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Contact:
info@urban-know.com

Design and Layout: David Heymann

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Cover

Tapestry by Nicola Antaki

This three-by-three meter embroidered tapestry was made by craftsman Ameer Shaikh in the Mariamma Nagar settlement, Mumbai, 2014. It forms an interpretation of a map (comprised of photographs, drawings and annotations) made by Mukhtangan Love Grove 6th standard schoolchildren (11 to 12 years old) about their neighbourhood as a learning environment. The project, entitled Walkabouts, was one of a series of incremental pedagogic endeavours with the schoolchildren over six years from 2012 to 2017 facilitated by Nicola Antaki. It explored collective design as an educator, enabling practices of active citizenship and sustainable development.

Tapestry interprets the children's map using simplified embroidered designs. Through crafted interpretation, the children's composition of photographs and drawings is smoothed: The craftsman's embroidered translation creates a plane section of life in the settlement. It is a curated inventory or archive, not only of learning situations but also of the settlement situated in the rapidly changing global city of Mumbai. It is a physical example of the informal and formal flows of information and agency that create the settlement as a learning environment. Through Tapestry, a correspondence between the children, settlement and craft took place; collective practice formed an object that would provide continued opportunities for learning.

[Find out more about the tapestry here](#)



KNOW | Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality

A: 34 Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury, London WC1H 9EZ

E: info@urban-know.com | Ph. +44 (0)20 7679 1111 | W: www.urban-know.com

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Translating knowledge for urban equality: alternative geographies for encounters between planning research and practice

Alexandre Apsan Frediani

The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

Camila Cociña

The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

Michele Acuto

Connected Cities Lab, The University of Melbourne

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For more information visit:

www.urban-know/WP4-Practice, or contact:

camila.cocina@ucl.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper presents a conceptual inquiry into the relationship between planning research and practice. It proposes to look at the geographies of knowledge production and their influence in policies and planning that advance urban equality. The paper develops a theoretical approach to 'knowledge translation' – understood as the encounters between research and practice – to account for the logics that govern the production of knowledge at different scales, and their implications for planning practice. It proposes that in order to deal with the complexity of current urban challenges there are two aspects of the existing paradigms of knowledge translation that need to be revisited: the supposedly linear and unidirectional relationship between research and practice; and the limited understanding of the politics of translocal geographies of knowledge production and circulation. The paper presents a review of current debates

on planning research and practice, and discusses how a Southern perspective can challenge current assumptions about geographies of knowledge. It then proposes a framework to study knowledge translation processes, drawing on the sociology of knowledge, development studies, and feminist theory. From this viewpoint, it discusses the potentials of an operative notion of 'interfaces of knowledge translation' that brings to light power dynamics behind interfaces and enhances the potentials of knowledge co-production.

Key words:

Knowledge, urban equality, planning research, planning practice, Southern theory

Introduction

Building pathways towards urban equality is a key challenge for cities globally. Urban equality is a multidimensional experience for urban dwellers, which requires a combination of equitable distribution, reciprocal recognition, and parity of political participation. This definition builds upon seminal works on social justice by Nancy Fraser (1995) and Iris Marion Young (1990), as well as research that has mobilised the concept of social justice to explore issues of urban equality (Allen & Frediani, 2013; Levy, 2015; Levy & Davila, 2018). Addressing urban equality has gradually become a priority for institutions at different scales, including international agencies, which have incorporated it as a key issue in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and New Urban Agenda (NUA). In this paper we focus on what we consider to be a key issue for urban equality: the relationship between planning research and practice. In particular we reflect on geographies of knowledge production in order to understand how the processes of 'knowledge translation' occur and influence both policies and planning practices that seek to advance urban equality. We argue that opportunities for a more equal society can only be realised if unequal relations of power in knowledge production and circulation are challenged; questioning and reviewing the relationships that govern the production of knowledge at different scales, and their implications for planning practice.¹

Recent debates in planning theory and practice have stressed the importance of examining the relationship between the work of urban scholars and practitioners (Charlton, 2007; Hambleton, 2007; MacDonald, 2014; Porter, 2015; Hurley *et al.*, 2017; Whitzman & Goodman, 2017), and the ways in which the production, flows, and transfer of knowledge inform and impact urban planning practices, internationally and locally (McFarlane, 2006, 2011; McCann, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2015). Professional bodies, international agencies, translocal networks, and researchers have reached a consensus that planning "is a discipline in which the relationship between theory and practice is central" (Balducci & Bertolini, 2007: 553), seemingly leaving far behind the positivist visions of modernist planning that dominated parts of the Twentieth Century.

