Urban Planners as Network Managers and Metagovernors

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ABSTRACT This article presents a study of urban planning roles in Danish municipal planning as they evolve under changing planning conditions, such as project planning and network governance. The study finds that a hybrid planning role is emerging, dominated by four role variants, all of them necessary to solve complex planning problems. The consequences of the four role variants are discussed in terms of the planners' expert knowledge and their participation in local network governance. The study highlights the potential benefits of network management and metagovernance as governance tools in the development of planning roles.

Keywords: Planning roles; project planning; network management; metagovernance

Introduction

In planning literature there has always been a great interest in the development of urban planning roles in response to the changing planning conditions in cities and society. This article contributes to this discussion by investigating the assumption that changing conditions within public urban planning, such as project planning and network governance, set particular parameters for the planner’s role in urban governance. These parameters, I will argue, require a flexibility in the role played by planners, as well as a large amount of reflection and role balancing in the exercise of planning roles.

The article begins with general discussions about current structural conditions for planners, including project planning, the revival of strategic planning and increased cooperation with actors from market and civil society (also referred to as increased network governance). These conditions have a major influence on planning conditions both in contemporary Denmark and in other European countries (Albrechts et al., 2001; Healey, 2007). However, role development occurs not only through institutional changes but also via actors’ shifting interpretations of those changes: for every alteration to the role of urban planners, modifications in the role perceptions and self-images of the planners who inhabit the planning roles are required (Sehested, 2003). Consequently, this article also offers a perspective on urban planners’ working conditions in practice and their own experience of the ways in which their roles have developed. It asks how urban planners interpret their working conditions, and how they handle and construct their role(s) as urban planners in planning situations characterized by project planning, strategic planning and increased network governance.

One result of the study is a model of variations in planning roles, describing different directions in which they can develop, all of which are regarded as relevant...
to contemporary Danish urban planning. The investigation also shows that there are ample opportunities for the planners to be co-constructors of their role in urban network governance, and aims to clarify the extent of this opportunity and to encourage increased reflection amongst urban planners about the existence of unused potential to sustain the role development via the employment of various techniques of network management and metagovernance.

The article starts with a presentation of the theoretical discussion about project planning, network governance and metagovernance in urban planning, and brings up general points about the opportunities that exist for role development among planning professionals within network governance. The theoretical discussions are illustrated with a more specific description of Danish planning conditions. The next section of the article begins by commenting on the methodology of the study before presenting the empirical data that it uncovered. These results are then formulated into a model that combines analytical questions and empirical findings in the final section of the article, which also suggests potential areas for future role development.

Project Planning, Network Governance and Metagovernance as Role Conditions

This paper’s analysis of the conditions surrounding current planning roles will be structured around three analytical questions:

1. How are Danish urban planners involved in project planning and network governance, and do they conform to an elitist or pluralist pattern of network governance development?
2. How do Danish urban planners use different types of metagovernance to regulate project planning and network governance in urban planning?
3. How, and to what extent, do Danish urban planners exercise their hybrid planning role?

Project Planning

According to planning literature, planning in western European countries since the 1980s has shifted from hierarchical and rule-based planning systems to new forms of planning in which faith in the capacity of planners to steer and regulate the development of the urban centre from a public centre is abandoned. It is argued that, in many cases, regulation, control and comprehensive plans have blocked the capacity of the city for dynamic urban development (Healey, 1997a). Instead, through the 1980s and particularly in the 1990s, there has evolved a more flexible form of project planning, based on ad hoc projects. Projects have evolved from below and from outside the planning bureaucracy, involving citizens, interest organizations and private interests. Working together, public and private urban actors try to find solutions to local problems (Dear, 2000; Hall, 2000; Sandercock, 1998).

In Denmark, municipalities have most of the responsibility for urban planning within the framework of a comprehensive municipal plan, which is revised every fourth year and approved by regions and state. The Planning Act constitutes a traditional hierarchical planning system between state, regions and municipalities. Since the 1980s, however, an ongoing political and administrative decentralization, occurring in both state and regions, has transferred more and more tasks and competencies to both municipalities and municipal local institutions, boards, users/citizens organs etc. This is especially the case for urban planning, which now sees few restrictions being imposed from higher levels,
while a variety of actors and networks in the municipal governance situation have been mobilized (Bogason, 2000; Sehested, 2003).

Up through the 1980s and 1990s, the formulation and revision of Danish comprehensive municipal plans became more of a routine, and most urban development occurred as a result of projects conducted by investors and builders, or as experiments paid for by state programmes concerned with urban development (e.g. urban renewal or environmental projects). The municipal plan’s function as a framework for project activities diminished. It was rather the projects that caused the plans to be changed. Deregulation, self-regulation and market principals became central to Danish urban planning, dominated by ad hoc projects (Kjærsdam, 1996; Petersen, 1985; Sehested, 2003).

