

Who speaks? And who listens? The relationship between planners and women's participation in local planning in a multi-cultural urban environment

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Abstract In recent decades, the dominant planning discourse has undergone a great change from a previous top-down approach towards collaborative and communicative planning. Instead of merely planning *for* the people in a technocratic and positivist approach, planners are increasingly expected to pay attention to the voices of the citizens. However, within this new participatory approach there is a growing post-colonial and feminist critique pointing out that not all voices are being heard. This critique sheds light on inherent power relations within the collaborative and communicative planning discourse. In particular, the voices of women in marginalised neighbourhoods are often neglected (Sandercock *Towards cosmopolis. Planning for multicultural cities*. New York: Wiley, 1998; Cornwall *World Development*, 31(8), 1325–1342, 2003; Pelerman *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 94(2), 151–163, 2003; Cameron and Grant-Smith *Urban Policy and Research*, 23(1), 21–36, 2005). Participatory planning in marginalised housing areas demands both a great sensibility to citizens' everyday life worlds, and a more reflexive planner role. However, the complexities of the planner's praxis and uncertainties in the planner's roles become an obstacle to develop a more inclusive

participatory approach. Difficulties of reaching out to the whole community is often recognised, but seldom fully dealt with, neither in theory, nor in practice.

Keywords Gender · Participatory planning · Planner's role · Women

This article presents experiences from an underprivileged neighbourhood, Rosengård, in Malmö, Sweden, illustrating the complex relationships between the local planners and civil servants on the one hand, and the women in the neighbourhood on the other. Through in-depth interviews with planners and civil servants on municipal and neighbourhood level intricate power relations are being revealed which relate to planning ideals on the one hand, and to planning practice on the other. It demonstrates the difficulties of professional practice and the different roles of the planner, using a theoretical framework that draws on feminist and post-colonial planning critique. Of specific relevance for the topic of this article is a critique of inherent imperialism within the communicative planning approach, including the goals of consensus and the ideal speech situation, the role of the planner, and the gendered dimensions of planning. My argument is that participatory planning is highly complex both as a theoretical and practical exercise. Planning is a political tool and as such must be used consciously. If the planners have poor knowledge about, or are prejudiced towards, the people they plan for, the result of the planning

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processes will illustrate just that. “Real engagement” amongst the citizens the planners want to engage, may not be noticed by the planners, because the planners remain trapped in their roles and ideals.

The communicative turn: an empowering discourse?

From its beginnings in the 1980s, the communicative turn in planning theory has grown into several different directions and subfields¹, and has been heavily debated. Though the philosophical background of this turn is diverse, Healey proposes that it involves, in short, (1) a recognition that all forms of knowledge are socially constructed; (2) a recognition that the development and communication of knowledge and reasoning take many different forms, from rational systematic analysis to storytelling and expressive statements; (3) a recognition, as a result, of the social context within which individuals form interests, and that individuals learn about their views in social contexts and through interaction; (4) a recognition that people in contemporary life have diverse interests and expectations, and that relations of power have the potential to oppress and dominate; (5) a realisation that public policies which are concerned with managing co-existence in shared spaces which seek to be efficient, effective, and accountable to all those with a ‘stake’ in a place need to draw upon, and spread ownership of, the above range of knowledge and reasoning; (6) a realisation that this leads away from competitive interest bargaining towards collaborative consensus-building; and that, through such consensus-building practices, organisational ideas can be developed and shared which have the capacity to endure, to co-ordinate actions by different agents, and to transform ways of organising and ways of knowing in significant ways—in other words, to build cultures; and (7) a realisation that, in this way, planning work is not only embedded in its context of social relations through its day to day practices, but also has the capacity to challenge and change these relations through the

approach to these practices; context and practice are therefore not, but socially constituted together (Healey 1997, p. 30).

Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones (2002) suggest that this field of research has filled an empty gap in planning theory after the turn away from an instrumental, rational basis to a theoretical one, and after the questioning of planning as such, specifically in Britain by the New Right in the 1980s and 1990s. As a consequence of the success of communicative planning theory, Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones argue that the approach and its advocates have lacked the advantage of any critique, while building a new hegemony or paradigm in planning theory. In their critique they point out that the impact of communicative planning risks creating a hegemonic situation that sidelines other theorists and works against a plurality of thinking. Furthermore, they argue, that the localisation of these ideas in the Anglo-American/Western mindset, however postmodern the communicative turn tries to be, departs from universalistic assumptions of modernist theory and therefore (unconsciously) portrays planning as an unproblematic global activity. The ‘ideal speech’ situation put forward by Habermas, which is central to communicative thinking, ignores the fact that “conversations do not originate from democratic arrangements, but are more likely to be by-products of a pre-existing culture” (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones 2002, p. 15). There is also no evidence that people are interested in working for the public good or common interest, rather than for themselves. As Flyvbjerg (1998) has pointed out, power relations are embedded in communication and socio-cultural practices. Along this critique, Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, also discern a problem with the proposed ‘good planner.’ What would the motivation for planners be, if their role as experts is being denied? Why should they devote all their attention to the citizens, when there are so many other actors to deal with? To be a professional is also to possess knowledge that can be rewarded (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger 1998²,

¹ Among the subfields mentioned by Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones are ‘planning through debate’, ‘communicative planning’, ‘argumentative planning’, ‘collaborative planning’, and ‘deliberative planning’ (Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones 2002, p. 5).

