Advancing Analytical Tools to Understand Urban Planning: Mapping Controversies around the Mumbai Development Plan 2014-2034

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Abstract:
The proposed article suggests that urban studies are in need of new tools to describe and analyze the different “regimes of urbanization” in an increasingly heterogeneous urban world. In order to create dynamic and relational descriptions of contemporary cities, we propose to use innovative mapping and analytical tools, which allow representing the richness and complexity of the controversies that accompany the making of a common urban future. Such tools are urgently needed to understand better the conflicting processes that drive urban development and to improve planning methods and policies.

Through the event of the publication of draft Mumbai Development Plan (MDP) 2014-2034 and its temporary withdrawal and revision due to an unprecedented public outcry and strong criticism, we propose to use the methodological tool of mapping controversies in the field of urban planning. This event is highly representative of the tensions and conflicts pervading the development and regulation of contemporary cities in the Global South as well as in the North. Using preliminary findings from this ongoing study this article highlights the need for new descriptive methodology that would describe better the heterogeneous characteristic of the cities. Thereby, it proposes to contribute to the international debates on the transformation of urban conflicts and more broadly on the renewal of critical urban studies.

Keywords: Mapping Controversies, Research Methodology, Urban planning, Mumbai Development Plan, Regimes of Urbanization

Introduction

Our urban world, partly because of its impressive growth and global interconnectedness, has become increasingly diverse, not only in respect of its populations and multiplication of ways of life, but also in its modes of development and the related challenges. The focus of the urban world has shifted from cities such as New York or Paris, that were built following static and rationalized master plans, to bigger cities, sprawling habitat, such as Tokyo, Mumbai or Rio. Urban development relies in this renewed context on the integration of cultures and ways of life that are becoming more and more hybrid, leading to an increasing heterogeneity of the cities. Changes in economic, social, political and demographic factors give rise to new socio-spatial forms and urban processes, and raise specific issues in terms of planning and architecture. In those new and ever shifting urban contexts, planning processes become extremely complex and the locus of strong controversies.

The tensions and conflicts pervading the development and regulation of contemporary cities in the South and in the North are often accompanied by rich and complex controversies over the possibility of a common urban future. This is certainly the case in the current controversies that arouse around the making of the upcoming Mumbai Development Plan (MDP) and that led to its temporary withdrawal. Such crises often indicate a mismatch between public concerns and aspiration on urban development, and visions of planning authorities. They can be interpreted as a sign of a more fundamental crisis of current planning tools and processes and their corresponding theories.

To account for those contentious dynamics, it is not enough to use analytical oppositions such as between functionalist and strategic planning, but we need to re-launch the work of description in order to produce in-depth, detailed and dynamic accounts of planning processes. This article is an attempt at such a description based on the developing field of “mapping controversies” (Yaneva 2013).
The planning challenges of the heterogeneous city

The heterogeneous city

The heterogeneities at stake in contemporary cities are various, multiple and evolve at different scales: heterogeneities of convictions, of ways of life (rhythms, capabilities), of habitats (huts, villas, skyscrapers), of city forms (slums, high rise, low rise), of actors (dwellers, government officials, NGOs employees), all of them interact to form complex and contrasted urban dynamics. For instance, it seems possible to identify in Mumbai at least three major types of urban forms, each of them following a distinct mode of development: the high rise, the slum, and urban villages rooted in fishermen villages that survived amid a sprawling city (Echanove et. al, 2015). On a more global scale, Christian Schmidt’s and his team have been able to identify seven major “patterns and pathways to urbanization” present throughout global cities from the North and South (Schmid, 2014).