Network Governance

In planning theory, project planning is described as part of a certain regulatory situation in public administration, generally referred to as network governance. It developed as a consequence of new public management reforms that have been implemented in public organizations in most western European countries (Albrechts et al., 2001; Jessop, 2002; Rhodes, 1997). Planning is increasingly exercised in a fragmented governance system consisting of numerous policy networks that stretch across public and private boundaries (horizontal governance) and across levels of public decision making (vertical governance) (Marcussen & Torfing, 2007; Rhodes, 1997). Within these numerous policy networks, the urban community’s array of interests and values emerge, and this is where the mutual impact between the actors transpires in order for consensus to be achieved (Freestone, 2000; Healey, 1997a, 2007; Tewdwr-Jones, 2001). Interdependence, negotiation and trust are the basic governance principles in governance networks, which can take different forms. Rhodes (1997) describes a scale of policy networks ranging from open and integrating networks with a plurality of participants, to closed and elitist governance networks with few participants. Urban planning is increasingly occurring in a situation where interactive forms of governance supplement (and some times undermine) traditional government institutions and representative democracy (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Heffen et al., 2000; Peters & Pierre, 1998). Under these circumstances, a top-down comprehensive urban planning based on subordination, control and detailed regulation is becoming increasingly difficult to achieve (Healey, 2007).

Denmark has a long tradition of interaction between public and private actors in government matters and also a long history of democratizing public institutions and planning (Andersen et al., 1999; Premfors, 1998). However, major interest organizations have gained special access by becoming directly integrated in the political decision-making system, for which reason Denmark is regarded as a corporative political system (Pollitt & Bouchaert, 2000; Premfors, 1998). Habits, routines and traditions have developed for managing the participation of professional interests in planning processes, with some actors encountering great difficulty gaining access to the process (Andersen et al., 1999; Klausen, 1998). In 1970 the Danish Planning Act formalized the participatory aspect by introducing mandatory hearings into the process of making comprehensive municipal plans. This gave professional actors, such as the interest organizations, a major influence on planning, which has been cemented as the hearing system has become an institutional part of the corporative political system in Denmark with a tendency to sustain elitist network governance. The hearing system has been emphasized and developed ever since
(Gårdmand, 1996). The Danish Planning Act of today encourages municipalities to pursue a broad and pluralistic involvement, but it is not mandatory.

Thus, network governance is not a new phenomenon in Denmark. However, one new aspect of it is that network governance has increased significantly in all public policy areas as well as in the planning arena in the last ten to fifteen years. Furthermore, a large variety of actors have become involved in the network activities beside the interest groups due to the decentralization process which transferred governance competence to political organs such as user boards, partnerships, voluntary organizations, citizen councils etc. (Bogason, 2001; Ejersbo & Greve, 2002; Sørensen & Torfing, 2005b). All of them are potential actors in urban planning.

Metagovernance

The first analytical question derived from these conditions of project planning and network governance is, as mentioned above: how are urban planners involved in project planning and in network governance, and do they sustain an elitist or pluralist network governance development?

The development of network governance has been accompanied by an indirect form of public coordination and integration called metagovernance. Theoreticians of metagovernance argue that the high degree of self-regulation enabled by network governance does not significantly reduce the possibility for overall public governance but, rather, transforms it in various ways (Jessop, 2002; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2004; Sørensen, 2006). Metagovernance is therefore an indirect means of performing “regulation of self-regulation”, both at the macro level (e.g. Jessop, 2002) of societal governance and at the micro level of network management (Klijn & Edelenbos, 2007). The purpose of metagovernance is to create some form of coordination, coherence and integration in the fragmented structures of network governance without completely undermining the autonomy, engagement and self-regulation in governance networks (Sørensen, 2006). Through metagovernance, it becomes possible to regulate without using traditional governmental techniques such as hierarchic orders, bureaucratic rules, control and detailed regulation. In the study the micro-level of metagovernance is investigated.

Various metagovernance techniques have come into use, and Sørensen (2006) argues that there are four main types. The first is the political and economic framing of network governance. This could take the form of regulation through political goals and visions, allocation of financial and other resources to network activity, or framing through the building of common discourses and narratives in the governance situation. The second type of metagovernance is network design, and can involve decisions regarding who ought to participate, how networks and processes are structured, and so on. The third type of metagovernance is network management. This concerns the regulation of tensions, resolution of conflicts, and management of unequal resources in the networks (Klijn & Edelenbos, 2007). Finally, the fourth metagovernance technique is network participation where politicians and planners can directly influence the discussions and decisions made in the networks (Sørensen, 2006, pp. 110–113).

The decentralization and democratization process in Denmark has led to a radical fragmentation of Danish policy making and planning, and a restriction of the possibility for municipal politicians and planners to regulate urban development in any detail. Within the last ten years Danish political governance has adopted the form of indirect metagovernance (Klausen, 1998; Sørensen & Torfing, 2005b). Management by objectives, contract management and financial framework agreements have become key political
metagovernance tasks during the 1990s (Bogason, 2001; Ejersbo & Greve, 2002; Sehested, 2004).