² Patsy Healey replied to the critique on the questions of the significance of a social relational perspective in the communicative approach, the treatment of power, the method of ‘critical theory’, and the condition of contemporary British land-use planning practice (Healey 2000).

Allmenindger and Tewdwr-Jones 2002).³ The critique put forward by Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones draws extensively on feminist and post-colonial critique of planning theory and practice, which focuses on issues of power, imperialism, consensus and gender, vis-à-vis planning practice and the role of the planner.

There is a vast literature on gender and planning (Greed 1994; Little 1994; Fenster 1999; Fainstein and Servon 2005), but still feminist theory could hardly be regarded as closely intertwined with planning theory in general. Sandercock and Forsyth stress the important power relation between theory and practice and argue that planning theory must be related to planning practice, political economy and metatheory (Sandercock and Forsyth 1992). From an epistemological perspective the feminist challenges to planning theory can be seen as corresponding to the hierarchical dualities of (1) theory/practice, (2) knowledge/experience, and (3) private/public (Snyder 1995, p. 99). In relation to the dualism of theory and practice Snyder states that even though many practicing planner's ideals are of justice and equity, it is not often manifested in the actual practice within planning departments, and she argues therefore; "If inequalities and domination continue to result from planning practice, as they so often do, one must examine the theory and methodologies behind that practice, and what is discovered there must be applied" (Snyder 1995, p. 99). Examples of going further into the epistemological thinking behind practice is Fraser's critique of Habermas not foreseeing that his categories of social identity being gendered (Fraser 1987) and Milroy's similar critique of Forester (Milroy 1992).

³ At the basis of this critique are assumptions drawn from a Habermasian theoretical background. The critics see a risk that the consensus-building strategy could lead to the development of new restrictive political systems which will reproduce the search for a 'right decision-rule' based on rational-comprehensive or rational communicative ideas (Allmenindger and Tewdwr-Jones 2002; Yiftachel and Huxley 2000, p. 908). This critique has been challenged by Healey and Forester, who see it as reflecting a simplistic understanding of their work and that of others (Forester 2000; Healey 2000). The communicative turn has shed light on several important planning issues, as has the critique. I do not intend to address the entire debate, but to take this discussion as a starting point for a deeper analysis of three main aspects.

In the dualism of knowledge and experience women traditionally have been associated with the emotional, irrational and subjective, while the planning expertise is based on rational, absolute knowledge and independent of time, space and social identity. The more marginalised the individuals are, the less credibility they have and less valued their input is in the eyes of the planner (Snyder 1995, p.101). This critique has been dealt with by several feminist planners who call for openness to other forms of knowledge and the acceptance of embodied experiences (Fainstein 2000; Sandercock and Forsyth 1992; Sandercock 1999; Fenster 1999). In feminist theory it is also emphasized that the planner/researcher should not separate between the self and the object of research. Empathy and emotions become a part of the dialogue, and methods based on oral traditions, listening and tacit knowledge is given higher priority than in traditional planning. All this implies ways of dealing with the fact that knowing is inseparable from the subject (Sandercock and Forsyth 1992). The questions of language and communication are central as language often acts as a borderline between power and inclusion. In order to move away from professional planning language, feminist planners have used for example methods of storytelling and anecdotes as an alternative (Sandercock and Forsyth 1992). In *Towards Cosmopolis*, Sandercock (1999) argues for a new planner role, which needs new approaches, new theories and new methods, that is a planning that builds on practical wisdom, is more people-oriented, based on other ways of knowing, gears to community empowerment and requires a new kind of multicultural literacy. However marginal these examples are in the overall planning practice, they have taken the theoretical planning discussion further.

In line with this argument of connecting knowledge and experience, there is a need to bridge the private/public dichotomy. Planning has traditionally dealt with the public sphere. In transport planning, everyday life experiences of commuting patterns between nurseries, shops, work and home are often ignored. Another example is the issue of women's safety which until recently was ignored by planners. Women also dominate the elderly groups which require special attention in planning. Altogether, women's interests are often at the margin of planning practice.

In recent decades feminist theory and feminist practice has been forced to challenge the taken-for-granted assumption that women share a common experience of oppression by men. Through a critique of the Western ethnocentric feminist tradition, feminists today more often refer to intersectional power relations of ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality and age, than only gender-relations. A deeper understanding of the complexity of power relations illustrates Spivak's argument that one can only speak if there is a position from which a speech can be made. Spivak claims that subordinate women 'cannot speak,' since that which constitutes the position of the subordinate is precisely the impossibility of being heard (Spivak 1996, p. 289). The ideal-speech situation then becomes rather unfulfilling. Furthermore, what the following example from Rosengård illustrates is that it is not only enough to be willing to listen to the voices of marginalised women—planners need to 'find them' in the first place. The community-based planning that Sandercock calls for is maybe not so easy to implement or engage with.

