning beyond its self-assured territories, we are interested in probing something different, exploring a dimension of planning that is not captured by its being necessarily "activist," "political," or "counterhegemonic," and to see what the discipline of planning can do about it—an exploration, it should be mentioned, that is in part also the result of a reflexive engagement with "political" approaches to planning of some of us (e.g., Tulumello 2019).

What we are speculating about, then, is not an "alternative" notion or definition of planning, one that could be presented with recipes, a normative framework, and a set of clear examples. We are rather pointing to a *disposition* that is nested within planning, and that has to do with its peculiar ontological condition, one that is normally overlooked when planning is understood as an action performed by given subjects over a malleable space in a specifically defined time frame: namely, the fact that planning always takes place in the middle. Its intervention on the world is always an *inter-venire*, coming in between, in the flow of things, that is, always a getting into something rather than being the origin of an effort (Deleuze 1995, 121).

What is at stake here, to be sure, is a matter of perspective: one may argue that, by claiming that planning *is not* about designing the future, we end up depriving it of perspective. This would certainly be true as long as one regards "future" as a location positioned somewhere in the line of time, and "perspective" as the project(ion) of a subject's mind toward it. Everything changes if we assume perspective is not something

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we either *have* or not, but rather a precarious condition that we *are*, one that is held together by all sort of ongoing practices, relations, and plans.[1] A perspective, in other words, is a situated and embodied point of view entangled in a space that is dense and a temporality that is multiple: as such, perspective does not allow for a disembodied overview, from which it would be possible to "see" and "design" a future. Lacking such an overview, then, does not mean lacking a perspective. It means, however, to understand that planning is an always situated condition that is constantly haunted and overflown by the complexity of the relations, frictions, and prolongations in which it is taken.

And yet, this is not a damning condition for planning. On the contrary, what we are interested in probing here is precisely a different *disposition* in planning, toward the excessive dimension that, normally, planning either seeks to suppress or ignores. Rather than further exploring oppositions—institutional/insurgent, formal/informal, and top-down/bottom-up—that, despite having long been in the kernel of planning theory, are inadequate to capture this fleeting condition, we propose a speculative endeavor, akin to the one proposed, in a different context, by Maria Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, 7): namely a stance that "invokes an indecisive critical approach, one that doesn't seek refuge in the stances it takes, aware and appreciative of the vulnerability of any position on the 'as well as possible.'"

In order to do so, this article explores the temporal multiplicity of this excessive dimension through Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's notion of "fugitive planning" and Abdoumaliq Simone's notion of *surrounds*. Subsequently, we reflect on how the discipline of planning may dispose itself toward, or attune to, this dimension without suppressing it, that is, opening the possibility to attend to and let emerge those future(s) that are already fermenting in the present.

The article is organized as follows: after a critical review, of the relation of planning (theory) with normativity and future, we discuss the "fugitive planning" proposal to then resort, in the last section, to Agamben's destituent strategy to consider planning's ability to attend to the "fugitive planning" proposal.

From Modernist to Insurgent Planning

Planning, the call for this Special Issue reminds, is peculiar among the academic disciplines because of its "focus on the future"; and yet, its practice has been "look[ing] backwards, towards the past," focusing at best on practices to be reproduced, archetypes to be replicated. What if planning, the call continues, were to focus on next practices and prototypes instead? This is the suggestion we intend to problematize, not to reassert a conservative view of planning, but rather to encourage a more radical imaginative experimentation. Whether looking backward at best practices, or forward at next practices, planning still remains within the temporal imaginary introduced by Enlightenment ideas and nineteenth century historicism: an unilinear understanding of time proceeding along with a progressive path; one that planning is tasked with shaping, either by replicating the past or envisaging the future. Yet, from

historical materialism to the theory of relativity, many intellectual traditions have argued for the need to *rethink time* by displacing its supposedly uniform, linear, and homogeneous quality with a much more complex, heterogeneous, and multiple image: a fragmented and layered *multiversum* (see below), where different temporalities are sedimented in various strata and degrees of consistency (Bloch 1986[1954–1959]; Tomba 2011). Seen from this angle, spatial development appears as a multifaceted, spectral territory, whose present and presence are haunted by what is not there, what is no longer, what is not yet. Something more radical than simply looking forward, rather than backward, may be required. First of all, this entails questioning planning's normative relation with future.

Two caveats are necessary, before we begin exploring the history of (spatial) planning in these terms. The first concerns the multifaceted, and at times complicated, relation between planning as a practice (and public policy) and planning as an academic discipline (and a field of theorization). In particular, it is worth reminding that only recently has spatial planning been fully assumed as an academic discipline with a coherent body of theoretical work—with key planning theory books published since the 1970s (e.g., Faludi 1973) and the creation of planning theory journals since the 1990s.[2] But the theoretical endeavor of planning goes much back into the past: modern (and modernist) planning find much of their inspirations in the utopian texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth century; and it is a nineteenth century "theory," Ildefons Cerdá's *Teoria General de la Urbanización* (2018[1867]), that has introduced the very concept of urbanization, opening up a crucial problematic field for twentieth-century planning. This is the problematic field with which we engage, drawing on texts of "planning theory"—that is, those explicitly discussing the theoretical grounds of/for planning—as a reference for understanding the broader relation between normativity and planning practice.

Second, we center the history of planning in the history of Western/Northern planning—which has long been considered to constitute "planning" writ large. While we are aware of the problematic assumptions of this, we are precisely interested in reconsidering and problematizing what has long been assumed as the "core" of the discipline—thereby possibly opening to different relations with normativity. At the same time, we will engage with works that have come from outside this "core," noting those that seem to have fallen prey to the same relations with normativity of mainstream planning, and those that instead opened up a space for a different understanding of those relations.