The second analytical question that emerges from the metagovernance discussions is as mentioned above: How are the urban planners involved in, and how do they utilize different types of metagovernance in order to regulate project planning and network governance in urban planning?

Although project planning, network governance and metagovernance are influential trends in Danish urban planning, the hierarchical planning system is still extant: the municipalities must still draft comprehensive plans every fourth year, and the representative politicians in municipal councils are still regarded as the final arbiters of planning decisions, enjoying a great deal of legitimacy. Denmark is one of the countries in which the general development has not unambiguously moved from government to governance and from plans to projects, as otherwise described above. Scharpf (1994, p. 41) has coined the expression “governance in the shadow of hierarchy” to characterize the general development of public administration in several European countries, and this is also a relevant description of the Danish context. Therefore, the role of urban planners has to be developed within the framework of “governance in the shadow of hierarchy” and projects in the shadow of plans.

Planning Roles in Governance and Metagovernance Settings

Project planning, network governance and metagovernance pose a challenge to urban planners. Especially since the 1960s, urban planners in public organizations—like other public sector professionals—operated in niches of autonomy within public bureaucracies (Burrage & Torstendahl, 1990; Sehested, 2002). During this period, public bureaucracies became dependent on the professionals and their expert knowledge to perform specialized tasks, such as urban planning, with the result that those professionals gained more autonomy, often monopolizing their working area in their role as experts. In practice, large technical departments dominated by urban planners became responsible for public urban planning and development (Sandercock, 1998; Torstendahl, 1990). In the planning literature, this autonomous planning role is often described in terms of the ideal of the “rational planner” or the “utilitarian modernist rationalist” (Faludi, 1986; Healey, 1999). Sandercock (1998) describes the rational planner’s role as characterized by a search for rationality, objectivity and scientific knowledge and a strong belief in his or her own knowledge and ability to develop general and universal principals for urban planning (Sandercock, 1998, p. 62). The rational planner is an excellent example of an autonomous expert operating within a professionalized bureaucracy, and this role indicates how important the authority of expert knowledge is for professionals such as urban planners.

The literature on professions describes how major public reforms since the 1990s have challenged the autonomy of professionals in all public policy areas (Broadbent et al., 1997; Ferlie et al., 1996). Subordination of professional values to political and administrative values, the introduction of business-style organizational forms and control mechanisms in professional work, greater influence accorded to citizens and other urban actors are just some of the reform initiatives which have undermined the autonomy of professionals, including urban planners in public bureaucracies (Ferlie & Fitzgerald, 2000; Gleeson & Low, 2000). Despite these changes, however, studies on professionals during the 1990s have concluded that those in public administration in general have maintained a relatively high degree of autonomy and a central position in professional work. However, their roles are changing from that of traditional autonomous expert into a hybrid role combining in-depth
professional knowledge and values with other forms of knowledge and other values (Dent et al., 1999; Sehested, 2004). However, it is only by studying practice that it is possible to see how the hybrid role materializes in different policy areas such as urban planning.

In the planning literature there is a long tradition of challenging the ideal of the rational and modernistic planner. In Marxist writing of the 1970s, the need for planners to be critical and to defend the needs of the poor and weak in society, instead of acting as a government defender, was argued (Campbell & Fainstein, 2003; Healey, 1999). One of the first labels applied to this newly critical role was that of the advocacy planner. Those formulating the concept argued that the planner cannot act only as an objective technician in modern planning but has to sustain plural democratic planning “openly inviting different political and social values to be examined and debated” (Davidorff in Campbell & Fainstein, 2003, p. 305). The advocacy planner has to act as a campaigner for the weakest and poorest, to ensure that their interests and values are heard by decision makers (Campbell & Fainstein, 2003; Forester, 1999). In this role, their interaction with other urban actors is emphasized and a normative critical perspective is introduced that has influenced planning discussions ever since. In Denmark, the concept of the “political planner” was used to describe this advocacy role, and the ideal was built into the professional identity of urban planners (Kjærsdam, 1996; Petersen, 1985).

However, the discussion of planning roles has moved on and one role model in particular has dominated the literature in the last 15 years. This is the ideal of the collaborative and communicative planner (Healey, 1997a; Innes & Booher, 1999). The argument is that project planning and network governance cause an increasing number of actors to be involved in the planning processes, hence there is a need to develop a planning ideal based on the democratization of the governance processes. Planners should not formulate and argue for the interests of the weakest but instead should generate processes and dialogues which allow the weakest parties to formulate their own needs and interests (Agger, 2007; Friedman, 1992; Healey, 1997a). The planner has to interact with the stakeholders of communities as a knowledge mediator, a broker, a counsellor or a critical friend facilitating dialogical processes (Healey, 1997a, p. 309). Various alterations to the dialogical processes themselves are necessitated, with planners often turning to Habermas’s ideals of integration and fairness in communicative action for inspiration (Sager, 1994). In other words, the role of the communicative planner is to sustain open and plural network governance in urban planning. This ideal has also influenced Danish planning discussions especially in theory but also in certain planning practices: for instance, evaluations of the state funded programs of area-based renewal illustrates how planners strive for the ideals of communicative planning (Engberg, 2003; Fotel & Andersen, 2003). This raises the third analytical question mentioned above: to what extent and how do urban planners exercise the hybrid planning role in practice? Furthermore how do they combine their in-depth knowledge and values with other knowledge and values, particularly if they perform the role of advocacy or communicative planner?