This diversification of the paths to urbanization is matched with an increasing heterogeneity of the authorities on national, states and city level involved in the planning and transformation of the city. For example, in Mumbai there are a number of state agencies that plan different parts of the city: Metropolitan Mumbai Region Development Authority (MMRDA), Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA), Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA), and many others. Then there are parastatal agencies, like for example the Mumbai Transformation Support Unit (MTSU), a governmental think tank set up to facilitate the process of Mumbai's transformation by advising on, coordinating and monitoring projects to improve quality of life. Finally, there are all the different political parties, on state, city and local level that participate in the construction of the city. All of the above compete over territorial and thematic influence. Already this preliminary glimpse gives us an idea of the heterogeneous and complex administrative and political system posing a veritable challenge to city planning. Planning is not anymore an exercise of a prevalent actor who combines and aligns the various forces shaping the city in order to follow its plan, but it implies on the contrary constant, upstream negotiations and translations to be able to draw a common plan and overcome the increasing social, political, and technical complexities. In the process, it forces professionals (planners, architects, geographers, researchers) to go beyond the multiple dichotomies that rule most of the urban world, such as the high rise and the slum, nature and culture, or social and material.

The evolution of urban planning: from functionalist to strategic planning

Historically, urbanism – translated into ‘urban planning’; here – was first introduced by the Catalan engineer Idelfons Cerdà in the middle of the 19th century defining the modern city in opposition to the traditional city. Since then, urban planning theories have multiplied and diversified along the years. Until the late 1950s, urbanism was characterized by attempts to build the ideal city based on various models. Urban planning was primarily seen as a craft and a technical practice, following a physical determinism, and as a tool that could determine social and economic life (Rabinovich 2008). Therefore, it was assumed that mostly architects carry out the planning. This becomes problematic when we consider that cities are very different from buildings. Indeed, there was no – or not much – study done about the city itself, its evolution, flux, etc.

A major shift happened between the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. Cities started to be seen as “systems of interrelated activities and places in a constant state of flux” (Rabinovich 2008), which lifts urban planning to the rank of a specific science (Hall 2005). Becoming a science in itself, urban planning became a matter not only for engineers, architects and geographers, but also for social scientists and economists, all of which had the goal to analyze the interrelated urban phenomenon. In parallel, former expert driven top-down planning approaches underwent harsh criticisms opening up for more participatory approaches. In much of the global North, there is now principle acceptance that planning processes should be transparent, participatory and inclusive.

Indeed, there have been important shifts away from comprehensive master plans and towards strategic spatial plans and urban planning that is responsible to strong civil society. Strategic plans are “directive” of long-range. They give frameworks, principles and guidance rather than detailed spatial plans. “They do not address every part of a city – being strategic means focusing only on those aspects or areas that are important to overall plan objectives, which in Western Europe are usually sustainable development and spatial quality” (Albrechts 2001).

As suggested by Watson, such an evolution is also taking place in large Southern metropolises: “a number of Southern countries have also adopted strategic planning (to replace master planning), probably as a direct borrowing from strategic planning ideas in the global North. The very different approach required by strategic planning inevitably counters opposition: from politicians and officials who use closed processes of decision-making and budgeting to insert their own projects and further their own political interests, and from planners who have to abandon their comfortable role as the ‘grand classical planner’ and become more of a communicator and facilitator” (Watson 2009).
While by principle still a master plan, a tendency towards increased participation can also be seen in the making of Mumbai’s Development Plan. In fact it was the first time in the city that a plan necessitated the organization of workshops with the civil society in order to include (or at least take into account) some of their requirements. The transformation in the making of the MDP seems to be illustrative of this broader evolution, especially as it mobilized more actors then ever before. Nevertheless, as a first empirical result, we noticed that the debate about the right planning model is itself a component of the controversy. We argue therefore that the distinction between functionalist and strategic urban planning must be integrated in a broader and more encompassing description of the controversies themselves, i.e. the arguments, technical and spatial devices, rule and social actors they articulate. Such an analytical strategy should allow us to understand the way debates about planning are embedded within broader political conflicts and strategies to master – and take advantage of – urban development. This posture seems even more relevant if we consider the intrinsic ambiguities of planning in the global south.