The Swedish context of communicative planning

Swedish planning authorities, inspired by the communicative turn, are now trying to implement the ideals of participatory or deliberative democracy, following the idea of "planning as a democratic enterprise aimed at promoting social justice and environmental sustainability" (Healey 1997, p. 233). This approach is also a result of municipalities gaining a greater influence over planning at the expense of the national state. In the state report 'A sustainable democracy!' (SOU 2000, p. 1), the importance of citizens taking part in societal issues is articulated. Direct democracy and decentralisation of power are the main goals. Here, citizens need both to gain increased consciousness about their democratic rights and obligations, and to take an active part in democratic processes. Civil spirit should be built upon certain characteristics that people can train and develop, such as critical rationalism (an interest in different issues, and the ability to question them and to understand other peoples' arguments), law abundance, and solidarity (an empathic and unselfish position in relation to other people). Overall, "the Swedish democracy should contain a considerable element of self-organization, decentralisation and

self-administration" (SOU 2000 p. 241, my translation). In Sweden, discussion of participatory planning goes back to the 1960s, when criticism of large-scale building projects began to grow, but has gained renewed interest in the context of an increasingly diverse society and in relation to the discourse on sustainability. But it was not until 1987 when democracy and citizens' right to influence planning processes were written into the planning laws. The active involvement of citizens is accompanied by increased local knowledge and experience for both the citizens and the planners. Planning should today be regarded as a forum for dialogue (Boverket 1998). The legal framework however is focused on the citizens' rights to be informed and to be able to influence planning decisions, while a participatory approach is recommended, specifically in areas where the citizens' is regarded to be in need of gaining increased consciousness about their democratic rights and obligations.

With a growing awareness of gender issues, Boverket (The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning) has also supported the implementation of a gender-sensitive planning approach (Boverket 2006). Gender awareness is theoretically a part of the participatory approach today, but there is great insecurity amongst planners on how to implement gender aspects in planning (Friberg and Larsson 1999). Due to the planners' insecurity on what to do, they either ignore the issue or they tend to reconfirm stereotypical gender norms (Larsson 2006). In a similar vein, ethnicity and multiculturalism are mainly approached in planning through issues of 'integration.' Post-colonial theories are virtually absent in planning practice, and issues of gender *and* racist discrimination are seldom related to each other. A fundamental problem with this public debate is the reinforcement of 'immigrant' women as the 'Others' and as different from 'Swedish women.' The Swedish feminist movement, which has been successful on some other fronts, has not sufficiently managed to include immigrant women in the emancipation process (de los Reyes 2004; Towns 2002; Knocke 1991). According to Paulina de los Reyes, the problem is not only that immigrant women are invisible within the Swedish women's movement, but also that this movement is unaware of the social power mechanisms that create differences, and that categorise and sort people due to their gender and

nationality; in short, how ethnicity is constructed (de los Reyes 2004, p. 191).

The interest for communicative planning in Sweden can be related to Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones' (2002) argument that communicative planning has filled a gap in planning theory in Britain. In Sweden the interest in communicative planning can also be related to changes in welfare systems and growing socioeconomic diversity in society. As a consequence, it is necessary for planners and local civil servants to deal with the growing number of deprived neighbourhoods. Through programmes such as the nationally financed programme of 1995–1996 and the Swedish Metropolitan Policy Programme (2000–2003), local authorities have tried to improve and deepen their relationships and interactions with their citizens. However, there still remains much to be desired, and the wider the social and cultural gap between the citizens and the planners, the greater the difficulty of communicating. Ethnic women, in particular, are regarded as difficult “to get in contact with” and not interested to speak to the planners. The planners, however, do need citizen involvement to fulfil ‘the duty’ of democracy (see Velasquez 2004). This illustrates another problem seldom dealt with in planning theory, that is, *the reason* for people to engage in planning debates. It is often understood from the critical planning discourse that people want to engage, while no planner listens to them, and that people have tried to influence the planning agenda with no result. In the following example from Rosengård, *the lack* of citizen engagement is a problem for the planners since the planners are encouraged to implement a participatory planning approach. This active search for consensus may, on the one hand, hide inherent power relations between different social groups and between the planners and the citizens, but, on the other hand, if the women are not included, then they would be further marginalised.

Engaging women

The importance of engaging and increasing the visibility of women from marginalised groups in relation to urban renewal has been mentioned in several studies (Anjum and Klein 1998; Sandercock 1998; Listerborn 2005; Velasquez 2007). Often women living in marginalised areas are being

engaged in, encouraged by others, or engage themselves in, activities and local projects based around children, gardening, interior design (Anjum and Klein 1998), baking, and textile work (Listerborn 2005), or those aimed at establishing networks and practicing language. Women who are more established and privileged in the local community are often offered IT courses which can be seen as less traditional female (Anjum and Klein 1998; Listerborn 2005). These projects can be a step towards integration and increased chances on the labour market, but can also be criticised for preserving traditional gender roles. These initiatives are examples of efforts to include women in community work and neighbourhood development.