The three analytical questions about governance and metagovernance forms and role development will be investigated through a Danish case study. Before presenting the study, some brief comments will be made regarding its methodology.

Methodology in the Study of Planning Roles

This study of planners’ roles is based upon a sociological neo-institutional understanding of the interdependent relationship between context and roles, viewing roles as a part
of an institutional meaning structure (Ejersbo, 1996; March & Olsen, 1989). This view emphasizes the connection between roles and context (in this study, project planning, network governance and metagovernance), but also stresses the importance of the planners’ meaning systems, looking at the framing of the actions of individuals within an institution according to the norms and values, the routines and habits, and the sense of appropriateness to a given situation (March & Olsen, 1989).

In most studies of the relationship between network governance and professionals’ (such as planners’) roles, researchers have explored common trends. The analytical questions mentioned above are derived from this perspective and constitute an important starting point. However, this perspective has a tendency to stress a developmental sequence and therefore to posit a universal and necessary pathway for the development of network governance and planners’ roles, while overlooking the possibility that choice and political decisions can influence roles in public institutions (Premfors, 1998). As Bogason (2000) argues, in studies of public reforms and roles it is important to make room for empirical analyses of the interpretations and strategies pursued by individuals within institutional constraints, but also of the ways in which institutional features can be used as resources. In situations where changes and reforms are taking place, it is likely that this room for individual interpretations and strategies is wider than in other situations (Bogason, 2000, p. 110). This study investigates the interpretations and strategies of the planners to see not only how they handled role development that was imposed on them, but also how they constructed and developed their own positions.

The role study was carried out using semi-structured qualitative interviews, each lasting two hours, with urban planners in ten different municipalities. Each fulfilled the same position, having responsibility for comprehensive planning and urban development in the municipality to which they were attached. They all had between 15–25 years of experience in urban public planning and were all educated as urban architects. The empirical questions were structured by the analytical questions mentioned above and concerned daily work activities, organizational settings, use of management tools and knowledge in planning activities as well as contacts to and co-operation with other actors, education and courses, etc. The ten municipalities varied in size, but all of them had carried out comprehensive reforms in their municipal organization and regulatory thinking as a result of project planning, network governance and metagovernance. However, the trends of these reforms in each of the municipalities varied.

In all ten municipalities, the task of comprehensive planning was moved during the 1990s from the technical urban planning department to development units close to the mayor and the administrative executive. Detailed local planning, however, stayed in the technical department, though some of the planning tasks were outsourced to private firms. All the planners had formerly held central positions in the large urban planning departments but had been moved into small development teams in the central administration, where they had to think broadly about municipal and urban issues and make planning more political than technical. In all ten municipalities, new management tools such as contract and result management, and management by (political) objectives, financial frameworks, were used to guide the planning process. The planners were requested by the politicians to integrate not only the interest organizations in the planning processes (as they used to) but also other urban actors, in an effort to democratize and create ownership of the planning processes. They were requested to fulfil the legal obligations in the Planning Act but at the same time initiate, keep track of and get involved in urban development projects introduced by other urban actors. Changes in municipal development thus impacted heavily on their role, to the point that the urban planners
constitute a critical case in which the planning conditions have changed considerably. In all cases, the changes were anticipated, but planners did not know the exact form that they would take (Flyvbjerg, 1991).

Moving Towards a Hybrid Planning Role

Looking to the empirical results of the study, there is no doubt that the planning role today is perceived by the planners as more complex than in earlier eras, and that this complexity is related to the changing planning conditions. Firstly, the planners’ own description of their planning conditions is presented, revealing similarities in the way that they represent current planning conditions, despite differences between their municipalities. These commonalities can be used as a general framework for discussing the development of a hybrid planning role. Secondly, variations in the hybrid role are presented in a model that illustrates a combination of the analytical questions and the empirical results. This is followed by a short description of variations between the hybrid roles.

The General Framework for the Hybrid Planner

Most of the planners described their former work in urban planning departments as consisting of drafting comprehensive plans for the development of the municipality and of making detailed planning regulations. In other words, they played the role of technical planning experts. The planners felt that they had great influence in the planning process and that their expert knowledge was decisive for maintaining this influence. They were respected and listened to. However, after the changes were implemented, they found urban planning to be a combination of presenting political objectives and visions and realizing concrete projects that have been developed with a plurality of city actors participating in numerous working groups, boards, committees, etc. A planner describes the situation like this:

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

Another planner describes the difference between earlier planning and planning today:

When I started here we had a very big planning system where all corners of the municipality should fit into the plan. This has been abandoned. Now we are almost in the opposite position. We have almost given up on planning at all because it is not possible to control developments. Perhaps we are now on our way to a middle position because it is realized that a coordination of activities in the municipality is necessary.