Planning in the global South

Regarding the global South, much of the literature about its urban world notes that planning in many cities has been strongly influenced (imposed or borrowed) by planning traditions that emerged in other parts of the world (mostly Europe and USA) (Watson 2009). This planification was, at that time, a response to specific urban conditions and political context of the South that is of colonized countries. Such an interpretation draws from what is referred to in international literature as “post-colonial” approaches – or “subaltern urbanism” –, which argue that urban planning and theory throughout the world remains under Western influence and its associated notions of modernity and development (Robinson 2006). What is surprising is that planning conceptions have changed very little from these first models in many places. Therefore there is a mismatch between the urban planning and the reality and the issues of the city. Hence, derived conceptualizations such as the opposition of the formal and informal (Roy 2005) appear unfit to tackle the multiple challenges faced by cities in the so-called Global South. This is more than a mere epistemological question. Those normative and dominant visions of urban development deny and actively reduce the diversity of “patterns and pathways to urbanization” constitutive of the complex contemporary urban fabric (Schmid 2014). Indeed, these planning schemes articulate with local politics, economic and cultural factors and are often misused in the process.

The proliferation of informal settlements – often called slums – usually are seen as a failure of the master plan to “control” the city. In contrast, for Ananya Roy (2009), planning rather facilitates inequalities and exclusions through criminalizing certain forms of informality and legalizing others. Slums are the main elements – the easiest to notice – that prove current planning is facing difficulties to meet with urban issues. According to Watson (2009) such exclusionary processes have to be linked to the shortcomings of functionalist planning: “most obvious problem with urban modernism is that it fails to accommodate the way of life of the majority of inhabitants in rapidly growing, and largely poor and informal cities, and thus directly contribute to social and spatial marginalization”. Nevertheless, as we just suggested, the planning situation of large metropolis is more complex and it seems that attempts to adopt strategic planning in southern cities has resulted in reinforcing exclusionary processes of unfit urban habitats and ways of life. We must therefore “symmetrize” the argument and pay attention to the way both functionalist and strategic planning tools and processes are used to define who and what belongs to the legitimate and planned development of the city. It is time therefore to turn to the description of the ongoing process of making the MDP. Rather than explain urban planning in Mumbai as a particular type of planning, the mapping controversies methodology aims at understanding the actual making of planning. Following the making of the MDP should allow us to refine our understanding of what is planning in the heterogeneous city and, more broadly, to account for the intricate complexity of contemporary urban worlds.

Mapping controversies in urban planning

As we suggested, preconceived theories and methodologies often fall short and appear simplistic when, used to analyze, build and govern contemporary cities throughout the world, because they often do not reflect the intricate and diverse realities of our urban habitats and ways of life. Thus, we are in need for innovation in methodology in order to understand the contemporary heterogeneous urban world and the challenges it poses to planning. Here, we advance that the analytical tools of mapping controversies can enrich our understanding of planning processes through a mapping of the different actors and their interactions, their argumentations and motivations as well as the means of communication, the places they encounter, and the relation to practice they develop.

Crossing the tools of Science and Technology Studies (STS) with digital representation, mapping controversies as a research method was developed by the French sociologist Bruno Latour and his colleagues to account for heterogeneous networks of human and non-human actors involved in the making of the social (Latour 2005, Yaneva 2013). Mapping controversies offers a new way of inquiry in social sciences based on the Actor-Network Theory (ANT). ANT invites us in particular to “symmetrize” our analysis of urban development and its
heterogeneous components, i.e. treating at equal level and in a same analytical frame the various actors, arguments, technical elements or models of urban development – be it from the North or the South – to avoid falling in the traps of preconceived conception and their disjunctive dichotomies. As explained previously, the heterogeneous dimension of the modern city forces the urban researcher to go beyond these dualistic theories and to develop new ones. This is where mapping controversies methodologies plays out their full potential: opening up new perspectives on what exactly is going on, while avoiding to cover too rapidly empirical evidences with heavy explicative models (on the reproduction of power, domination, rational choice, and so on). In this perspective, the challenge is to unravel the numerous events and conflicting conduits that made – and are still making – the MDP. By putting every actor and event on the table, mapping controversies enables to shed light and unveil a specific controversy. It is only with this “big” picture in mind – i.e. a picture not drawn in black and white but one that takes into account multiple aspects and opinions – by which theories overcoming dichotomies can be elaborated.