Typical historical accounts associate the "birth of spatial planning" with the problematic field of rapid industrialization and urbanization in late eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe; and the paradigm of planning practice dominating since then and well into the twentieth century with Western ideas about modernity, progress, and development. Besides the already mentioned line of continuity with utopian thinking, planning historians have found the conceptual roots of spatial planning in a plurality of traditions: to make some examples,

from the ideas of utopian socialists of the likes of Robert Owen or Charles Fourier[3] to Ildefons Cerdá's theory of urbanization and circulation, all the way to Baron Haussmann's understanding of the city as a battleground—and the articulation of beautification with military movement. We have purportedly selected three examples associated with radically different understandings of politics: utopian socialism, Cerdá's egalitarian liberalism, and Haussmann's authoritarian nerve—that Cerdá did explicitly criticize for his evident classism (Pavoni and Tulumello 2023, 89).

We did so to stress what these accounts have in common, something that will be fully formalized and put at the "core" of planning by modernist architects/planners like Le Corbusier or Walter Gropius, or garden city movement founder Ebenezer Howard: the belief, typical of Enlightenment, "in the perfectibility of the social order" (Sandercock 2003, 29) through (the transformation of) space.

Already in 1867, Ildefons Cerdá already defined in these very terms the notion of urban planning that subtended his concept of urbanization:

> Let me adopt the word urbanization not only to indicate any action that tend to group buildings together and regularize their functions in a consolidated group, but also for the set of principles, doctrines and rules that should be applied so that buildings and their conglomerations, as opposed to constricting, distorting and corrupting the physical, moral and intellectual faculties of social humans, can help promote their development and vigor, thereby improving individual wellbeing, the sum total of which constitutes public prosperity (2018[1867], 68).

In his *Teoria*, Cerdá framed planning in the same terms in which we are urged to frame it today: a "set of principles, doctrines, and rules" to be applied in order to design a better future. Cerdá's ideas are exemplary because, Andrea Cavalletti argues, the question for him "was no longer that of including life within a determined place, but rather within space itself" (2005, 26; our translation). Urban space, in other words, was reframed by Cerdá as a veritable technology that the principles, doctrines, and rules of planning allowed to design in order to achieve a good that he believed to be self-evident and uncontroversial, according to an evolutionary theory of progress in which the notion of civilization and that of urbanization merged (ibid.; see also Adams 2019).[4]

From these ideas did descend an approach to planning practice centered on the technical, scientific competence of the planner, who is given by the State the authority to foster the "necessary" transformations. Here, the relation between planning and normativity/future is quite linear: social space is a *tabula rasa* (as per Le Corbusier's famous quip) on which technocratic action should be inscribed through the means of planning. Differently from the interest of the individual, planning is therefore assumed as practice that seeks to achieve the "public good" (e.g., Salzano 1998)—and, conversely, with predicting and anticipating problematic externalities of urbanization (see Lewis 1916). As particularly evident in Cerdá's argument for

replacing what he saw as the inadequate and anachronistic notion of city with the smooth space of planetary circulation (urbanization), this is the quintessential expression of planning as a sociotechnical imaginary[5] (cf. Adams 2019; Pavoni and Tulumello 2023, ch. 4).

In a sense, the very emergence and consolidation of planning theory as an academic, self-reflexive field is the history of the critique of the modern(ist) approach to planning. The crisis of the Western post-WWII social pact, the capitalist crisis of the 1970s, the long-wave of the spirit of '68, and the emergence of post-modernism have been associated, in the planning field, with the crisis of modernist planning and of its theories. The critique acquired different forms: the role of planning as an instrument for the (re)production of capitalist relations (Buitrago-Sevilla 2022; Young 1990, ch. 8), the shortcomings of social engineering (Sandercock 2003; Scandurra and Krumholz 1999), the rigid rationalities of technocratic planning (Davy 2008), the problematic relation between modernist spatialities and social encounter (Tulumello 2017, ch. 5). Critiques to modern/modernist planning have also come from the other side of the political spectrum, namely, from (neo-)liberal arguments "against planning" and for freedom in societal spatial organization (Banham et al. 1969; see, for a recap, Klostermann 1985).

Of course the critiques from the "left" and the "right" (with some degree of simplification) are radically different: the former find in the technocratic nature of modernist planning a disguise of a strategy for the reproduction of socioeconomic relationships; while the latter would argue that, since planning is an impossible technology for planners-humans, it inevitably leads to totalitarianism, and the only technology that should be endowed with taking decisions on the future is the market.[6] But cross-cutting different academic critiques and political oppositions faced by planning is a broader problematization of the type of normativity that dominates modernist planning, that is, the very identification of the "public good" as a self-evident given, with some distinctions in terms of more socialist or liberal democratic orientations, and of the future as a space for linear progress and development.

The result is a fundamental bifurcation in the discussions around planning. On the one hand, by the 2000s, the core discussions in planning theory (see, e.g., Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones 2002; Huxley and Yiftachel 2000; Talvitie 2009) have fundamentally come to revolve around the search for making sense of the plurality of approaches that had filled the void created by the fall of the hegemony of modernist planning. Three of the new theories enlisted by Antti Talvitie (2009) testify to the search for different relations between planning (theory) and normativity. The communicative model advocated by the likes of Patsy Healey and John Forester, the Just City, formalized in the field of planning by Susan Fainstein, and the proactive, non-Euclidean approach advocated by John Friedmann have in common a conceptualization of planning, rather than a linear process driven by public actors, as a social process, encompassing a plurality of actors—and the planner as the pivotal actor in the coming together of various instances, interests, and values. New planning ideas are still