From the position of the planners and local politicians who wish citizens to participate in their work, it is valuable when people engage in local issues and come to meetings. These people are needed as contact points in the community, as organisers, and as driving forces for change in the neighbourhood. Especially in areas where the planners find it more difficult to integrate, as in segregated housing areas, there is a great need for locally engaged people, both to aid the implementation of new processes, and to enable the making of plans in a communicative way. Sometimes the *implementation* of new processes is hidden within the communicative planning approach (Velasquez 2004). This situation does differ from that most commonly expressed within the communicative turn, where it is supposed that citizens are the ones who are going to take the initiative and who want to engage. In Rosengård, as in other similar places, the situation is rather the opposite, as these women are seen as *needing to be engaged* in order to be a part of the participatory planning process and an integration process. This creates a complicated and morally contestable situation, where it can be claimed that citizens, and women in particular, are strongly encouraged to participate and could be seen as a sort of “hostage” of the implementation of changes and, occasionally, already-made decisions.

To summarize, the complexity of ideal speech situations is expressed through, first, contradictory relationships between the citizens and the planners, second, contradictory relationships amongst the planners themselves, and third, institutional limits and norms, and practices that limits the planners' roles.

To understand these complex relations feminist and post-colonial planning critiques have argued for other forms of planning knowledge and the acceptance of embodied experiences, and for deepening the epistemological ground for planning theory through looking at the dualisms of theory and practice, knowledge and experience, and private and public (Snyder 1995, p. 99). This search for new methods and deeper theoretical knowledge is an ongoing process, and also geographically specific. New empirical examples will illustrate that.

Rosengård in the margin of Malmö: a case study

The case study of Rosengård, Malmö, was part of a wider research project called “Women’s influence in the local democracy processes. An exploration in participatory planning with a gender perspective” which consists of two parallel case studies in Stockholm and Malmö.⁴ The starting point of the project is the under-representation of women in local planning in marginalised housing areas, and the overall aim of the project is to increase women’s influence in their neighbourhoods through the development of local democracy processes that will strengthen existing women networks and grassroots organisations. The central focus of the project was the dialogue, or lack thereof, between these women networks and the local planners. We held in-depth interviews with six planners in Malmö. To understand the local processes in the Rosengård neighbourhood we also interviewed planners at the municipal council of Malmö City who give the guidelines and tasks to the local administrations in different parts of the city. Through these interviews at different municipal levels it also became clear that the communication between these levels were not always so smooth. This result added another level of complexity to the relationship between citizens and planners.

Rosengård is a housing area known throughout Sweden for its multicultural community, high unemployment rates, and social problems. It is located at the edge of Malmö, which is the third largest city in Sweden, with a population of nearly 300,000

inhabitants. Rosengård appears frequently in the media; even Fox, the American television channel, has reported on Rosengård, in a 2004 broadcast which portrayed the neighbourhood as dark and dangerous due to its Muslim community.⁵ Today, Rosengård is also known as the childhood home of the footballer Zlatan Ibrahimovich.⁶ Media reports are usually concerned with arson attacks on schools and cars, conflict with the fire brigade and the police, and violent fights between different clans and groups. Both locally and nationally, Rosengård is portrayed as a recruitment base for criminal youth, where macho men run the place and women are kept quiet and confined to the home. Even though the image of Rosengård is contested by locals and critical media, very little research which could help to modify this image has actually been conducted here.⁷

Rosengård was built at the end of the 1960s as a part of the national Million Programme, a massive housing programme which ran between 1965 and 1975. New neighbourhoods characterised by high rise buildings were built around the major cities in Sweden. While Rosengård was still under construction, a critique was published by two activist Marxist social workers (Flemström and Ronnby 1972). The representation of Rosengård as a social phenomenon has also been studied by Ristilammi (1994), and in-depth studies of the area’s different ethnic and religious communities have been performed by Popoola (1998), Johnsdotter (2002), and Carlbom (2003). From a housing management perspective, the strategies of the main local housing company have been researched by Cars and Martinson (2001). Overall, the focus of research has changed from a class perspective to an ethnicity perspective. As soon as Rosengård was completed, it was adopted by social workers and others as a place where the inhabitants needed support and guidance in order to either be freed from a “false consciousness” or to be integrated into Swedish society.

⁵ “Swedes Reach Muslim Breaking Point”, Friday, November 26, 2004 By Steve Harrigan, Fox News <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,139614,00.html>

⁶ Zlatan’s somewhat difficult relationship with some Swedish media is sometimes explained by the way the media portray people from the neighbourhood.

⁷ Several student essays from Malmö and Lund universities are the exception.

⁴ The parallel project in Stockholm is run by Juan Velasquez.

