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Politicising the landscape: a theoretical contribution towards the development of participation in landscape planning

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we engage with the topic of public participation in landscape planning. Academic discussions and policy rhetoric tend to build on a conceptualisation of landscape as a democratic entity, yet practices of participatory landscape planning often fall short of these ideals. Most scholars approach this rhetoric-practice gap from procedural and normative positions, defining what makes a successful participatory process. We take an alternative approach, scrutinising the role of landscape planning theory in participatory shortcomings, and reveal how poor substantive theorisation of 'the political' nature of landscapes contributes to the difficulties in realising participatory ideals. We engage theoretically with the political dimension, conceptualising and explaining the implications that differences, conflicts and power relations have for participation in landscape planning, that is, politicising the landscape. This theoretical engagement helps bring about a much-needed realignment of substantive theory, procedural theory and practice for developing participation in landscape planning.

Introduction

Public participation in landscape issues has become a mandate across much of Europe through ratification of international conventions and national policies (Council of Europe, 2000; UNECE, 1998). Community involvement is seen as a precursor to sustainable landscapes and is widely promoted as a cornerstone for successful and just practice in landscape planning (Jones, 2007; Selman, 2012). Consequently, a call for full or genuine participation of all concerned groups or stakeholders in landscape planning decisions is frequently made (Conrad et al., 2011; Scott, 2011).

Following ideals of direct democracy and communicative rationality, theoretical approaches to participation in landscape planning regularly cite three main principles for 'genuine' participation: 1) *inclusiveness*, based on involving all stakeholders; 2) *power balance*, or giving participants equal say and influence in decision-making processes; and 3) *consensus building*, where consensual decisions are reached through deliberation and facilitation (Calderon, 2013). However, inclusive, balanced and consensus-building processes are far from mainstream, with information gathering and consultation being the most common participation practices undertaken in landscape planning (Butler & Berglund, 2014; Conrad et al., 2011). While legitimate in certain circumstances, such practices have long been questioned as pseudo or non-participatory (Arnstein, 1969). Studies exposing pseudo-participation reveal that such processes often fall short in actively involving a wide range of stakeholders or fail to engage in meaningful deliberation, limiting the public's

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influence in decision making and reinforcing the interests and values of powerful stakeholders (e.g. Scott, 2011; Vik, 2017). Such actions challenge participation's legitimacy.

Rather than looking to practice to explain these shortcomings, in this paper we engage with landscape planning theory, exploring its contribution to the difficulties in achieving genuine participation. Our approach was inspired by theoretical discussions within planning theory, where comparable shortcomings have led to extensive debates among scholars on how participation is theorised and thus practised (e.g. Healey, 2003; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998). Similar theoretical discussions are emerging in landscape planning (Butler, 2014; Calderon, 2013). However, the literature on participation in the field remains largely normative and procedural focusing on promoting the need for genuine participation and developing new participatory methods and instruments (e.g. Conrad et al., 2011; Innes & Booher, 2016; Roe, 2013; Selman, 2012). Such predominant focus, we will argue, has resulted in limited substantive knowledge of 'the political', that is, the antagonistic dimension of landscape (Calderon, 2013; Gailing & Leibenath, 2017) and democracy (Mouffe, 2005) and its inherit challenges for participatory processes regarding differences, conflicts and power relations. We will show that while these issues are touched upon in general landscape democracy discussions, they are seldom the focus of research on participation in landscape planning, or are dealt with in a superficial and disparate manner. Hence, while practitioners may be well aware about the challenges that differences, conflicts and power pose for participation they have little substantive knowledge that supports their conceptualisation and approach to these issues (Westin & Hellquist, 2018).

Our aim in this paper is to advance the development of participation in landscape planning from a theoretical and substantive standpoint, stepping away from the normative and procedural focus that prevails in the field. To achieve this, we first present the significance of participation within landscape planning based on recent developments in rhetoric of landscape as a democratic entity. We then reveal the significant role played by the practice-orientated epistemology (i.e. the traditional normative and procedural focus) of the landscape disciplines and poor substantive theorisation in perpetuating the dominance of experts in landscape planning.[1] Based on this, we call for a substantive-based approach for developing participatory landscape planning practice, based on a critical and in-depth understanding of participation in relation to landscape. We show that this creates a need to recognise and engage with landscape's political nature, focusing on the differences, conflicts and power relations that constitute the landscape. We assess the implications that our suggested approach infers and address the role that landscape-planning theory has in advancing such an approach.