heavily normative but, this time, there is an acknowledgment of the political nature of the "public good"—and planning becomes the space where different visions of the public good can come together, more or less collaboratively or agonistically (cf. Bond 2011). This is also reflected on a return of explicit engagements with the future, for instance in Sam Cole's call (2001) for opening planning futures through the methods of future studies; or the emergence of approaches centered on risk and security, quintessentially anticipatory fields (e.g., Jabareen 2015). In sum, amidts all the shifts that (Northern) planning theory and practice have undergone, important dimensions of continuity crosscut this complex journey. One the one hand, the persistence of modernism: of its *spatialities*, which still dominate the patterning of cities and metropolises across the world (e.g., Martinotti 1993); and of its core idea about planning as a sociotechnical *imaginary*.[7] On the other hand, what has really never changed is precisely planning's focus *on future*: planning has always and still is centered on ideas about a progress from a gone past to a non-yet future its present is supposedly able to produce, within a precise "ontology of action" that rests on an uncontested relation between planning and acting, making, and doing. Questions of gender, race, class, environment, and therefore equality, sustainability, and justice, nowadays directly inspire vast swaths of the discipline of planning—and planning theory. Yet, planning keeps positing these abstract notions as goals that it believes to be able to design. What remains unthought in this sense, for all the good intentions, is exactly the limit of intentionality and, more profoundly, the non-innocent relation between will, design, space, and time, that assumes that the present can be linked to a desired future via planning itself. The idea of "planning the next century," in other words, still appears to be fed by its nineteenth-century sociotechnical imaginary: a normative understanding of space as a malleable technology that can be repurposed for the good along with a teleological understanding of time. Despite the significant shifts in the type of normativity at the core of planning theory, in sum, we want to stress here that "new" approaches[8] and paradigms seem to still rely on an "old" view of future.

On the other hand, the influx of southern, post- and decolonial ideas have refreshed, enriched, and certainly complicated the field of planning from the outside and the margins—though with important incursions in the core of disciplinary discussions, most notably through the work of Ananya Roy (e.g., 2005).[9] Besides the importance that the focus on informality and/in the Global South has had in reshaping the geographies of urban studies and planning, southern approaches have also challenged mainstream planning's conceptions of normativity through the lenses of insurgent citizenships (Friedmann 2002; Holston 2007) and planning. Insurgent planning (IP) follows and expands the tradition of radical planning by questioning the epistemic violence through which planning delimits its own field (see Huq 2020). According to Faranak Miraftab, IP is "counterhegemonic, transgressive and imaginative" (2009, 33) and oriented toward the decolonization of the future as a space for political contestation and imagination. The challenge

to (modernist) planning's normativities is brought to a deeper level—not only opening the future to competing visions of public good but also to different and necessary visions of a different world.

In Miraftab's words, "the practices of insurgent planning acknowledge what the hegemonic drive of neoliberal capitalism tries to obscure: the potent oppositional and transformative practices that citizens and marginalized populations invent outside global capitalism's definition of inclusion" (ibid., 43). This effort in problematising, expanding, and questioning the definitional, categorical, and political certainties of planning is particularly relevant and constitutes a necessary reference point for any speculative effort at upsetting planning away from its comfort zone. While this is also our intention here, the dimension of planning we are interested in exploring is different, and in a sense transversal to the opposition between (hegemonic) and (counterhegemonic) planning that the notion of insurgent planning seemingly relies on. Especially focusing on its definitional texts—the variety of empirical examples caution against easy generalizations—it seems to us that insurgent planning still rests on a series of ontological assumptions as regard temporality, action, and "the good," which formally converge with those of professional planning. While radically questioning the *what*—by significantly expanding the concept—and the *good* of planning—by unpacking its conflictual dimension –, insurgent planning literature somehow remains entrapped within a consequentialist presupposition as regard what qualifies a practice *as* (insurgent) planning: "whoever the actors, what they do is identifiable as insurgent planning if it is purposeful actions that aim to disrupt domineering relationships of oppressors to the oppressed, and to destabilize such a *status quo* through consciousness of the past and imagination of an alternative future" (Miraftab 2018, 44). Moreover, it seems that beneath and beyond the conflict that insurgent planning releases, there remains a "naturalised set of assumptions; that is to say, that of the state, which, explicitly or implicitly, presupposes democracy, citizenship and the public sphere as universals to be reached" (Feltran 2020, 12). What we are referring to, borrowing from Gabriel Feltran's critical reading of the literature on insurgent citizenships,[10] is that it often seems that the notion of insurgent planning refers to practices that express *different* ways to reach the *same* goal that mainstream planning gesture toward, at least rhetorically.

Let us clarify that these reflections are not to be understood as critiques to the notion of IP *per se*. We believe that many of these aspects can actually be functional and strategic in the context of IP theory and practice, opening up a space of debate and conflict vis-à-vis the discipline of planning, challenging technocratic developments, and expanding planning's imagination. Our intention here is, nonetheless, to follow a different trajectory than IP. The "political" dimension of the planning we are interested in exploring in this text is far less evident and it is not necessarily grounded on an explicit "activist" narrative "focused on making and doing" on behalf of the "common good," in the "public interest" or to achieve "social impact," however ambiguously these goals may be defined"

(Boano 2017). The "fugitive planning" we will describe in the next section is not a planning that seeks to liberate the commons from their occupation, but rather one that constantly secretes something far more volatile, obscure, and ambiguous. Harney and Moten have defined it as *undercommons,* that is,

> not a realm where we rebel and we create critique; it is not a place where we "take arms against a sea of troubles/and by opposing end them." The undercommons is a space and time which is always here (2013, 9).

What we are interested in exploring, in short, are those dimensions exceeding planning that surround, and to some extent haunt, planning practice itself: the excess through which suppression normally planning emerges *qua* discipline, with its implicit understanding (and ontology) of action and time.