Mapping controversies is first a research method focusing on controversies surrounding a particular knowledge rather than facts and statistics; more precisely it does not focus specifically on knowledge per se, but rather the process of its production and stabilization. By raising the question of “how” instead of “what”, mapping controversies – and more generally pragmatic approaches – aim to overcome traditional divide, such as nature and culture or technical and social, that were found at the core of critical approaches such as the description of traditional Berber houses by Bourdieu in 1972. According to Yaneva (2013), we need to go beyond this kind of description in order to expand and integrate more dimensions, and not only cover the social and symbolic aspects. She suggests that we need to follow the people making the house, and not the house when it is already built, as was the case in Bourdieu’s approach. Developed in STS and adapted to architectural research, mapping controversies could also be used in urban and social studies, as it is capable to unveiling complex and intricate phenomenon (planning, social events and practices). It is therefore not only about producing new visualization of social phenomena but it is a methodological and analytical posture. One that calls for careful description of the dynamic unfolding of a controversy along the way arguments are constituted and embedded in contrasted assemblage where the world is re-produced; how opportunities and orders are created and also how inequalities and oppressions are either alleviated or produced anew.

The case of the Mumbai Development Plan 2014-2034

Legal framework of the MDP

In India, the current urban planning regime is rooted in the Town and Country Planning Act from the United Kingdom of 1947, which is primarily focused on detailed land use zoning. Although this was the principal tendency during the second half of the 20th century, now, many countries (including United Kingdom) have been exploring more flexible ways to accommodate changes in land use (Watson 2009). Indian cities have been mostly governed by master plans, which are urban plans that cover a long time range – usually twenty years – which is the case of the recent MDP that will cover from 2014 to 2034. In the past in certain cases, such as Mumbai or Delhi, it has taken over ten years to complete the preparation of the plan and its sanctioning. More and more, the master plans raise a lot of criticisms because either they don’t incorporate inclusion of Economically Weaker Section, or they have been done in a top down tradition with very little consultation.

Institutionally speaking, the creation of a development plan in Mumbai originates with the state of Maharashtra mandating the production of plans for the urban by the Maharashtra Regional and Town Planning Act, 1966 (MRTP). The act was altered multiple times since its creation but not fundamentally changed. While the act defines narrowly the process of preparation of a development plan, neither implementing nor economic concerns are within the scope of the MRTP. It demands the elaboration of a comprehensive land use plan following functionalist ideals, allocating of distinct functions to territories. While the elaboration of the plan is mandated to urban local bodies, in the case of Mumbai to the Mumbai Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM), the plan is approved and sanctioned by the state of Maharashtra. While the task remained to elaborate a comprehensive, all encompassing plan, multiple state agencies were created to plan for thematic and territorial spaces such as slums or the airport area. As a result, the MCGM not only lost control over certain issues but also over the respective territories and the right to plan them.

The MDP controversy and our approach towards it

We can localize the latest climax of the MDP controversy during the months after the publication of its draft on February 24th 2015. It not only captured the attention of diverse civil society groups, but also of course developers and politicians. According to the MRTP this was the moment when the MDP was to undergo public scrutiny over a period of sixty days. In the following weeks a veritable media campaign against the MDP “riddled with errors” climaxed in the call to “dump this DP” and finally forced Maharashtra’s chief minister to intervene. However he
did not follow the request to “scrap” the MDP but installed a review committee, which would take four months to analyze and rework the “faulty” MDP. Subsequently the deadline for this revision has been postponed several times and modifications are still on-going at the time of writing.