This situation has produced new working tasks for the planners, which can be divided into three types of tasks:

- Collaboration and dialogue with many types of urban actors in different network organizations;
- Coordination and communication between the many projects and networks;
- Management and development work, e.g. network regulation and sparring about the political goals and visions.

The planners feel that the demands from politicians have changed considerably. They all state that their work used to be more sheltered, with professional colleagues working
together in large technical departments. Nowadays, the expectations are more complex and demanding. They have to “get out of the office”, as one describes it, and participate in many projects, and politicians expect them to represent municipal goals and interests wherever they go.

There is no doubt that project planning and network governance have become very influential in these working conditions. The new planning tasks are all somehow related to project and network management. However, there still is some form of comprehensiveness in the planning work but today it occurs through coordination and political goal-setting. Urban projects have to be developed “in the shadow” of overall political goals and visions stated in the municipal plans. In other words, metagovernance has become part of the planning work in all municipalities through political goals, coordination and network management.

We can conclude that the similarities for the current role development are as follows:

1. Expert authority has been challenged by political authority;
2. Different values and interests have to be integrated in the planning processes;
3. The planners have to open up the planning processes for a large variety of actors to be involved;
4. The planners have to make a balance between general political goals and projects.

These similarities make it relevant to talk about the existence of the hybrid planning role among the Danish planners surveyed in the study. But we also observed considerable variation amongst the planners in the way they handled their working conditions. Here the opportunity for being co-constructors of their own role development becomes apparent in the study.

The role variation is presented in Table 1 which is an attempt to synthesize the three analytical questions (the collaboration and network forms, the metagovernance forms, the knowledge and values) with the empirical findings. The labels for the variations stem from the planners themselves when they were asked to name their own roles. The variations are described more extensively below and here we also address the issue of whether the roles contain elements of the advocacy or communicative planner.

The professional strategist lies closest to the traditional expert role. As one planner states: “I am still a professional and proud of it, but I do act differently and more strategically than before.” The smallest step that this planner takes beyond the former expert role is to accept politicians as the legitimate political decision makers. As one urban planner says:

There have been a number of weaknesses in the urban planning field—a sense that you were more democratic than the elected representatives; that you knew better than the elected representatives. During professional planning meetings, you could either brag about which policies you had gotten your politicians to pass or be a little embarrassed about how stupid they had been in decisions made regarding planning.

This planner will fight to the end for his professionalism and fight hard, but when a political decision is made, he will be loyal. The professional strategist stresses the importance of urban architects as planners but also argues for combining professionalism with communication skills in order to be able to convince others of the relevance of expert knowledge in the planning process. This planner prefers to co-operate with the political and administrative management in order to influence the political decisions with expert
Table 1. Variations in the role of the hybrid planner near here

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The hybrid planner as:</th>
<th>Values and orientation</th>
<th>Knowledge combination</th>
<th>Collaboration and governance network forms</th>
<th>Metagovernance forms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional strategist</td>
<td>Professionalism and policy The &amp; “beautiful&amp;” physical product</td>
<td>Architect’s urban planning knowledge Knowledge of communication</td>
<td>Professional network, political-administrative management: closed and elitist networks</td>
<td>Network framing: political and professional goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Policy and efficient implementation The politically appropriate product</td>
<td>Knowledge of urban development Knowledge of politics and public administration Knowledge of communication</td>
<td>Political-administrative management, interest organizations, building contractors: formal and elitist networks.</td>
<td>Network participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market planner</td>
<td>The market and competition The financially feasible product</td>
<td>Knowledge of urban and economic development Knowledge of communication</td>
<td>Private building contractors, political-administrative management: closed and elitist networks</td>
<td>Network framing: limited political goals and financial regulation Network participation and management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
knowledge, but also co-operates with other experts in the field of urban development. In so doing, the professional strategists tend to sustain a closed and elitist form of network governance. They are very active in metagovernance activities such as goal and vision formulation and in disseminating expert knowledge and values, but this planner also participates in the governance network from a professional perspective, influencing its activities.

The hybrid planner as a manager lies closest to the traditional administrative role so well-known in public administration. Here the urban planner orients her/himself in relation to policy making and attempts to decode political signals in order to convert them into professional messages in urban planning. As argued above, the political aspect of planning has been strengthened under the new Dutch professionalism. As one urban planner says:

"It has become more political. Today, we have to be very careful that we don’t do something that can come to hurt the Mayor. We have become a kind of manager more than professionals. If you cannot live with it, you have to find another work. These are the conditions here."

Several of the urban planners are not entirely comfortable in this role of interpreting the expectations of municipal management. For the planner as manager to handle the specific public context of planning, general knowledge about urban issues and urban development is important, as is knowledge about political processes and administrative procedures. Furthermore, communication skills are necessary in order to sustain dialogue between the different actors. The manager-planner maintains formalized network governance and stresses the importance of representation in any form of the network’s activities in order to ensure that the process remains within the rubric of representative municipal democracy. The manager wants to limit and control network activities in order to keep them in line with representative democracy and is in favor of using network framing for political goals and financial distribution. The manager also participates in politically important governance networks and performs network management in order to make governance networks more efficient.