Fugitive Planning

"Planning," as Mai Nguyen and Tom Sanchez remind in the CfP of this issue, "is a discipline that distinguishes itself from other academic disciplines because of its focus on the future." What they lament, however, is that in fact it has been mostly looking backward. "What if, instead"—they propose—"planners were asked to reimagine our long-term future and explore how the field could plan and design better communities, cities, and society in the next century?" In the last section, we explained why this stance is problematic in itself. In this section, then, we ask what does remain of planning, of its sense and purpose, if we stop thinking of space as a malleable matter to be designed according to our will, and future as a still inexistent point in the trajectory of the arrow of time? Let us qualify from the start that this does not imply that the ambitions of planning be diminished, its role confined to small-scale localism, or, worst, to libertarian improvisation. Renouncing to Prometheanism does not mean resignation, as some believe. Planning remains crucial, provided that its sense and purpose are radically reimagined, starting with the ontological premises on which its notions of space, time, and action implicitly rest.

The temporal orientation that feeds planning is heavily indebted to the teleological understanding of progress that has emerged in the nineteenth century, parallel to the surfacing of discipline itself. It is worth reminding that, already by then, historical materialism was challenging such an empty and homogeneous understanding of time, by proposing instead to think temporality in its concrete and multiple quality. A rather different image of reality was in this way implied, a fragmented and layered *multiversum* where different temporalities and collective desires are sedimented in various strata and degrees of consistency: unactualized futures, abandoned pasts, alternative presents. In the words of Massimiliano Tomba, "the historical materialist regard history the way an archaeologist regard the various layers of soil at an archaeological site, or the way a geologist regard rock-strata. Centuries and millennia exist contemporaneously before his or her eyes" (2013, 7; our translation). This is what speculative archaeologists such as Walter

Benjamin or Ernst Bloch were interested in doing, that is, detecting the emancipatory futures that are sedimented in the present, in order to release them and their "effective and germinal force," the force that is capable to bring about actual change (Bloch 2000[1923]). The future, in these terms, is not positioned at some point along the arrow of time; it is already here, in multiple, larval forms, which require to be perceived, attended, listened to, and let develop. This is the ontological density in which planning is always already imbricated: planning the next century thus always-already means planning *in* the next century. Not a matter of seeking to design the better future we want, then, but of letting emerge the "better" futures (the "utopian" impulses, the sedimented temporalities, the lines of flight) that are already present within—and constantly overflow—the here-and-now, albeit often entrapped, oppressed, or neutralized by the violence of state, capital, and other reactionary forces. It is to these "futurial presences" (Harney and Moten 2013) that we now turn.

In *Against the Commons*, Álvaro Sevilla-Buitrago defines planning as a "consistent strategy to shape social order through a wide range of policy and design mechanisms that mediate, realign, and operationalize the spatial nexus of production and reproduction, often to the detriment of subaltern commons" (2022, 205). Throughout the book, he demonstrates the role that urban planning has had in capturing and perverting the spaces of commoning and autonomy that popular classes had been building all along. Granted, Sevilla-Buitrago provides an at times too dichotomous description of the relation between "commoning" and "planning," firmly situating the latter on the side of capitalist urbanization and providing the former with a sort of non-capitalist essentiality—we believe the reality of their coexistence is much more complex and complicitous. However, his powerful historical account is useful to grasp the extent to which planning cannot be understood without taking into account the dense process of sociomaterial production of space out of which it has emerged, a space that it has often ended up neutralising, if not violently perverting.

Sevilla-Buitrago proposes a set of normative suggestions toward the building of a project of "commonist urbanization": while similarly interested in the "commonist" potentials of planning, we propose to explore whether such a potential can be released by decoupling planning from its normative bent, and the ontological configuration of action, space, and time that feeds it. This decoupling will allow us to explore that sociomaterial density and its ontological implications, searching instead for a means to release its coexisting, neutralized virtualities/possibilities.

To do so, we gesture to another dimension of "planning," one that is transversal (or "diagonal," cf. Arendt 1961, 12–13) to the dialectics between commoning and Planning (here understood, in a more traditional sense, with a capital P)— or "insurgent" and "capitalist" planning for that matter— and that is not defined by its non-capitalist essence, but rather by its immanent unfolding as an ongoing work of being and holding together in the face of contemporary

precarization, insecurity, and brokenness. To do so, we take inspiration from Harney and Moten's speculation on "fugitive planning":

> This ongoing experiment with the informal, carried out by and on the means of social reproduction, as the to come of the forms of life, is what we mean by planning; planning in the undercommons is not an activity, not fishing or dancing or teaching or loving, but the ceaseless experiment with the futurial presence of the forms of life that make such activities possible (2013, 74–75).

Harney and Moten deploy the hold of the slave ship as a conceptual locus to think fugitive planning. There, in the hold, the black bodies have been violently gathered, forced to adapt to the bloody rhythms of colonial logistics. There is no way to flee the ship, unless by dying in the open sea: the black bodies must stay put. And yet, fleeing *does* take place, in the shape of a shared feeling of dispossession, a feeling-in-common that emerges as all other avenues and imaginaries of belonging have been eradicated, out of a common belonging-*in*-flight that is nonrepresentational, corporeal, material. What is this relation, and why they propose to define it as planning?

Before answering this question, a clarification on that feeling-in-common is in order. For that we will briefly turn to Agamben's reflections on the ontological relationality of the common. In his long-standing exploration of the "juridico-political machine of the West" developed in the various volumes of the *Homo Sacer* series, Giorgio Agamben (2017) gave notable emphasis to the double structure that he sees at the core of said "machine": the state of exception. Elaborating on the intuitions of Walter Benjamin and Carl Schmitt, Agamben describes the state of exception as a logic of inclusive exclusion whereby an outside (e.g., life, space, world) is *included* by means of *excluding* its excessive, conflictual, and contingent materiality. The normative logic of the state of exception implies a notion of relation "as that which constitutes its elements by at the same time presupposing them as unrelated" (Agamben 2017, 1271). What characterizes the "relation" of exception is *the systematic denial of the ontological relationality of the common* that, in fact, is its condition of possibility. As Roberto Esposito (2011[2002], 31) similarly claims, the juridico-political relation of exception is what immunizes life from this impulse, what suffocates its excess. This is for instance evident in one of this logic's foundational loci, Thomas Hobbes, for whom, writes Esposito: "if the relation between men is in itself destructive, the only route of escape from this unbearable state of affairs is the destruction of the relation itself" (Esposito 2009[1998], 27).[11] The ontological relationality of the common, what is simultaneously presupposed and denied by the state of exception, could be thus understood as "contact"—an unmediated condition that cannot be grasped by a representational medium (Agamben 2021). Keeping this tension between "contact" and "relation" (of exception) in mind, we can come back to the slave ship. There, Harney and Moten observe, what seems to be emerging is a strange sort of relation:

> Hapticality, the touch of the undercommons, the interiority of sentiment, the feel that what is to come is here. Hapticality, the capacity to feel through others, for others to feel through you, for you to feel them feeling you, this feel of the shipped is not regulated, at least not successfully, by a state, a religion, a people, an empire, a piece of land, a totem (2013, 98).

In that most violent and desperate of places, a common form of life does unfold nonetheless, as "a living normativity emerging out of contingent and singular encounters" (Pavoni 2018, 103), one that, paraphrasing Rosi Braidotti and Patricia Pisters, is "dynamic and creative, transforming reality always according to hidden intensities which […] present the ethical norm of finding new ways of how we might *inhabit* the earth" (2014, 8, our emphasis).

We would like to point the attention of the reader to the concept of *inhabitation*, since it is in this sense that this emerging relationality can be better understood as "planning." Planning (in) the undercommons means crafting common ways of inhabiting the uninhabitable (Simone 2016). Let us hasten to qualify this concept should not be mistaken as a romantic ode to resilience and adaptation in conditions of deprivation. Nor are we necessarily dealing with a counterhegemonic resistance, here. What preconstituted categories—be them political and/or moralist in their overtone—fail to do is attending to these emerging relations on their own terms. Abdoumaliq Simone has addressed this aspect by looking at the way in which definitions of urban inhabitability shape given ways of seeing and unseeing the urban, ways that are in turn unable to attend to those "emergent figurations of social bodies constituted through the intersections of different ways of inhabiting the urban" without only defining them in negative terms, as instances of lack, deprivation, or romantic resilience (2016, 137). As anticipated, also the label of "counterhegemonic resistance" appears to be too prejudged to grasp the concrete relationality of these practices as they emerge: infrastructural notions such as consistency, maintenance, or (co-)traction seem to be more appropriate.[12]

This emergence can be strategically referred to as planning, in other words, because it is generative of common infrastructures of being- and holding-together (cg. Berlant 2016). It is a "fugitive" planning, moreover, since it seems to be emerging by dint of fleeing, that is, from a common flight from established categories, expectations, relations, and identities—a commonality among bodies that is produced *as they flee*.

Take the colonized bodies that revolt, as famously described by Frantz Fanon (1963[1961], 47): by taking the streets, that is, by means of a common flight from the physical, affective, and juridical straitjackets of the colonial apparatus, they "realize" that the colonial state of exception, and the "theory of individualism" that informs it, is false. This is not only an intellectual "realization," in fact, but a corporeal one, that unfolds through the corporeal experience of becoming-common (see also Pavoni and Tulumello 2023). A more mundane instance can be found in the "clandestine life" in common that Guy

Debord refers to, when reminding those years spent in Paris with his Situationist friends, going round and round in the night, consumed by fire.[13] This "life," private and public at once, certainly cannot be ascribed to anything explicitly "political" or "insurgent," and yet might well be the latter's condition of possibility. This is what Agamben seems to imply when reflecting about it:

> It is as if each of us obscurely felt that precisely the opacity of our clandestine life held within it a genuinely political element, as such shareable par excellence—and yet, if one attempts to share it, it stubbornly eludes capture and leaves behind it only a ridiculous and incommunicable remainder (2017, 1026).

The notion of *surrounds*, recently proposed by Simone, could provide a way to grasp this fleeting emergence, as long as we do not locate it within the realm of mere provisionality, informality, or improvisation—if these terms are understood as the other face of Planning's permanency, formality, and reliability—or as instances of insurgent planning or commoning—if these terms are understood as the other face of Planning's post-political narcosis. The *surrounds* refer to "the ways in which […] brokenness, fragmentation, and dispersal usher in practices of repair or invention" (Simone 2022, 28). This is not to say fugitive planning does not belong to the sphere of the political, of course, but rather that its "political" or "emancipatory" dimension cannot be established or certified in advance. With an effort to avoid or circumvent dichotomous definitions, fugitive planning must be understood as belonging to that ordinary work of being and holding together, by meeting, communicating, thinking, loving, plotting, and struggling, a material relationality that does not unfold into a praxis oriented toward a dominant or alternative future, but rather experiments with the multiple temporalities or "futurial presences" that already populate the here-and-now, intangible and yet fermenting, waiting to be pursued as lines of flight.

While the notion of insurgent planning has been deployed to acknowledge *as* planning all those practices that escape the mainstream vision of planning insofar as not institutional, formal, professional; that of fugitive planning therefore is not defined in opposition to dominant ones. It rather *surrounds* them, as a "strange accompaniment", a "submergent infrastructure that suggests something other than what is recognized" and that "exceeds definition and coherence […]. In all instances the surrounds are infrastructural in that they entail the possibilities within any event, situation, setting, or project for something incomputable and unanticipated to take (its) place" (Simone 2022, 5–11). There is an excessive dimension that is important to keep in mind here: it is exactly by being excessive to the state of affairs that something like a fugitive planning is able to emerge and *hold*. The undercommons is traversed and composed by instances of a planning that is surely emergent and yet not necessarily insurgent, because it is first of all an infrastructural activity of holding together and an ethical activity of empowering—in the Spinozian sense—that cannot be defined in advance, since it lacks a clearly defined political essence, since it has first of all to do with fleeing and exceeding planning (its categories, diagnosis, projections) itself.