Given the importance of the MDP for the future of Mumbai’s development and impact on the life of its population, the public reaction as such was not unexpected. However the dimension of the outcry, the unified opposition in rejection and, last but not least, its success to force an overhaul is remarkable. Such a controversy makes visible the invisible forces that otherwise are disguised in the dispersed and detached everyday making of the city. Taking this opportunity, we set out to examine the making of the MDP and creation of Mumbai’s future. From these first observations, a few general questions arise.

As a starting point, we set out to understand the historical course of events as well as who actually raised their voices and what concerns were brought forward by reviewing online available newspaper articles. With this knowledge in mind, series of interviews with various actors (activists, communities, academics, planners, politicians) enabled us to understand the diverse perspectives and conflicting visions on the MDP. This allowed us in a first time to better grasp the historicity of the controversies, i.e. its unfolding in time and the way criticism and indignation were nurtured. Indeed, to understand the dimension and intensity of the reaction one has to know multiple preceding events in the making of the MDP, where the first troubles and conflicts of interpretation arise and which set the path for the public controversy (giving it both its impetus and forms).

The story of the MDP begun on October 20th 2008, when the MCGM in accordance with the MRTP declared its intention to revise the Development Plan for Greater Mumbai. Two years later the task to develop the DP was finally mandated to a consortium of Indian and French urban planning companies – the Group SCE India Pvt Ltd. After some debates about the tendering process and mandating foreign specialists, when local capable enterprises were at hand, the debate cooled down. Rather the frequent delays and extensions for preparing the MDP became a point of interest.

At this time only a handful of professionals started to engage with the making of the DP outside of the offices of the municipal cooperation and the mandated consultants. The Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI) played a crucial role, which started to investigate how the production of the MDP can be made participative. Intending to support the MCGM in the making of the MDP, they initiated a stakeholder engagement (TOI 27.4.2011) and call for attention about the importance of this planning exercise. Various thematic groups – such as housing, transportation, urban form, health, water and so on – were formed to elaborate a list of “non-negotiable” issues, which should be taken into account by the authorities. While these thematic stakeholder groups consisted mainly of experts, they were foregrounding the view of citizens through a large survey to build up pressure for more participation.

A wider public was confronted with the MDP when Existing Land Use (ELU) map was published for public scrutiny in September 2012. The ELU as a survey of the existing land uses sets the basis for the preparation of the MDP. Many groups, particularly already marginalized populations such as slum dwellers, urban villages, hawkers and so on, found themselves excluded as their habitats were not mapped and thus deprived from the cities future as envisaged by the municipality. The ELU simply has left out slum areas from the plan, denying them formal recognition along with other groups such as the Koli (fishermen), homeless and hawkers. Calling Mumbai’s citizens for help in examining the ELU, UDRI set up a homepage to collect reports and inputs (http://www.mumbaidp24seven.in). Pre-formulated forms were made available and a great number of mistakes were found and reported during the official phase for suggestions and objections. Spectacular mistakes were made public in the newspapers such as, out of all, an architectural school was mapped wrongly.

Almost a year after the “suggestion and objections” exercise, the opposition to the MDP again made headlines when over 100 groups representing the urban poor gathered and demonstrated demanding inclusion in the MDP on October 22nd 2013. At that occasion, they presented “The People’s Vision Document for Mumbai’s Development Plan (2014-2034)” to the MCGM, challenging the official vision for the city as well as the procedure of planning. Yet, municipal commissioner Sitaram Kunte promised transparency and inclusion, assuring the normality of the procedures: “I have got the People’s Vision Document. We are following the right process while preparing the DP” (The Hindu 23.10.2013).