The rhetoric of participation in landscape planning

The rhetoric in landscape planning since the end of the 20th century has moved from 'landscape' as an expert area of practice to a democratic entity. Landscape as a democratic entity recognises the knowledge and values of everyone who experiences a landscape as fundamental for its management and development (Council of Europe, 2017; Jones, 2007; Scott, 2011; Vik, 2017). This rhetoric is reflected in policy through the European Landscape Convention (ELC), defining landscape as '… an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (Council of Europe, 2000, Ch.1, Art.1a). Accordingly, the ELC's general measures highlight the need to '…establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies' (Council of Europe, 2000, Ch.2, Art.5c). For landscape planning, the ELC implies including the views of *all* concerned groups or stakeholders in decision-making processes, entailing shared power and responsibility between government and the public, in order to achieve consensus decision making (Jones, 2007).

While the above understanding of landscape is gaining prominence in landscape planning rhetoric and policy, practice continues as a professional domain with limited public input (Conrad et al., 2011). There are many possible explanations for this disparity including: institutional

barriers (Raitio, 2012), expert ambivalence (Westberg & Waldenström, 2017), or public unwilling-ness to participate (Höppner, Frick, & Buchecke, 2008). However, the focus in the next section is the role of theory and conceptualisation of landscape in the shortcomings in landscape planning.

The role of landscape planning theory in shortcomings in participation

Numerous disciplines engage with landscape planning as a theoretical and practical endeavour. Landscape architects, landscape ecologists, cultural and physical geographers, spatial planners and historians, to name but a few, come to landscape planning with different substantive under-standings of landscape based on distinct disciplinary foundations and differing ontological stand-points. These include understanding landscape as a visual entity, an experienced phenomenon, a source of polity and practice, and a physical entity (Wylie, 2007).

The ambiguities created by the concept 'landscape' have made it possible for landscape planning to become an umbrella field comprising a wide range of disciplines. However, Butler (2014) claims that this multiplicity of perspectives has been problematic for theorisation in land-scape planning, since the diverse disciplinary understandings and theorisations make it difficult to develop a cohesive substantive theory within the field. Consequently, research tends to focus on practice and procedural concepts, helping better understand and handle particular disciplinary conceptualisations of landscape, rather than developing a more general conceptual coherence (Selman, 2010; van der Brink & Bruns, 2012). This implies a practice-based epistemological orienta-tion common for the disciplines engaging with landscape planning, where substantive theorisa-tions and conceptualisations are overshadowed by procedural understandings for developing tools and facilitating practice (Dakin, 2003). Knowledge in landscape planning is thus advanced through a predominance of procedural theory, where substantive theorisation plays a limited role in informing practice (Butler, 2014).

There has been little documented reflection over the implications a procedural focus has for participatory practices in landscape planning. However, we argue that the practice-orientated episte-mology of the disciplines engaging with landscape planning has played a significant role in perpetuat-ing the expert dominance in participatory practices. We identify two central factors supporting expert dominance. First, drawing on the distinct disciplinary foundations of the landscape disciplines makes it difficult to generate substantive concepts of participation in landscape planning (Butler, 2014). Second, since substantive theorisations and conceptualisations do not inform practice, it is the tools and procedures applied which determine how landscape problems and solutions are recognised and discussed within participatory planning processes (Brunetta & Voghera, 2008).

Although genuine participation is being increasingly accepted, ratified and promoted (Council of Europe, 2000), traditional tools and procedures are predominantly based on understanding landscape as an objective, physical and visual entity (Butler, 2014; Scott, 2011; Stephenson, 2008), as exemplified by present landscape characterisation practices (Olwig, 2016). The result has been the development of a dominant discourse of landscape as a tangible and objective unit of analysis, prioritising the visual and physical (Brunetta & Voghera, 2008). Such a view gives precedence to expert knowledge at the expense of the diverse, and often contradictory, understandings that emerge when decision making is opened up to the public (Conrad et al., 2011). Accordingly, participatory processes often exclude values beyond the physical and the visual, confirm expert-based values and legitimise dominant agendas, instead of supporting genuinely participatory processes (Scott, 2011).