The insistence on both the infrastructural and excessive dimension of fugitive planning is crucial for our argument. Either implicitly or explicitly, in fact, planning is normally defined by its capacity to reduce excess—differently referred to as chaos, noise, disorder, etc. More generally, forces such as capital, police, the state, they all want to decompose, separate, and suffocate the excess of this becoming-common where social reproduction rests. At the same time, they want to capitalize upon it, by *modulating* the excess, increasing it in order to be valorized, decreasing it in order to be tamed, a complex, contradictory oscillation, that is aimed fundamentally at domesticating the undercommons into a realm of adaptability, resilience, flexibility, in other words, into appropriating and perverting the qualities of fugitive planning into tools to increase adaptation and survival to the ongoing precarization. This domestication also comes with a normative diagnosis, the one Harney and Moten so piercingly describe, and according to which instances of "fugitive planning" are dismissed *qua* planning insofar as lacking perspective, hope, and design. This is understandable. Fugitive planning has *no* Perspective, no Vision, no Future; it is indeed hopeless.[14] Perhaps, in fact, it would be more accurate to say that what characterizes it is a different relation to hope. While Planning seems to require its hopes to be well-defined in advance, fugitive planning has the potential to let them emerge *as it flees*: neither hopeful nor hopeless, it is better understood as the breeding ground of hopeful orientations *to come* (cf. Levitas 2013).

Let us qualify that our speculative suggestion cannot be reduced to some kind of planning technique, technology, doctrine, or *how to* manual. Nor it is a matter of providing "examples" of what this kind of planning could be. Fugitive planning is an instance of an intensive praxis developed by bodies that flee, and that exactly by mean of relating flee, and by fleeing become(in)common. This is the seemingly paradoxical condition of a practice that is not defined by *what* is fleeing from, but rather by the process of fleeing itself, and that exactly by means of fleeing generates a precarious infrastructure of co-belonging. We can call it a "minor planning," to paraphrase Jill Stoner's suggestion (2012; cf. Boano 2020), that is, the practice of dismantling from a given discipline (language, architecture, planning itself) the internal tensors and constants of power, in order to free its intrinsic variability (Deleuze and Guattari 2004[1980], 108; Vignola 2018).

Again, Simone offers a precious insight in this sense:

> The flight from captivity was not only an attempt to extricate oneself from the plantation system but a means to unsettle its hegemony, to demonstrate the viability of possible outsides. Yet, any unsettling had to be complemented by the exigencies and practicalities of resettling (2022, 15).

It is here—where the viability of possible outsides that the flee(t)ing excess of fugitive planning points to encounters the exigencies and practicalities of resettling—that we can see what the discipline of planning can do about it.

Making Space for Fugitive Planning

How can Planning, the discipline, make space for fugitive planning to "re-settle," while preventing its reappropriation, neutralization, repression, and commodification? After gesturing toward the infrastructural and excessive dimension of fugitive planning—one that, we argued, is transversal, or "diagonal" (cf. Arendt 1961, 12–13)—to well-established dichotomies (e.g., political/post-political, capitalist/emancipatory, and hegemonic/counterhegemonic), in closing this article we want to reflect on what could mean, for planning, to attend to this fleeting dimension, by briefly dwelling on Agamben's notion of destituent power.

This notion, together with the other cognate concepts—inoperosity, use, profanation—, expresses the fundamental "*pars construens*" of Agamben's project, complementing his diagnosis of the juridico-political apparatuses of exception that allegedly entrap contemporary life, and the corresponding attempt at "calling into question the centrality of action and making for the political" (2017, 1084), including the notions of space and time that sustain it. We used the inverted commas, since what is peculiar to this strategy is the apparent revocation of notions of production, creation, construction, in favor of a politics of destitution that be able to release the ethicopolitical force of the free play of common potentialities.

Let us unpack the last sentence, beginning from the notion of play, one that Agamben often resorts to in order to gesture toward a realm in which the human being "frees himself [sic] from sacred time and 'forgets' it in human time" (1993[1978], 70). In play, like when dancing, what appears to be dismantled is the functional relation to an end that organizes the action of the physical and social body in public and private life, and the corresponding understanding of time as a "quantified and infinite *continuum* of precise fleeting instants" in and through which action must unfold (ibid., 93). Following and mixing Benjamin's reflections on gesture, infancy, and play, and Heidegger's ruminations on the relation between things as present-at-hand and ready-to-hand, Agamben suggests that in these instances such as play or dance—when to be deactivated is the triangulation between instrumental action, manipulable space, and teleological time—the body is released toward the potentialities of the relationality and temporal multiplicity of its ontological condition. In other, Spinozist words, we could say that, to be released, is the power of what a body can do.

Such a "liberation" does not have to be confused with libertarianism, to be sure. What is at stake is not the freedom to do what one *wishes* to do with her body—that is, a subject's mastery over one's body—but rather the freeing of the unactualized potentialities of the body itself: that is, a different *mode of relation* in which the subject-body dichotomy is revoked.[15] To express this strategy of deactivation, Agamben uses the notion of profanation, a term that refers to the act of desacralizing a sacred place, practice, or object by restoring it to a profane use. In Agamben's strategy, profanation becomes the deactivation of the separation introduced by the state of exception, and therefore the restoring of something to that *common* use from which it had been separated by the relation of exception (see 2007, 77). "What is in question is the capacity to deactivate something and render it inoperative—a power, a function, a human operation—without simply destroying it but by liberating the potentials that have remained inactive in it in order to allow a different use of them" (Agamben 2017, 1274). Common use is not an innocent dimension that is free from power but rather the liberation of an excess of potential—that very excess where the possibility for transformation lies, a transformation whose outcome, however, cannot be judged in advance (see Pavoni 2018, 11–44).