In contrast to the ever-louder voices demanding public participation might lead to perceive, the elaboration of the MDP foresaw participative workshops. Although few in numbers and limited in scope, those workshops were the

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1 To gain a first overview and commence the ongoing research this review was restricted to English newspapers.
first time steps towards more inclusion – outside the legal framework – were made mandatory in a planning process in Mumbai. Confronted with the pressure for “real” participation and the immense objections on the ELU, the MCGM initiated additional workshops on ward level, where they sought to get feedback form citizens (TOI 2.1.2014). In total 29 workshops on different issues were held with various civil society groups. However, all parties – the public and the planners – felt these workshops were inconclusive and mainly used as dispute arenas rather than constructive talks. Additional workshops with politicians were organized but without the presence of civil society groups. While seen as a move to more participation from the MCGM’s side, the invited citizens did not feel that they were really involved in the process (TOI 11.8.2014). Above that, the workshops were made responsible by civil engineers for further delay in the preparation of the MDP and increasing costs. Meanwhile the public controversies slowed down while the MDP was supposed to be prepared.

Shortly before the publication of the draft MDP, expectations and excitement over the new and better MDP rose: comparisons to the earlier development plans and their draw back were made (TOI 13.2.2015), hopes expressed that this MDP will be approved faster than previous ones (TOI 23.2.2015) and the preparation process is priced as India’s first MDP with public participation (TOI 18.2.2015). Further the city's open spaces, environment and infrastructure would be given high priority in the MDP (TOI 13.2. 2015). Through allowing densification in certain areas by raising the Floor Space Index (FSI) – i.e. the ratio of built up area to ground area – to terrific 8 (TOI 17.2.2015). On February 14th, only 11 days before the publication, the responsible municipal commissioner Sitaram Kunte was quoted: "We expect maximum suggestions from Mumbaikars on it" (TOI 14.2.2015). A prediction that would come true.

After the publication of the draft MDP on February 25th 2015 the newspaper coverage multiplied. The first articles had more explanatory character trying to make sense of the enormous voluminous MDP and its linked Development Control Regulations (DCR) and presented it to the readers (e.g. TOI 17.2.2015). The diverse civil society groups were on their guard and almost immediately started to point out difficulties. Soon every day new flaws and faults of the draft MDP were unveiled. Affected people started to voice their concerns, journalists hurried to run after the out speaking persons and NGO and CBO representatives. Politicians jumped on the running train hoping to make for public opinions and votes (TOI 4.3.2015) and start to blame each other for the “mess” (TOI 5.4.2015). The dimension of the protest became visible as resident groups proudly pointed out the number of complaint letters they collected (TOI 18.4.2015a), all of this spearheaded by UDRI who started to campaign for “dump this DP” (www.dumpthisdp.org). Interestingly, even the developers were starting to critic the MDP for taking away incentives for redevelopment (TOI 18.4.2015b). According to them this will most affect future tenants, who would receive smaller flats.

Under the increasing public pressure, the state chief minister Fadnavis announced inquiries into the errors and that he will “scrap Development plan and start afresh if need be” (TOI 7.4.2015). Despite these challenges from above and below and faced with the floods of 50’000 “suggestions and objections” municipal officials react with a reference to the procedure. Despite the numerous numbers it shouldn’t be such a difficult task as the objections have been repeated and it almost seems that all goes the right way and MGCM assures that this can be handled adequately (TOI 24.4.015). After the intervention of Fadnavis to “scrap” the MDP, there were uncertainty among the political of what really happened. Is the MDP truly dumped or does merely undergoing revision? (TOI 29.4.2015). And the newly appointed Municipal Commissioner of MCGM, Ajoy Mehta, refused to comment upon it. The question of accountability for the error-riddled MDP was rarely raised. The private firm was excluded from the process of overhauling the draft MDP. And the Kunte had to liberate his chair just three days prior to the end of his appointed time at that position.