Many of the planners felt that their hybrid role as market planners was strange. Only a limited number of the planners exercised this role, because it is very different from their traditional expert role and because some of them were personally against the “marketization” of urban planning. As one urban planner describes it, this role sometimes means that professional strategic goals have to take a back seat:

"I have never experienced this kind of planning before as a planner, where you go out and make some mutually binding agreements with investors and builders—also on the financial level. Not as a planner. Now we have to sit on the same side of the table as the private investors and builders who used to be on the other side of the table. We have to be part of partnerships with “the former enemy” and create common involvement and commitment in large urban projects."

The market planner has to be oriented towards market mechanisms and must focus on economic development. The work here is about realizing projects within the sphere of economic opportunity and engaging in dialogue with private actors, e.g. regarding investments. It requires familiarity with the logic, methods and function of private business. The argument for the existence of the market planner is that the public must accept co-responsibility for the city’s dynamic and economic development and that it is the
The market planner prefers closed forms of network governance with key political, administrative and business actors in order to make the decisions effective. The argument is that the competition in the private sector requires a closed form of network governance. The market planner is in favor of limited network framing only (because it could reduce the possibilities for exploiting changing urban development prospects) and also supports financial incentives. Furthermore, the market planner’s role stresses the importance of network participation and management in order to make the planning process as efficient as possible so that private investors stay in the process.

The process planner is another type of planning role that diverges significantly from the traditional expert character of the planner. One process planner who was interviewed for this study explained that in earlier times most planning decisions were made “in house” at the town hall with formal hearings. The decisions about urban development often generated protests from and conflicts with ordinary citizens. Now it has changed. As one planner says:

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

The process planner’s job is to create democratic processes that can integrate all relevant actors in order to make common decisions regarding “the right kind” of urban development. This planner feels that all the affected parties have to be heard or integrated into the processes before decisions are made, in order to create ownership of decisions. The impact on planning activity is an increase in networking and communicating with relevant actors, and more effort spent on coordination, process management, etc. The work is described as something between a pedagogue and a process consultant.

The process planner requires not only knowledge about urban development but also about processes involving a large number of participants. She or he concentrates on establishing a large variety of governance networks with not only professional interests and interest groups but also ordinary citizens and other affected actors in the city, such as civic organizations and the private sector. The process planner favors limited network framing, and where it is unavoidable, prefers discursive and narrative framing to build up common understandings and goals from “below”. Network design and management are the most essential metagovernance tools for the process planner.

In the process planner we find most of the elements characterizing the collaborative and communicative planner as cited in the planning literature (see above). In general, the planners in the study find this role difficult to perform because they lack the competences to fulfil it. Furthermore, they do not find this role possible or desirable in all planning situations.

**Reflecting, Combining and Balancing Roles**

Even though the hybrid planning role conceptualizes planning in a general way, there are considerable differences in the way planners fulfil their roles within this framework. The four role variants of the hybrid planner are not to be considered as mutually exclusive. Rather, the planners exercise the role variants in different planning situations. At some
points the roles can supplement one another, whereas in other areas they are in conflict. It is not that difficult to act as a professional strategist in some situations and as a manager in others, because they share some similar elements. It is more difficult, however, to act as a professional strategist (“I know best”) in one situation and then as a process planner (“together we know best”) in another, or to combine the manager who stresses policy and proper procedures with the market planner’s emphasis on effectiveness. Combining all the four roles can produce an almost schizophrenic result for the urban planner in question. Hence, reflections and decisions about the role must be undertaken in relevant planning situations, which is exactly what urban planners do, either consciously or unconsciously.

The main conclusion of the study is that the planning conditions of project planning, network governance and metagovernance frame the hybrid role development generally, but do not delimit the exact content of the role. There is a fairly wide and open “construction site” for urban planners to improvise, deciding which of the four role variants of the hybrid role they could play or combine in different planning situations. Situations created considerable leeway for the urban planners to be the co-constructors of their hybrid role; in other words, they were not merely role-takers, they were also role makers, whether consciously or unconsciously.

The urban planners in this study have developed a quite varied repertoire of hybrid planning roles. This repertoire must be varied in order to solve the complex and diverse tasks facing contemporary urban planners. In fact, in future, a criterion for success for the planners could therefore become how good they are at reflecting, combining and balancing the various roles in order to solve the planning tasks to which they have been entrusted. The important question to ask oneself as a planner is: Which role variant should I activate in this specific planning situation and why?

The study did not include an investigation of which factors, aside from contextual ones, could account for the tendencies toward specific role variants. However, the study showed that most of the planners made their choices and strategies relatively unconsciously. Drawing attention to the role variations and consequences could reinforce the quality of the role development within urban planning.