When, in 1996, Malmö city council divided the city into ten parts with decentralised government, the main idea was to establish a higher degree of citizen influence over local development, as well as to increase the effectiveness of the municipal organisations. Today, approximately 21,500 people live in Rosengård, and the area covers a large part of Malmö, southeast of the city centre. Within the neighbourhood there are different types of housing (including relatively well-off villa areas) and different social groupings. The main reason for the negative image of Rosengård stems from two smaller areas, Örtagården and Herrgården, which are made up of rented flats and social housing. In these areas, the houses have not been properly maintained and the neighbourhood has both socially and physically deteriorated. The demands of the inhabitants have been ignored by private landlords (most housing in Rosengård is city-owned), particularly in Herrgården.⁸

Today, the majority (59%) of people living in Rosengård are immigrants, mainly from Yugoslavia, Iraq, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Lebanon, and Poland. Generally, both unemployment rates and proportions of people depending on social welfare are higher than the Malmö average, and this can be related to the fact that many inhabitants are newly arrived in Sweden. A great deal of economic support has been directed to Rosengård over the last decade, through different state and municipal aid programmes. While there has been a vast amount of critique on the temporality and the narrow local aspects of the previous projects, the recent effort “Welfare for All” does not target a specific neighbourhood, and does not have any deadline for support.

In this study it is actually the *place* Rosengård in itself, as a rather typical Swedish housing type, that is the common denominator for the women in focus. People of many different backgrounds and ethnicities live here, and the social constitution of the place is constantly changing in relation to global, national, and individual economic and political decisions. The national or ethnic background or identity of women in the local networks is therefore not in focus, but rather their geographical position—situated on the margin of Malmö, and thus on the margin of

Sweden⁹. People of different origins tend to move away from Rosengård as their individual financial situation allows. The marginalisation is more related to the place than to the individuals. However, this does not mean that the ethnic dimension of the area’s poverty problem should be ignored, but rather suggests that, on an individual level, personal financial situations may change.

Focus on women

The discrepancy between theory and practice, knowledge and experience, private and public in planning practice and theory becomes visible in the case study in relation to how to engage citizens in planning processes. On the one hand, from the city planner’s perspective, women in Rosengård are creating strong and persistent networks in Rosengård. One of these networks was the driving force in establishing a women-only gym hall; however, when the local council ran out of money, it decided to no longer prioritise these activities. Another network urged the city council to help them organise an exhibition at the city museum covering cultural differences in weddings, baptism, and funeral traditions; they ended up going to the city council to ask for support, after being rejected by the neighbourhood council. Both these networks have accomplished something rather remarkable, against the local odds. On the other hand, the experience of the planners is that women are excluded from both the local immigrants’ organisations and from the local planning council of Rosengård.¹⁰ Hence, the women are somewhat excluded on the local level, both in the informal and the formal arena, but have gained some sympathy at the city council level.

The new neighbourhood council has therefore begun to get in contact and establish networks with the women in the neighbourhood. The general impression is that women are more difficult to get in contact with than men, because their relationships

⁸ The municipal housing company is planning to buy the area this year, to improve its physical and social status.

⁹ Malmö is located on the south west coast, with a bridge to Copenhagen, Denmark. The region (Scania) has historically belonged to Denmark, and therefore still has a problematic relationship with the ‘core of Sweden’ and the capital, Stockholm. Malmö in general also has a high number of immigrants.

¹⁰ Interview with a female planner at the Malmö council department for integration and labour market, 2005-10-26.

to the public spheres are somewhat more complex than that of men. And since planning in general deals with public spheres these women easily get excluded, something feminist theorists have pinpointed as one of the traditional planning dilemmas. Civil servants in Rosengård also commented on the lack of visible women in the neighbourhood, and pointed out that there is a need for ‘safe’ meeting places for them, as a way of making them more public and more approachable for the planners, which is not the least important from their point of view. Several civil servants also expressed a need for more knowledge about the women in Rosengård. In that sense they also wanted to get closer to the experiences and the private spheres of these women. The planners see a tendency for men to gather more around their ethnic group or around a sports club, while women tend to focus on broader issues. The deliberate attempt of the new management to make contact with women’s networks in the neighbourhood resulted in some open meetings for women only, where they could feel free to express themselves.¹¹

Further links are now beginning to be established with the aim to create contacts between the professionals and the citizens to enable implementation of different projects and as a base for future planning initiatives. Through employing locally active ethnic women as network organisers in local management, this contact should improve. These women work, for example, at the local citizen liaison offices, at the association of education for workers, as liaison workers between the schools and the parents, and as neighbourhood hosts. Rosengård also hosted a feminist conference “The Feminist Forum” of 2006, which was held in the “House of Dreams.”¹² This building—an old mansion—is used for all kinds of cultural activities in Rosengård, including those for women. The main city-owned housing company, Malmö Kommunala Bostäder (MKB), also rented out a flat free of charge for women to meet each other, and simultaneously took the opportunity to listen to their ideas about the neighbourhood. Additionally, meetings are being organised by the fire brigade and the police to address the citizens’ questions about their activities in Rosengård, with the aim of

minimising tensions when incidents occur. The different links which are established between the citizens and the planners raise the question of who takes care of the experience and knowledge generated by these meetings, and whether the outcome will come back to the women living in the neighbourhood. Are these initiatives mainly aimed to benefit the planners, or the locals? In post-colonial theory, as well in feminist theory, there is a refusal to separate theory from the lived experience. The value of knowing reality from the ‘wrong side of the tracks’ must also be acknowledged and remembered, and put on the political planning agenda (Sandercock 1998), but as mentioned earlier these attempts may hide a different agenda from the planners’ point of view.