The practice-orientated epistemology of landscape disciplines makes it difficult to escape the dominant expert discourse in landscape planning. The discourse on landscape as a tangible and objective visual entity is subsequently used as the basis for tool development, such as, landscape assessments, development or land use plans. The continuous and prevalent usage of these tools reproduces and reinforces the dominant understanding of landscape within the field (Brunetta & Voghera, 2008). It is a vicious cycle for participation; both practice and academia struggle to promote the dynamic, non-tangible, experiential and democratic nature of landscape (Conrad et al., 2011).

In the following section, we outline a means for moving away from the practice-orientated epistemology of landscape disciplines and the difficulties it creates for the theorisation and practice of participation in landscape planning.

From normativity to a substantive-based approach to practice

Strengthening substantive theory

As mentioned earlier, there has been limited development of substantive theory in landscape planning. Consequently, substantive knowledge of participation in the field has drawn from, and has been supported by, theoretical input from numerous other disciplines, including urban planning (Healey, 2005), development studies (Cooke & Kothari, 2001), environmental management (Reed, 2008) and public policy (Arnstein, 1969). These fields recognise the relevance participation has for democracy, new forms of governance, justice, social learning, complex problem solving, conflict management, empowerment and sustainability. While these considerations are important, we argue they need to be discussed and conceptualised in relation to the entity or phenomenon they address, in this case 'landscape'. Our claim is that in substantive terms, engaging with participation in relation to landscape is not the same as, for example, engaging with participation in urban planning or natural resource management. Similar claims are made by Dakin (2003) and Stephenson (2010), who argue that, in order to genuinely handle landscape as the perceived surroundings to life, there is a need for philosophical reorientation of participation. In our view, dealing with landscape as a democratic entity, open to values, experiences and interests beyond those framed by dominant expert-based discourses, requires realignment of procedural and substantive theory in landscape planning. It is not possible to achieve such realignment if one aspect is under-developed, in this case substantive theory. Thus, in the remainder of this paper we seek to strengthen the substantive aspect of landscape planning theory, as a step towards realignment. We centre on the idea of democracy, given its importance in discussions of participation (Pateman, 1970; Vik, 2017) and in line with the ELC's recognition of landscape as a democratic entity (Council of Europe, 2017).

Democracy, participation and landscape

In landscape studies, there is a growing tradition of addressing democracy through the concepts of landscape as a right, including discourses on landscape as a common (Olwig, 2005) and landscape justice (Mels, 2016; Mitchell, 2003). Recently, the term 'landscape democracy' has arisen as a focus of academic literature (Arler, 2008; Egoz, Jørgenson & Ruggeri, 2018; Egoz, Makhzoumi, & Pungetti, 2011). The concept centres on the notion that democracy requires tangible spaces provided by landscape in order for communities to form (Egoz, 2011; Olwig, 2005). Landscape is thus seen as the backdrop for practising democratic rights, and for engaging with the plurality of values of those who constantly construct and reconstruct its meaning (Gailing & Leibenath, 2017).

In line with this democratic conception, discussions on participation in landscape issues highlight two main symbiotic ideas. The first of these sees landscape as an arena for freedom and public deliberation, including people's right to be involved and heard in decisions affecting their landscape (Roe, 2013). The second idea sees landscape as constitutive of and by human societies, forged by interactions within and with the landscape (Olwig, 2005).

The first idea, which operates more at the normative and procedural level, can be found in a large body of literature on participation in landscape planning. The focus of such scholarly works rests on the practices and institutions through which participation in decisions and transformations of the landscape can or ought to take place (e.g. Innes & Booher, 2016; Selman, 2012). These texts reinforce the previously outlined practice-orientated epistemology in landscape planning. In contrast, the second idea, constituting a more substantive and ontological level, remains less developed and under-critiqued (Gailing & Leibenath, 2015; Roe, 2013). Existing literature has mainly maintained the normative notion that, since

landscape is constitutive of societies and vice versa, all should participate in the landscape as holders of true justified knowledge relating to their landscape (Jones, 2007).