Consequences of the Hybrid Planning Role

In this last section, the four role variants will be discussed according to the three analytical questions structuring the role study.

Values and Knowledge in the Hybrid Planning Role

The variants of the hybrid role raise the question of which sets of professional values should form the backbone of urban planning in Denmark. Planners’ loyalties have changed: formerly, professional values alone were important, but now other kinds of values are seen as relevant to public administration.

Except for the role of professional strategist, the other variants illustrate that in-depth professional knowledge can be knowledge about urban development in general, opening the way for other professions to enter the urban planning field. In the variants, we also find a combination of traditional planning skills with new skills from economics, politics and organizational studies. The planners do not agree on which form of complementary knowledge is needed the most, and they pursue different strategies. This variation in enhancement of individual competence shows the requirement for all these forms of knowledge in an urban planning process and also the need for different professions and qualifications in those areas of public administration concerned with urban planning.
It would be desirable if urban planners and municipalities could make conscious choices about educational needs for urban planning in future, because their choices have a major impact on the role development of future planners.

Although the planners do not agree about which kind of knowledge is the most important in carrying out their hybrid role, they all agree that communication skills are very important. This emphasis on communication illustrates the movement away from the expert and the professional as an authority par excellence in the planning process and towards an individual capable of interacting and arguing with a wide range of urban actors possessing other forms of knowledge about the urban development.

The role study indicates that in the future there might be a need for a greater variation in future than currently exists in the professions dealing with urban planning. In particular there may be a greater need for teamwork, as this allows individuals with a wide variety of knowledge and competences to work together. The study also indicates important knowledge areas to be integrated in future planning education.

### Hybrid Planners in Network Governance

As indicated in the model, urban planners increasingly collaborate with different types of urban actors in the planning process. The planners participate in different kinds of networks and are an active force in the development of network governance. However, there is a great difference between the kind of urban actors who are included and in the form of governance networks they participate in across the four variants of the hybrid planning role.

Three of the variants have a tendency to sustain a closed and elitist form of network governance. There are different explanations for this from professionalism (one must be an expert to know something about the town) to the forms of representative democracy (one must be elected and represent a constituency in order to participate); to economic motivation (one must have capital interests to attain influence). But the consequence is the same. It is the few—the “selected” and the elected—who come to participate in the planning networks and have an impact on urban planning issues. Only the process planner builds upon a different kind of network formation: open, broad and inclusive network formation involving all affected parties is at the very core of his or her role in trying to create consensus and co-ownership to urban planning. However, this role is not the most widespread because the planners find it difficult to perform it in practice and they do not find it desirable in all planning situations.

Looking at the tradition within Danish planning of integrating interest groups in policy making (elitist corporatism), it is not surprising that we find the same integration of professional “expert” actors and representative actors in three of the hybrid role variants. It is easier to continue with “more of the same” than to change the way in which urban actors are involved in the planning process. However, there is no doubt that the difference in how planners sustain network governance has a major impact on the development of local democracy, regardless of whether the network governance builds on representative democracy (as in the three first variants) or tries to draw on the forms of more direct democracy (in the process planner). One of the striking findings of this study is that the issue of democracy building is not particularly articulated by the planners and not a central issue in their meaning systems. The explanation might be found in the history and culture of their role as professionals and autonomous experts: traditionally, planners typically distance themselves from drawing non-experts or laypersons because “they know best” (Sehested, 1996; Torstendahl & Burrage, 1990). The quote above from
a planner about the planners’ former view on politicians and democracy illustrates this point very well.

The study of planning roles shows that the governance changes and public reforms influencing planning work in Danish municipalities push urban planners to the forefront as regards the development of local democracy. As they create their respective collaborative relationships and various forms of networks, they are pushing the local democratic development in a representative (elitist) or participation-oriented direction, as seen in the model. Whether or not they are aware of it, the planners are democracy makers. One of the challenges facing the urban planner is to clarify their position in the municipal democracy. The democratic consequences of the role development must be included as a decisive factor in decisions about planners’ future roles.

**Hybrid Planners as Meta-Governors**

The most extensive form of metagovernance used in the hybrid roles is network participation. The argument is that the planners feel obliged to participate in important network activities in urban (project) planning. They want to directly influence what happens in these networks in order to make sure that professional, political and administrative values are represented. Most of their work involves network activities, and as they become busier, it becomes more and more difficult to keep track and find time to participate. The planners have an urgent need for more strategic network participation. The use of other metagovernance forms could help in this strategic process.

Another widespread method is to combine network framing via political objectives and visions with financial framing. The explanation is that financial framing has been known for years in the Danish municipalities, and more recently management by objectives has become part of the political management of Danish municipalities. The planners feel comfortable with these network framing forms. However, they do not extensively use other means of network framing, such as discursive and meaning-creating processes or other supporting administrative framings. These forms are not well known by the planners and they do not have competences to exercise them properly. Hence we find a lot of unused potential in the use of this kind of network framing.