Engaging women in local development

Many planners do not find it an easy task to “get people engaged,” and the question of how to engage people is an ongoing assignment for planners. An interlocutor at the Malmö planning department was well aware of the power relations involved in the wish to communicate and interact:

I have heard people saying thousands of times ‘how can we get people engaged,’ but the funny thing is that nobody directly asks the people who they want to be engaged. Instead they ask somebody else. And when people are *asked* to start a parents’ council or school board, there is also a risk that we will miss the *real engagement* that is happening somewhere else...¹³

The planner quoted here sees the need for a more sensitive and conscious interaction with the ethnic communities, but she believes that there is a structural problem, which she finds hard to point at: where is the actual engagement happening, and are the planners really interested? All three dualisms of theory/practice, knowledge/experience and public/private are prominently present here. The ‘theoretical’ aim is to get people engaged, while they do not know how to do it in practice. The knowledge they need take this aim further is based on citizens’ experience, but since the planner does not know how to reach the private sphere and the experiences of the

¹¹ Interview with two female local planners in Rosengård, 2005-10-28.

¹² <http://www.feminism2006.org/>

¹³ Interview with a female planner working at Malmö Planning Department, 2005-10-04.

citizens she suspects that the ‘real engagement’ happens somewhere else, outside the knowledge and public sphere where she acts within. As a way forward she therefore highlights the importance of having a local perspective:

This is something I have learned over the years—always begin with the conditions and circumstances of the specific place, always; never copy other models or apply a method from somewhere else—you can take ideas, impressions, learn from other experiences, but you must always take the starting point from where you are—that specific place. Listen carefully to the local needs and try to keep an overall view. If you live in a place you automatically have an overall view, even though it is not a professional one. It is based on your own experiences and practices. It is natural knowledge. I find this very interesting, and difficult; how to hold on to and make use of this knowledge within planning and urban development.¹⁴

Today’s young planners are educated within the communicative planning discourse, and their aim is generally to involve citizens in planning work. The ambition is ambiguous, since they want to be involved with local development, but at the same time often do not know what is going on locally. With the wisdom of earlier experience, a planner at the Malmö planning department says:

We have learned that you cannot make a plan and then come to a local meeting and ask what they think about it. We must engage the inhabitants from the beginning and we have tried in some parts of Malmö to organise focus groups. But you will never come close to the whole community.¹⁵

The planner quoted earlier also indicated that communicative planning can sometimes be more of a showcase than a real, in-depth, democratic process which really affects the planning process. Her aim is to get closer to a participatory planning approach, but

the process has to grow incrementally. Both planners reflected self-critically on what the consequences would be if the citizens really *would* engage—could the planners handle that engagement, and all the added work that would follow? They also highlighted the competition over planning issues, and pointed out that if grassroots organisations did demand more influence, this could create conflicts of interests and lead to laymen intruding in the realms of the experts.

A related issue is also *whom* the planners want to engage—these may not always be the same individuals who are actually engaged. Ideals and reality are obviously two different things. This illustrates another dimension to the knowledge—experience dualism. The planners have a professional role, and specific knowledge, and therefore they believe in the importance of pedagogical practices when working with people; this includes both the need to inform people about the legal framework, and to listen to the citizens needs. Consequently, this approach of seeking to engage certain groups gives planners the freedom to choose who they want to listen to and to select the reasons why they should be included. Here the ideal speech situation will not be implemented and the power hierarchies are not being challenged, due to the practical reasons the planner argues for.

In addition, a civil servant at the municipal Department of Integration and Labour Market pointed out the difficulties of handling political differences, both among the civil servants themselves, and between them and their employers (that is, the politicians); this sometimes led to difficulties in being consequent towards their clients in their work. Indeed, she believed that the councils needed structural change in order to meet the needs of citizens, and that such change would involve those within the council questioning themselves as professionals and individuals to ensure their own awareness of the politics that they, as civil and public servants, represented and executed. She also noted that many planners could be rather full of prejudices and stereotypical images of the inhabitants, particularly in relation to ethnicity and gender.¹⁶ In a self-reflexive way she argues for a change in practice to meet new demands and ideals.

¹⁴ Interview with a female planner working at Malmö Planning Department, 2005-10-04.

¹⁵ Interview with a male planner working at Malmö Planning Department, 2005-10-04.

¹⁶ Interview with a female planner at the Malmö council department for integration and labour market, 2005-10-26.

The city and its parts...

The difference between theory and practice, and knowledge and experience can also vary at different scales. While this discussion, consciousness, and even sometimes the willingness to change the organisation to meet the needs of the inhabitants, seems to exist at the level of the city council, the local council in Rosengård has not shown the same interest in these issues. This was rather surprising, as could be seen as predictable that the closer a planner is to the inhabitants, the more engaged in the community he or she would be. This was also the basic idea behind dividing the city into smaller local councils. The council of Rosengård has previously been regarded as a 'problem case' from the city council's point of view, since it had a rather negative approach to the capabilities of their citizens. At the end of 2005, a new manager was employed to work on changing the attitudes within the organisation. The previous management had found it difficult to follow the city's guidelines; and, according to the city council, some people had had a rather misanthropic view of the citizens in Rosengård. Furthermore, large investments in programmes of assistance failed in the sense that the council did not complete projects with tangible results and changes. The money was instead spent on interviewing people living in Rosengård about their needs and wishes, but when the time came to implement some changes, all the money was gone. This lack of professionalism and planning only aggravated the relationship between the inhabitants and the local management.¹⁷ Working with local development in the aftermath of these previous failures is, of course, a challenging task. Contemporary civil servants must make sure they complete what they start, and fulfil their promises, in order to rebuild their trustworthiness. If they do not manage this, the local community will probably not find it worth their while to engage.