In our view, a significant substantive aspect is missing from the second idea of participation in landscape planning. This absence pertains to one of the main challenges of participatory practices: 'the political' and antagonistic dimension that constitutes democracy (Mouffe, 2005) and landscape (Calderon, 2013; Gailing & Leibenath, 2017; Mitchell, 2007; Zukin, 1993). The political dimension emphasises the idea of landscape as a space of constant struggles fuelled by differences, conflicts and power. The very idea of landscape democracy and participatory processes is to find ways of dealing with this antagonistic dimension in a civilised manner. However, we argue that the present emphasis on developing practices and institutions for achieving democratic ends, coupled with the lack of theoretical engagement and reflection on 'the political', prevents researchers and practitioners from posing and contesting important questions about the challenges of participation and democracy in the landscape. These questions are crucial to forward participation in landscape planning (a similar argument is made by Mouffe (2005) in her ontological engagement with democracy and her distinction between 'the political' and 'politics').

Discussions about struggles shaping the landscape are not new. Within cultural geography (see Wylie, 2007, pp. 102–108) scholars have long viewed landscape as a contentious product of society shaped by power, coercion and collective resistance (Mitchell, 2007; Zukin, 1993). Yet, as noted by Gailing and Leibenath (2017), this political dimension is significantly neglected in landscape planning research. Those authors argue that (p. 388):

> Political elements can be discovered in virtually all landscapes because they are inevitably imbued with politics and power. 'Neither the production nor reading of landscape is ever "innocent". Both are political in the broadest sense of the term' (Duncan, 1990, p. 182). Both material interests in land-use and the representations of landscape entail a high potential for processes of politicisation and depoliticisation (Kaltmeier, 2012). They are linked to processes of inclusion and exclusion by privileging certain values, interests and practices over others. Additionally, they can be—or actually are—contested.

We are more emphatic than Gailing and Leibenath, claiming that the political is present in all understandings of landscape. Thus there is a significant need to engage with the political. Below, we develop a substantive understanding of the political nature of landscape, that is, we politicise the landscape (cf. Gailing & Leibenath, 2017; Olwig & Mitchell, 2007). To do this we focus on differences and conflicts, and power *in relation to the landscape*, and the implications for participation in landscape planning.

Landscape and differences and conflicts

Aiming for genuine participation tends to be recognised as a positively laden goal, providing legitimacy to landscape planning. However, numerous challenges emerge when decision making is opened up to the multiple and diverse values, experiences and interests of all who have a stake in the landscape. The differences existing within the landscape have long been recognised (Helliwell, 1978; Zube, Sell, & Taylor, 1982). Differences lead to disagreement and conflict as parties claim the landscape in different ways (Balestrieri, 2013; Egoz et al., 2011; van der Horst & Vermeylen, 2011). Participatory processes are often seen as an arena for mediating and balancing differences and conflicts (Jones, 2007, 2016). However, over recent decades, deepening social divisions and increasing hegemonic market rationality in most Western societies have created a new social context. This new context finds landscape planners increasingly operating in situations characterised by deep differences and conflicts. In such situations, mediation in participatory processes becomes more challenging (Calderon, 2013), constituting a major hurdle to attaining genuine participation in landscape planning.

Following Watson (2006), we argue that in the new context of social differences and market rationality, there are two sources of differences and conflicts that are important to understand in

order to develop substantive knowledge on the political nature of landscape: 'intergroup differences' and 'state-citizen differences'.

Intergroup differences arise through differing claims that stakeholders (e.g. regulators, producers and users) and social groups (based on e.g. gender, age, class, ethnicity) have on the landscape. Thus intergroup differences draw attention to the conflicts and challenges arising due to overlapping and conflicting use of the landscape by different social groups (Egoz et al., 2011). Similarly, they can be seen in the contrasting understanding of what different groups, including professionals, consider socially, culturally or ecologically significant, what they regard as aesthetically valuable or perceive as appropriate, safe or acceptable behaviour (Ernstson, 2013; Low, Taplin, & Scheld, 2005).

The key challenge of intergroup differences for participatory processes is that they tend to create situations where contrasting experiences, values, interests and goals are equally legitimate and irreconcilable. Ernstson (2013) reveals this challenge, showing conflicts between different groups focusing on equally valid, yet difficult to combine, claims about ecosystem services; one group targeted long-term adaptation to global climate change, another focused on coping with recreation, health and identity issues of current users. Similarly, Olwig (2007, 2016) warns of the contradictions in the right to preserve and safeguard landscapes, reflecting on the values of dominant groups and the equally important need to allow contrasting values of new and under-represented groups to shape that same landscape.