As we will see it is not simply the cry for participation that made Fadnavis buckle up and install a review committee. While participation unites the diverse groups of the civil society, they still relate very differenlty to the city and its heterogeneous fabric. Thus, they speak about contrasted realities and what matters to them – their so-called “interests” – is on different nature and scale: some of them are restricted to local and situated concerns, some generalize their claims at the scale of the city, while other focus on specific questions like environmental issues.
Conclusion

Explaining the controversies around the MDP only as hijacked by politicians using the debate to further their interests or to explain the fights over participation as a (necessary) step in the transition from functionalist to strategic planning does not help us to understand the making of the MDP. Or else, explaining the controversy as a political battlefield where politicians want to harvest the fruits and blame the errors to opponents or where capitalist interests want to maximize their profit. Such easy explanations aren’t sufficient to account for the complexity and dimensions of the controversy. In particular, they often neglect that even the expression of a raw pecuniary interest is forced to go through various “translations”², be it into legal and technical means, publicly received justifications or any operation allowing to articulate the interest within the broader settings of the development plan. It is therefore very different – and it is one of the goals of our research to assess it in detail – to express and defend financial interests within the contemporary MDP as it was under some more classic urban planning process. It has to do with the way market logics are embedded within the renewed systems of density calculation or else with broader discourse on sustainable urban development. We believe that understanding those difference is exactly what allows researchers to better understand the making of contemporary urban planning and more generally the ordering mechanism of the heterogeneous city. It is also a way to grasp better the different situations that are summoned under the label of the “neoliberal city”.

As this brief account of the contemporary setting and situation of the MDP shows, its complexity calls for a careful unfolding of its many facets. In this perspective mapping controversies methods appear as an apt set of tools. We will not understand the making of the MDP – or in more general how planning is made – if we reduce it to disembodied political struggles or confrontation of opposed “interests”, to a politician-developer nexus or even to a mere demand for more participatory planning processes. We need to understand the shifting interests and arguments and their articulation with spatial and legal ways of functioning. To understand planning we have to look at the process and all that is included (and excluded) from it, hence the use of the mapping controversies method. Putting the controversy in the centre of the focus allows us to cover the full scale of an event and does not limit the analysis to a certain dimension, be it political, economic, social, spatial or technical. Mapping controversies is a method to sidestep the search for the “hidden” intentions and the questions of what lies beyond. No need to search for the hidden forces of capitalism. The important question thus is “how does planning work?” and “how is planning made to work?” Master planning emphasizes the product of planning but not the process, hence there may be little local buy-in and plans are unlikely to be institutionally embedded. For these reasons it seemed relevant to use the mapping controversies method to analyzze the controversies of the MDP.

At the same time, we also need to reflect on the fact that the mapping controversies method is before all a method of description, a detailed, dynamic and relational description of complex phenomenon, but a description nonetheless. The purpose is only to “provide the most detailed description of the phenomena as seen by their protagonists” (Yaneva 2013). As such, it offers a necessary basis to elaborate a critique on the sources and the protagonists” (Yaneva 2013). As such, it offers a necessary basis to elaborate a critique on the sources and the normative elements – required to criticize its reflection and possible solutions. On the contrary, it might sometimes fall into the trap of fluid description of the world hindering critical leverage.

The limits of the mapping controversies method as a purely descriptive exercise are discussed in the ANT debate. In particular to the critical urban theory, description at best is a (necessary) element towards an analysis of the destructive working of capitalism. Against this critique, it can be said that if we restrict our search to the working of capital, then we will only find expanding capitalism. On the other hand, if we only describe the dynamics of controversies, we fail to explain the making of the contemporary complex inequalities, oppressions and power relations that evolve with urbanization process. The questions of to whom does planning profit and those of inclusion and exclusion can still be addressed through an analysis of the very technicalities that are shaped through the controversies, for example the FSI, the actual plan and its regulation.

² On the concept of “translation”, central to the development of ANT approaches – or also what has been labelled the “sociology of translation” – see the seminal article from Michel Callon (Callon 1986).
References