Who speaks? And who listens?

The question of who speaks is central in post-colonial feminism, but as Spivak has pointed out, one can only

speak if there is a position from which a speech can be made. Spivak claims that subordinate women 'cannot speak,' since that which constitutes the position of the subordinate is precisely the impossibility of being heard (Spivak 1996, p. 289). Ahmed adds to this discussion by asking the question of *who knows*. Her starting point is the ethnographic desire to learn more about strangers, according to the post-colonial concern with the politics of representing others. Through asking this question, she wants to shed light on the contexts in which speaking and hearing take place: what knowledge is already in place which allow one to speak for, about or to a 'group of strangers' (Ahmed 2000, p. 6). A 'stranger' in Ahmed's words is not just somebody one does not recognise, but rather somebody one recognises *as* a stranger; "somebody we know as not knowing, rather than somebody we simply do not know" (Ahmed 2000, p. 1). Ahmed argues that a stranger is an object of knowledge, rather than existing in an absence of knowledge.

There is an interesting parallel to the planning discourse and the knowledge production in the ethnography that researchers do in these segregated areas. For the mainly Swedish-native civil servants in Rosengård's local council, the citizens become strangers in the sense conceptualised by Ahmed. At the same time, local civil servants need to be in contact with the women of the neighbourhood in order to fulfil their professional duties. This planning task sometimes demands an ethnographic approach to get to know the stranger, influenced by communicative ideals of dialogues. Indeed, the state-led and municipality-led help programmes for these segregated housing areas are formulated within this democratisation discourse. There can no longer only be planning *for* the people; the people must also get an opportunity to influence the agenda. This is not only, or even mainly, an issue of democracy, it is also important in terms of making the citizen responsible for and engaged in their neighbourhood. As Ahmed illustrates from the ethnographic field, attempts to make the 'research objects' into equal partners, or to include them in the process, often conceal the existing power relations. It is therefore not only a question of 'who speaks' but also the institutional conditions in which the speech acts takes place, and who is given the right to know. Co-operation between citizens and civil servants is not free from organisational conditions.

¹⁷ Interview with a female planner at the Malmö council department for integration and labour market, 2005-10-26.

Engaging with strangers means learning what they want, and finding out how to organise them according to existing institutions. Civil servants have professional knowledge, which is the starting point for their interaction with the citizens. The relationship between the women in the area and the professionals is, of course, unequal from the beginning in terms of status and interests. The distance or gap that exists between these two groups also has a geographical dimension, since the majority of the managers of the area do not live there. Relations between the mainly Swedish civil servants and the mainly non-western immigrants in Rosengård are based on social identity construction, as Hall illustrates in the British context: “The English are racist not because they hate the Blacks but because they don’t know who they are without the Blacks. They have to know who they are *not* in order to know who they are” (Hall 1991, p. 16, in Owen and Jones III 2000, p. 212).

There is an invisible wall around Rosengård, and women, especially, tend to stay within this wall, claims a local civil servant in Rosengård.¹⁸ This local boundedness is, however, only half the picture, as a previous study has shown (Listerborn 2005). The results of that study revealed a simultaneous process, in which women are becoming more closely attached to their locality while at the same time establishing strong networks with the world outside Sweden. The ‘glocality’ of these women’s lives is also a reason for not always being so engaged in the local neighbourhood, as their engagement may lie elsewhere. If planners are unaware of this situation, they will find it hard to understand the geographical life-worlds of these women, which are neither local nor global, but glocal.

The listener; the planners motivation

A great deal of communicative planning theory deals with the new role of the planner. As Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones point out, it is not clear what the planners’ motivation for changing their role would actually be. According to a civil servant in Rosengård, the motives behind the professionals’ interactions with the citizens in Rosengård are multifaceted. Some see themselves as ‘missionaries,’

who want to ‘help’ the inhabitants to a better life. Others are there to *confirm their prejudices*, as it gives them satisfaction to see that the world is as they believe. Finally, some have a serious interest in improving the neighbourhood, and work as *professional planners* for a better future, together with the citizens. The city councils’ critique of the previous management in Rosengård was that they tended to feel very sorry for themselves, and did not believe that anything could change for the better.¹⁹ Even the new manager was met with this attitude from a colleague on her first day at the new job: “he came in to my office and said, ‘I must ask you something—why on earth did you take on this job?’, as if I had made a strange choice, and as if to say “people have been here before you who wanted to change things, but then failed’...”²⁰

The planning literature contains plenty of discussions on new approaches ... (Innes 1996; Healey 1997; Sandercock 1998, 2000, Forester 1999). In general, there is optimism that new ways of integrating people’s experiences will provide a way forward to a more equal society, but as this case study illustrates, further complexities are still to be analysed; there are still many prejudices and difficulties embedded in organisational and internal discussions. There is also a need to follow up the initiatives and to have a clearly defined purpose with the different approaches that are being developed. There is no coherence either in the planners’ motivation or in their actions—or, for that matter in the engagement of the citizens. Furthermore, the planners are very much unaware of what engages the citizens within their own life worlds and realities.