State-citizen differences and conflicts, on the other hand, refer to contrasts between the (growing) hegemony of market-orientated discourses in many political and planning systems and the everyday values and experiences of people. This source of differences and conflicts has its foundation in the replacement of the welfare state with neoliberalism (Watson, 2006). This shift has introduced a new set of values that have caused most spheres of life to submit to a market rationality (Sager, 2009). For landscape planning, this change has meant that decisions concerning the landscape are largely seen in terms of supply and demand logic, measured in terms of their economic contribution.

Decisions following market rationale often lead to intense conflicts with non-financial interests and values, including environmental performance, everyday social relations and local identity. This is demonstrated in conflicts over local wind power developments (Mels, 2014; Otto & Leibenath, 2014); wildlife preservation and livestock farming (von Essen & Allen, 2017); and indigenous practices and mining (Raitio & Harkki, 2014). The challenge for participation in landscape planning rests on the seemingly irreconcilable gaps that these examples reveal. Challenges are tied up in gaps between governments, experts and those with a stake in the landscape, whose very understandings of development or progress differ. Such fundamental issues leave no obvious hope of dialogue. Likewise, such underlying differences can undermine the essentials for genuine participation (i.e. disrupting collaborative power sharing, subverting individual liberties and eroding freedom of expression), as they are considered obstacles to economic progress.

The disparities and conflicts that characterise the differences mentioned above suggest inevitable compromises to the genuine participatory ideals of inclusiveness, power sharing and consensus building. Connelly and Richardson (2004) claim that even if there are strong intentions to make (landscape) planning genuinely participatory, in reality differences and conflicts will lead to a potential range of practices, inevitably excluding certain participants, values, interests and agendas from the process. Power is central to this exclusion, given the fact that the above-mentioned differences and conflicts are inextricably interpenetrated by power (Watson, 2006). Understanding the way that power operates in landscape planning becomes central for furthering substantive understanding of differences and conflicts that constitute the landscape and its political nature.

Landscape and power

There has been an increased interest in power related to the landscape (Gailing & Leibenath, 2017). The main focus has been on the struggles that lie behind the creation of the landscape (e.g. Gailing & Leibenath, 2015; Mitchell, 2003; Zukin, 1993). Yet critical and substantive understandings of power are generally absent from landscape planning (Gailing & Leibenath, 2017; Richardson, 2016).

In discussions on participation, references to power are made in terms of normative ideals of empowerment and delegation/sharing of power. This is evident, for example, in the seminal work by Jones (2007) on public participation and the ELC; only in the final paragraph of the article does he in passing refer to the use of power to contest decision-making processes.

A substantive understanding of power, as opposed to a normative approach, recognises that the landscape is generated through the interaction of a wide range of stakeholders (not all local or evident in the geographical location) that have access to different levels and sources of power (Mitchell, 2003; Swaffield & Primdahl, 2006). This includes economic or political power, valued knowledge and socio/cultural capital. When making decisions about or acting in the landscape, the various stakeholders, consciously or unconsciously, deploy power in order to achieve their desired goals. The planning, transformation and management of a landscape is thus inextricably bound to 'various classes and positions of power within a society' (Duncan, 1990, p. 182). However, a deeper substantive understanding of power implies a move from a focus on stakeholders' different levels and sources of power to discussing how power is exercised. Following Hay (2002), we identify two main theoretical approaches to such a focus on power. Based on the work of Dahl (1957), Bachrach and Baratz (2012) and Lukes (1974), the first approach views power as inter-personal relationships; powerful actors take actions for influencing decisions that favour their own interests. Accordingly, power can be exercised by directly enforcing, conditioning or manipulating others towards decisions they would not normally consider (Dahl, 1957); by setting agendas or practices that limit the scope of a decision-making process (Bachrach & Baratz, 2012); and/or by influencing and shaping others' perceived interests and values (Lukes, 1974).