Concerning network design and management, these metagovernance forms are used by the planners to a much lesser degree. Planners set up many network activities and reflect on who should participate in them. They also perform some internal network management in the networks they do participate in and they try to coordinate between the various network activities in order to obtain some form of comprehensiveness in the planning process. However, there is an obvious lack of more sophisticated network design and management such as the introduction of incentives in order to achieve results in the networks, and the establishment of a few general rules for the network activities and the processes, and little awareness of need to equalize and balance unequal resources in the networks to ensure interests are fairly supported. Clearly, there is unused potential in network design and management as a means to regulate the tendency towards fragmentation and self-regulation in urban planning. Use of these forms of metagovernance would reduce the need for planners to be actively involved in ever-increasing numbers of governance networks.

Metagovernance is not only a matter for planners. It is first and foremost a matter for politicians because it concerns the general governance of public activities. However, the development of new governance measures is typically a matter for administrators, and in this instance it becomes a consideration for urban planners working in cooperation with
politicians. To strengthen their role as metagovernors, the planners could develop more explicit strategies for metagovernance with the politicians and make use of more varied instruments of metagovernance.

Hybrid Planners as Advocacy or Communicative Planners?

All the planners opposed the idea of promoting any particular interest in planning development besides the professional and political interest of the municipalities. Most of the planners in the study had earlier supported certain professional planning interests or weak interest groups in the municipalities (as mentioned in a quote above, they sometimes saw themselves as more democratic than the politicians). However, they do not find it appropriate planning behavior today, and even if they did, politicians would not allow such behavior. Actually, the planners surveyed argued that advocacy planning caused the technical planning department to become very unpopular among the politicians, possibly one reason for the dismantling of urban planning during the last 10 to 15 years. In this sense, these planners have moved from advocacy (political) planners towards the kind of “government defender” role so often criticized by advocacy planning. The planners’ position as the individual “in charge” of comprehensive planning is one explanation for the disappearance of the advocacy planner, as well as for the planners’ own changing attitudes towards the question of how best to represent the interests of the weakest in society.

In the role study, we found some elements of the communicative planner in the process planner. These revolved around the establishment of networks and support for open and plural planning processes. As mentioned above, we also found that process planners undertook some network management in the form of solving and preventing conflicts in the networks, which are also important elements in communicative planning. Process design and management were clearly a part of being a process manager. But the organizing and framing of dialogues or initiatives to influence the conditions for dialogues (e.g. following the communicative claims) were not widely used as a governance tool by the planners. This was mostly because they did not know how to do it in practice—they lacked the relevant competences and tools to fulfil this part of the communicative planner’s job. Therefore, there are plenty of unused governance tools involving the “management of dialogues” which can be used to develop the role of process planner.

The process planner was in general not the predominant role assumed by the individuals interviewed for the planning study. One explanation, the lack of competence, is mentioned above. Another possible reason lies in the attitudes of the planners themselves, many of whom were sceptical about the process planner’s applicability to certain planning situations, preferring to enact their values in one of the other variants. A third explanation is that comprehensive municipal planning is less well suited to process planning than other areas, where this role may be more prominent.

Conclusion

The study of urban planners’ role development in Danish municipal comprehensive planning has illustrated the emergence of a hybrid planning role with four different variants, all of them necessary in a planning situation influenced by project planning, network governance and metagovernance. In combination, the four variants generate tensions and contradiction in the development of a hybrid role for planners. Hence, an important measurement for success in the future is how well the planners are capable of reflecting, combining and balancing the different role variants in different planning situations. In other words, role development acts as a “construction-site” where planners
must not only deal with planning conditions but also co-construct their own planning role. The aim of this article has been to clarify the conditions under which planners must make these choices about their roles.

The article presents a model of four role variants assumed by Dutch planners, concentrating on the consequences of those roles for the planners’ knowledge and values, and for their involvement in network governance and in metagovernance. The conclusion is that the knowledge base for urban planning is changing: more general knowledge about urban development is now combined with specific information about politics, economics and collaboration processes. Planning teams representing different professions might be necessary in public administration in the future to solve the complex planning problems. The conclusion that the paper reaches on governance is that planners have come to the forefront of organizing and managing network governance but there is unused potential in some tools that could assist them. Furthermore the democratic effect of the planners’ participation in and support of network governance is almost absent in the role development, so there are ample opportunities for planners to have explicit discussions about their role in enhancing local democracy in future. Lastly, the paper argues that the planners’ use of the forms of metagovernance forms is limited to network framing through political goals, network participation and a limited form of network design and management. Narrative and discursive framing are significantly underused, and there is little attempt to employ more sophisticated forms of network and dialogue management and strategic use of network participation.

The urban planners in this study have a central position in Danish urban comprehensive planning and the variants of the hybrid planning role that they have adopted are related to this context. In other planning contexts, other variants might be more appropriate. The planners perceive their planning conditions ("project planning in the shadow of plans" exercised via network governance and metagovernance) as new and different from those of former eras, and see a consequent need for a further development of their role. The article has presented some important potential avenues for this future role development.

References