The last observation brings to light the question of reorientation: if profanation is the dismantling of a given configuration of power, the common use thereby opened will be soon reabsorbed within the very configuration—according to the well-known mechanism of *recuperation* (e.g., Boltanski and Chiappello 2005)—if that is not reoriented otherwise. Commenting on the practice of the Decolonizing Architecture Art Research (DAAR)—an ongoing project by Alessandro Petti and Sandi Hilal –, Eyal Weizman poses this very question: "does the power that exists in the architecture of colonial exclusion remain in it like a residue, when it is unplugged? … The task is to identify this power that remains, this charge, and to attempt to reorient it" (Weizman 2010, 282–283). The point, he continues, is "not to simply undo the power and techniques of the occupation but to reorient them" (ibid., 294). This is probably where Agamben's concept is most at need of a strategic complement, since profanation seems to be only content with "unplugging", that is, deactivating: whether this may allow to release the excess potential entrapped within a situation—and therefore the common emergence we referred to as fugitive planning –, there is no guarantee that such an excess will unfold in ways that are desirable, or emancipatory. Granted, this is what a non-normative model of politics, or planning for that matter, entails. However, that does not mean that a strategic reflection on how to deal with this "released" excess is not in order. In fact, it is here that planning assumes a particular relevance.

Lacking such a reflection, the ethical dimension of Agamben's project appears hardly translatable into the political realm. His affirmation of inoperativity, according to its critics, risks translating into a politics of resignation, inertia, and desertion, one that at best could lead to "a private ontological ecstasy rather than a productive and constructive collective activity" (Attell 2009, 47). In fact, as others have rightly argued, this is an ungenerous critique: the question for Agamben is that of removing the teleological and operational orientation from praxis, not that of removing praxis altogether (e.g., Boano 2017; Pozorov 2014). Agamben is interested in unfolding a politics out of the deactivation of the triangulation between action (production), space (malleable matter), and time (telos) that has

characterized the hegemonic model of politics so far at least in the west. While it is not right to assume it as depoliticized, the question of whether this is a viable model at all is certainly cogent—all the more so in the light of the recent controversies concerning his positions vis-à-vis the COVID-19 pandemic. Although an in-depth exploration of the contemporary debate around Agamben's philosophy is not our concern here, we should stress that critiques articulated around the action/inaction dichotomy are themselves entrapped within a paradigm that is unable to conceive a praxis that is not explicitly defined as "activist."

Everything changes, however, if we rather explore the possibility of a destituent strategy that has the potential to release a different kind of praxis, one that may have not been defined as such in the first place. The reader can easily see how such a reflection can be applied to the discussion on planning developed so far, in the form of a strategy that does not simplistically renounce to plan, but rather seeks to plan "inoperosely": (un)building, that is, unplugging the existent apparatus that exists, by deactivating its exclusionary configuration, and repurposing its residual power toward other possibilities (cf. Pavoni 2018, 117).

Camillo Boano (2017), who has provided one of the more systematic attempts to explore Agamben's thought in relation to architecture, emphasizes the value of this approach "to think of architecture and design as radical alterations of the project of design," that is, to profanate planning in order to restore it to a common use. Many examples, more or less fitting, can be provided, and we point the reader to Boano's book for a useful collection for what concerns the fields of art, architecture, and planning. Besides them, however, we underline once again that what is at stake here is *not* an alternative model of planning, but rather a different *disposition* toward planning, that is, a different mode of relation with that fugitive planning that exceeds Planning and that Planning has so far ignored, sought to suppress, or, at best, tardily endorsed as another instance of planning (e.g., insurgent). What is at stakes, in other words, is a strategy "which renounces representation and upsets the temporality of the political imaginary, thus undermining any political project construed around images of the future" (Boano 2017). In a sense, the temporal strategy of destituent power can be understood as addressing a classic trope of the contemporary condition, namely the incapacity to imagine a future that would be other than a simple reproduction and repetition of the present—rendered popular by the likes of Friedrich Jameson and Mark Fisher. There is a key difference, however. The destituent strategy is not interested in prompting a different, other, alternative future: what is being questioned, in fact, is exactly the normative presupposition of future as the space where political imagination must ferment and, therefore, the presupposition of a future as the space in which planning must unfold. What is being sought, then, is to deploy planning not as a strategy to act in the present in order to build a different future, but rather as a strategy to release in the present those futurial presences—those instances of fugitive planning—that are already there.

Epilogue

For you, the new biopolitics taking shape involves more a flight or taking leave than resistance or conflict […]. Faced with the consistency of this adversary, you seem nevertheless to plead for a politics of inconsistency, of dissolution, of evasion: rather than fabricating collective subjects, we should learn to "let go" […]. But is there always the latitude to flee? It seems to us that the power of biopolitical apparatuses (think, for example, of the politics of public health, the administration of welfare, the regulation of immigration, etc.) resides precisely in their terrible force of capture. Pardon us for saying it so brutally, but it seems quite possible that desubjectivation would be a luxury whose possibility is offered only to those who escape the apparatuses of biopower (Smith 2004, 120–1)

To this critique, formulated by an interviewer, Agamben replied as follows: "I think everything depends on what one understands by flight […]. The notion of flight does not imply an elsewhere one might go. No, it's a very particular flight: a flight with no elsewhere" (ibid. 121). Like the fugitive planners Harney and Moten situate in the hold, the whatever singularities envisaged by Agamben are akin to the nomads Deleuze and Guattari famously referred to, those that "are nomads by dint of not moving, not migrating, of holding a smooth space that they refuse to leave" (2004[1980], 482). The question, it follows, is not that of indicating *what ought to be done*, nor that of abdicating the task of providing an answer: it is, more precisely, a matter of *undoing,* that is, unplugging a space from power relations. First of all, a matter of undoing planning itself from its own unacknowledged reliance on the action-time-space triangulation we have discussed. And, subsequently, a matter of reorienting planning toward the possibility to release an excess whose desirability cannot be guaranteed in advance. What is at stake, in other words, is the possibility for planning to develop a disposition toward those "sparks or fragmentary potentials already operative in the present" (Aarons 2020, 65).