In landscape planning, direct exercise of power is present, for example, in the conditions private interests stipulate for financing development or conservation of a landscape, for example by targeting specific users or activities (see e.g. the development of skiing facilities in Scotland, as critiqued by Warren (2002)). Examples of power in setting agendas or practices lie in choice of methods or techniques that open up or restrict the understanding or contribution of different actors (see e.g. Olwig, 2016). Exercising power through shaping others' interests and values can occur in the use of images and information about a specific landscape, promoting ways of experiencing or perceiving the landscape while inhibiting others (Brunetta & Voghera, 2008).

Hay's (2002) second approach to power is based on Foucault's conception of power as structural and socially constitutive, shaping and controlling discourses in society (Foucault, 1979, 1988). Power is inherent, ever-present and exercised through the day-to-day, taken-for granted beliefs and actions of people, producing and reproducing conceptions of what is considered to be true, normal and acceptable. In landscape planning, this relates to the influence that powerful actors have on the knowledge, information and ideas that guide decisions and practices relating to the landscape. As noted by Flyvbjerg (2002), knowledge is power, but power also prioritises knowledge that supports its objectives, ignoring or suppressing knowledge that goes against it. Thus, through including and excluding certain forms of knowledge, power actors may frame specific ways by which problems are understood, create the conditions for possible solutions and determine how results are evaluated during landscape planning processes (see e.g. Syse, 2010). This inextricably affects the interests or values that are included or excluded from decisions about the landscape, leading to desired effects for some parties, but less favourable outcomes for others.

An illustration of this second approach to power is the predominant masculine and heterosexual aspects of the traditional landscape gaze, encouraging particular ways of seeing, experiencing and acting in the landscape while excluding others (Mitchell, 2000; Till, 2004). It can also be seen in how assumptions of preferred forms of experiencing and developing the landscape, based on the values of elites or ethnic majorities, give greater power to the claims of people within these groups, subordinating those of minorities or unrepresented groups. Similarly, given the dominant political discourses giving primacy to economic benefits, the interests of actors whose values attach to such economic primacy will be reinforced, while the values of those with a social and environmental focus will be subordinated (Calderon & Chelleri, 2013). Finally, the landscape itself is an agent of

power (Mitchell, 1994) that disciplines and subjectifies individuals into certain forms of experiencing, valuing and acting in the landscape. Hence, either through inter-personal relationships or due to its structural and socially constitutive nature, power caters to the needs of certain groups, excluding and marginalising others.

Differences, conflicts and power relations are crucial for understanding the political nature of landscape and thus the challenges faced in efforts to achieve genuine participation in landscape planning. In the conclusion, we discuss the implications that our substantive engagement with the political dimension of landscape has for participation in landscape planning, and the role that landscape-planning theory has in advancing such types of practice.

Conclusions: towards the development of participation in landscape planning

In this paper, we describe the importance of the democratic and participatory rhetoric that has developed within landscape planning discussions. We also show that such rhetoric remains questionable. Instead of looking at practice to find explanations for these shortcomings, we scrutinise the role of landscape planning theory. In so doing, we claim that the predominance of a practice-orientated epistemology and the poor substantive theorisation of the relationships between landscape, democracy and participation have significantly contributed to the difficulties in genuinely operationalising the participatory ideals promoted in landscape planning and policy.

To forward the development of participation in landscape planning, we see a need to move from existing normative and procedural rhetoric to substantive-based practices of participatory decision making for dealing with landscape protection, management and planning. We thus see a need to strengthen the substantive aspect of landscape-planning theory in relation to participation, transcending the predominantly procedure-based orientation of knowledge production within the field. We take a step in developing this substantive stance by theoretically engaging with what we identify as one of the main challenges for participation in landscape planning, that is, the political nature of all landscapes. We define this political dimension while recognising that, although acknowledged in more general discussions of landscape democracy (Arler, 2011; Egoz et al., 2018), it is significantly neglected in landscape planning research (Gailing & Leibenath, 2017) and if addressed in research on participation, dealt with in a piecemeal and disparate manner. Consequently, we focus on conceptualising and explaining the implications that differences, conflicts and power-relations have for participation in landscape planning.