The best chosen planning methods or strategies are of course, as several researchers have pointed out, a question of where and in which social context the planning is executed. Participatory approaches can be severely problematic in areas where the inhabitants do not want to deal with the surrounding society, or when the inhabitants interests of are too narrow (Cameron and Grant-Smith 2005). Planning is a political tool, and as such should be used consciously, and participatory planning must be regarded as one

¹⁸ Interview with two female local planners in Rosengård, 2005-10-28.

¹⁹ Interview with a female planner at the Malmö council department for integration and labour market, 2005-10-26.

²⁰ Interview with two female local planners in Rosengård, 2005-10-28.

tool amongst others. Planning, however, is also increasingly performed outside the traditional planning institutions, where the corporate market has greater influence. How, for example, these women should be able to have a say in these major city renewal projects, is a more complicated issue.

Co-existence in time and space

A good starting point in a democratic society is the idea that planning is “managing our co-existence in shared space” (Healey 1997, p. 3). As researchers on ‘cities of difference’ (Fincher and Jacobs 1998) have argued, different voices need to be heard in a permissive environment, if public spaces are to be shared. Fear of the Other and fear of strangers work against this goal, as some people’s voices are being excluded. Several researchers argue that it is to the benefit of urban life to experience multiculturalism, and that the fear of strangers, or urban fear in general, must be accepted as a part of contemporary urban life (Ellin 2001; Sandercock 2000, 2002; Sennett 1996; Zukin 1995). Traditional urban planning has to a large extent been based upon handling fear (Sandercock 2000), and women in marginalised areas are often excluded from the city in more than one way. As Sandercock has rightly pointed out, traditional planning has failed in dealing with multicultural urban life (Sandercock 2000).

I do agree with the overall argument for the need to accept fear as a part of urban life; however, I want to point out two aspects of the discussion which I find problematic. Firstly, this fear is not merely grounded on a discursive or psychological level, but is based on actual and concrete violent acts. This is especially true for women, sexual minorities, and ethnic minorities. Secondly, managing the different voices in an urban setting is not only about creating safe places for meetings, but also about realising that not everybody has a voice, or will be seen on these agendas. This is especially true for these women living on the margins of society. These women will need to be seen and included, before the question of whether they want to speak up can be addressed (see Velasquez 2007). Feminist and postcolonial theory could further illuminate these two issues. As Mohanty puts it, the world we occupy today is a “world which is definable only in *relational* terms, a world traversed with intersecting lines of power and resistance” and one

“which must be transformed through a necessary process of pivoting the center for the assumed center (Europe and the United States) will no longer hold” (Mohanty 1991, p. 2). I also believe that knowledge about the needs of and visions for Rosengård must be defined in a relationship between the citizens and the planners, and, likewise, the norms must not be set from the centre. Awareness of this relationship has grown among the planners, but is still far from being implemented as an everyday practice. As Snyder puts it;

Planning practice informed by feminist epistemologies would be critical, emancipatory, and conscious of gender and other differences./.../ Reflexivity, self-consciousness, political awareness, value commitments, diversity, the legitimacy of experience, the significance of private life: all of this must be kept in mind, balanced together (Snyder 1995, p. 104).

But it is also important to keep in mind that no planning theory could have universal claims and to take notice of different group specific situations.

Concluding remarks

Learning from discussion with the planners and from previous research in working with participatory planning in marginalised housing areas demands a great sensibility to citizens’ everyday life worlds, specifically the geographically and gendered aspects. Every neighbourhood has a gendered use. Since women’s use of public space differs, women’s local meeting points need further investigation that would demonstrate how participatory planning is gendered. Furthermore, the ethnic dimension adds another geographical scale, since many citizens live in geographical life-worlds which include both the local and the global. Many citizens have a ‘glocal’ mental mapping of the world, but since the planning procedures are local, there is an inconsistency between the citizens’ lives and the planners’ interests. The planners interviewed for this study showed a certain awareness of the importance of the local perspective, but less insight into the citizens’ mental maps. Their engagement varied with their motivation.

This discussion raises the question of the role of the planners, and the needs of the women in the

neighbourhood. Is there a risk of ‘chasing’ these women to get involved, instead of listening to them? Is there a risk of disregarding the actual women’s movement in the neighbourhood, which takes place within their own ‘glocal’ network, and instead only focusing on local events? Planning operates locally, but Rosengård is for many people a place of transition which they either plan to leave, or in which they mainly focus on their families; why would they then engage in the development of Rosengård? Citizens may show interest in specific issues such as good nurseries for their children, but many of them are influenced by the bad reputation of Rosengård, and they basically want to move away. The long term planning of such a place must therefore take all these issues into account.

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