This is, for instance, the core of the abolitionist struggle—a struggle that has been recently, if still in incipient ways, articulated within planning theory (e.g., Bates 2018). Here, the matter of imagining and (re)constructing a different society is tied to the ongoing process of dismantling the systems of oppression —it is by the very practice of doing the latter that the former will emerge. It is about multiplying possibilities and loopholes for fugitive planning to emerge and take hold, while crafting protective strategies to prevent these vacuums to be recolonized by capital, police, or other oppressive institutions. We could interpret Sevilla-Buitrago's suggestion in this sense:

State spatial planning should be repurposed to work at three levels: first, it may act as a barrier, shielding the commons against market assaults and enclosure; second, it *can hollow out capitalist space by facilitating the penetration and expansion of communal projects* in territories already colonized by commodity logics; and third, it may serve as an external control mechanism, preserving local

and regional balances between different communes and *reorienting internal contradictions that can deviate the commons from the central goal of egalitarian* emancipation (2022, 223; our emphases).

Rather than a holy planning, as it is still understood as of today, namely, a holy practice that be able, as holy practices do, to transform the world for the better; Planning could be repurposed as a holey practice,[16] that is, a worldly practice of perforation and profanation.

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Notes

1. Perspectivism is the assumption that there are not interpretations elaborated by abstract subjects but perspectives produced by materially situated bodies (Nietzsche 1967[1887/1888], 12).

2. The first of whom has been Planning Theory, published by Franco Angeli since 1991 and then by Sage since 2002.

3. The fact that utopian socialist ideas have been associated with both the genealogy of progressive planning inspired by reformist, and later on Keynesian, ideas, and with the tradition of anarchism (see Buber 2006[1950]) is an inspiring bifurcation, which we cannot however develop here.

4. The extent to which Cerdá's ideas have shaped the imaginary of urbanisation—and this may well be in the process of being explicitly acknowledged also in the Anglophone discussion—can be exemplified by an excerpt from Vicente Guallart's introduction to the first English translation of the *Teoría*: "beyond its historical interest, this translation aims to promote reflection on the process of urbanization today, at the beginning of the 21st century, when a new revolution, the digital revolution, has shown us the need to define rational processes – and if possible scientific processes – for the construction and reform of cities around the world" (2018, 12).

5. We refer to Sheila Jasanoff's definition of sociotechnical imaginaries as "collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of forms of social life and social order attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology" (2015, 4). While this is a quite specific—and in many sense

reductive—definition of imaginary (see, for a discussion, Pavoni and Tulumello 2023, ch. 4), it aptly captures the spirit of typical modernist conceptions of planning.

6. A discussion nicely summarised by Evgeny Morozov (2019).

7. This is particularly evident in the smart city (and especially so in its corporate versions)—that these imaginaries may have become more powerful outside of the Global North (e.g. Watson 2015) does complicate the geography of planning at the same time as showing the diffusive power of certain ideas.

8. The Anthropocene has triggered a whole new brand of promethean solutionism that promises to save humanity via planetary design and relative techno-fixes (e.g. Bratton 2019; for a critique, see Dillet and Hatzisavvidou 2022)—not to mention the latest bold, future-oriented plans for fully automated luxury techno-cities, such as NEOM's The Line.

9. The cold reaction received by the keynote on planning and racial capitalism delivered by Roy at the AESOP Congress 2018 in Gothenborg (cf. Tulumello and Pozzi 2019), however, testify quite clearly that the conflict for the 'core' of the discipline is still pretty open

10. Feltran (2020) focuses on the fracture of the 'normative regime' among those (who he calls the 'left' and the 'right') that associate security and progress with the state, and those, excluded by that very progress, that find protection and economic opportunities in the criminal sphere.

11. Esposito refers to the etymology of *munus* (2009[1998]) that simultaneously refers to gift, obligation and duty, and its positioning at the core of the notion of "community" shows the back-and-forth relation of co-immunity and mutual vulnerability that grounds being-in-common.

12. We follow Deleuze and Guattari's reflection on consistency as 'the "holding together" of heterogeneous elements' (2004[1980], 323), a notion they develop to address the question of how do bodies come and hold together forming *agencements* [assemblages] that are not just about connecting bodies but also about *making* and being *made* by them (see Pavoni and Tulumello 2024).

13. This was the famous Latin palindrome Debord chose as the title his film, *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*.

14. "They do not see clearly. They hear things. They lack perspective. They fail to see the complexity. To the [policy] deputies, planners have no vision, no real hope for the future, just a plan here and now, an actually existing plan. They need hope. They need vision. They need to have their sights lifted above the furtive plans and night launches of their despairing lives. They need vision. Because from the perspective of policy it is too dark in there, in the black heart of the undercommons, to see" (Harney and Moten 2013, 79). Let us clarify: we are aware that this concept has been developed in the field of Black studies, from the "fantasy in the hold" Harvey and Moten talk about to the *surrounds* Simone describes. We do not wish to suggest this concept can be simply extrapolated from its context of emergence and seamlessly applied to that of planning in general. We believe that, however, if due caution is deployed, this can be done, and productively so, with respect to the sociotechnical imaginary of planning we are concerned with in this text. It is again Simone (2022) to offer a promising suggestion, reflecting on the fact that the conceptual theorization of the surrounds has precise geographical and historical specificity but, at the same time, can be expanded beyond those.

15. Agamben for instance refers to Benjamin's observation about "the just relation with nature not as 'dominion of the human being over nature' but as 'dominion of the relationship between the human being and nature'" (2017, 1040).
16. The notion of holey practice takes inspiration from the concept of holey space (see Deleuze and Guattari 2004[1980]).

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