Two main conclusions can be drawn from our substantive engagement with the political nature of landscape. Firstly, what should differentiate participatory landscape planning practices from other forms of decision making should be an ability to recognise, legitimise and engage with different and conflicting values and interests, acknowledging the existence of power structures in landscape issues. This would leave practices of participation in landscape planning better equipped to include disruptive elements; essential for the authenticity of democratic processes (Connelly & Richardson, 2004; Mouffe, 2000). As argued by Mouffe (2000), too much focus on consensus may lead to apathy and disaffection with political participation, or to crystallisation of collective passions around issues that cannot be managed by democratic processes. Hence, our engagement with the political nature of landscape highlights that a well-functioning landscape democracy calls for a vibrant clash of positions and the recognition that in many cases there will be irreconcilable gaps between the equally legitimate claims of different social groups or actors. In this sense, participatory processes should be less about following ideals of genuine participation regarding consensus building and more about acknowledging and addressing differences and conflicts present within a landscape. Instead of only aiming for consensus outcomes, the focus of certain processes would be to help participants better understand (the legitimacy of) their own values and interests and those of their opponents; unpacking the roots and types of differences and conflicts that may exist and finding tailored ways to manage them, without necessary consensus. This would allow for a more constructive or productive approach to differences and conflicts based on

agonistic rather than antagonistic relationships (Mouffe, 2005). Bringing these ideals into practice rather than just festering in the rhetoric of planning (Bäcklund & Mäntysalo, 2010)

Our second main conclusion is that participatory debates within landscape planning need to be more open to, and honest about, the power mechanisms and forms of exclusion emerging during, and influencing, the decision-making process. This means recognising that all interventions in the landscape will inevitably lead to inclusion/exclusion of certain values, experiences or interest, and that there will always be winners and losers in the landscape. Accordingly, participatory processes would continue to aim to be as genuine as possible, but they would also be reflective of and make explicit who was excluded from discussions and who won or lost with decisions. They would also show the reasons why it was not possible to involve all stakeholders or reach win-win or consensus outcomes, and state what should be done about this in the future. A main goal of participation in landscape planning would then be to make visible the conflicts and power mechanisms that operate in the landscape, instead of trying to balance or remove them from the decision-making process. This would allow the emergence and contestation of unjust or unsustainable hegemonies and the possible institutionalisation of new counter-hegemonic projects that can alter them.

Asking practitioners or politicians to recognise that participatory processes exclude parts of the public, are incapable of fully removing or balancing power, or result in decisions with winners and losers, can be the equivalent of asking them to 'shoot themselves in the foot'. Not doing so, however, will lead to the all too often negative opinions of the public regarding decisions that, following political correctness and the ideals of genuine participation, are commonly promoted as inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all. In our view, this constitutes the main challenge, and threat, to participation in landscape planning, not because this can result in complaint or critiques of specific processes, but because it can delegitimise institutions, practices and actors, including landscape planners, that are essential for landscape democracy and participation.

As we argue in this paper, the role of landscape planning theory should not simply be to normatively promote ideals and tools for genuine participation. It also has a role in critically and substantively understanding the realities of the political nature of the landscape and how they affect participation in both landscape planning and landscape democracy. Such understanding should be translated into conceptual tools, which practitioners can use to critically reflect on how the political, that is to say, differences, conflicts and power, affects their practice and what, if anything, they can do about it.

This paper is a further step in what we consider should be a key theoretical endeavour within landscape planning with the greater purpose of genuinely democratising the landscape and developing practices that are closer to the participatory ideals of rhetoric and policy. In our view, the ultimate goal of this endeavour should be the alignment of substantive theory, procedural theory and practice. This would create an iterative relationship in which practitioners become more theoretically informed and reflective about their work and where the development of participatory policy and tools is grounded in critical and substantive explorations of what happens in the real life of landscape planning practices, rather than on normative ideals of how these ought to be.

Finally, we want to stress that, in contrast to the current dominant procedural focus of theory development within landscape planning, the development of substantive theory and of a substantive-based approach to practice should not aim at providing practitioners with a tool-kit of suggestions of what to do better. Instead, following Richardson (2002), we argue that the aim and relevance of theory should not necessarily be to make practice simpler or smoother, but to help practitioners to be usefully critical (rather than generally cynical) and appropriately positive (rather than naively optimistic). We encourage other landscape planning scholars and practitioners to join, or question, our theoretical endeavour as a means towards the development of landscape participation and democracy.

Note

1. For a discussion of substantive and procedural theory see Murphy (2005) and Butler (2014).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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