The publication of journals focused specifically on the relationship between planning research and practice, such as *'Planning Theory & Practice'*, *'Planning Practice & Research'*, and *'Urban Policy and Research'*, among others, is testament to the centrality of these debates. And yet, the complexity of the

challenge to make cities more equal, particularly in the global South, requires revisiting theory and developing alternative approaches that recognise and respond to diverse, situated, and networked urban dynamics. This calls for a deeper examination of the political economy of knowledge and planning.

In order to address the complexity of current urban challenges, particularly with regards to urban equality, we propose that at least two aspects of the prevailing paradigms of knowledge and planning need to be problematised and revisited: the supposedly linear relationship between research and practice; and the politics of translocal geographies of knowledge production and circulation. Unpacking these two aspects will allow us to better understand how 'knowledge translation processes' occur, and the potentials of these translations to influence policy and planning practices that contribute to fostering urban equality. Drawing on planning debates, we argue that in order to fulfil the potential impacts of knowledge co-production, it is crucial to develop systematic and flexible strategies to enhance institutional capabilities and to translate research and practices into policies and planning frameworks and instruments. Furthermore, we want to foster a greater understanding of how new centralities and marginalities are being formed in an increasingly globalised context of knowledge translation.

This working paper seeks to provide a framework to research knowledge translation processes. As such, it doesn't engage with specific cases, but rather it remains as a set of provocations to reflect on the ways in which planning research and practice interact, and the underlying power dynamics that qualify the spaces of those interaction. The first part of the paper positions the discussion by visiting the underlying paradigms behind these debates. It starts by presenting current debates on planning research and planning practice in order to identify the knowledge gaps and limitations of existing approaches. Then, it presents a revision of some of the main debates from a Southern perspective on planning practice and theory, in order to identify approaches that challenge current assumptions about geographies of knowledge, as well as the potentials for enhancing knowledge co-production.

The second part of the working paper proposes a framework to study knowledge translation processes. It starts by discussing the idea of 'translation', drawing on previous work coming from the sociology of knowledge (Callon, 1986; Law, 1986; Latour, 1987; 1999). These understandings, however, seem insufficient to challenge the limitations of the uneven geographies and multidirectional ways in which knowledge is produced and circulated, and its implications for policy and planning for urban equality. Then, in order to avoid the trap of overlooking asymmetries of power, these debates are interrogated and examined from approaches coming from development (McFarlane, 2006; 2011; 2018) and feminist theory (hooks, 1991; Levy, 1998; Halford & Leonard, 2001; Ahmed, 2004). This discussion aims to raise more explicitly questions of the subaltern, marginality, and resistance, and the ways in which groups with less power can strategise processes of knowledge

¹ These discussions are part of a wider research within the ESRC funded programme 'KNOW: Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality'. This particular inquiry is part of Work Package 4: 'Translating research into practice'. It aims to build a framework to analyse the processes of translating the learning generated by the research activities into policy and planning practices contributing towards urban equality. The overall research questions that the framework proposed in this paper address are: (1) How do *knowledge translation processes*, understood as encounters between research and practice, take place? And how can interfaces of knowledge translation facilitate encounters between various knowledge co-production processes in a city? (2) How can knowledge translation processes impact and foster institutional capabilities that support and institutionalise policies and planning for urban equality, locally and internationally? What are the capabilities needed to enable them? And (3) what other local and global impacts can knowledge translation processes generate – beyond fostering institutional capabilities – to build pathways to urban equality?

production and translation. Through this exercise, we hope to contribute to strengthening a Southern planning perspective, understood as an 'ethos of inquiry' that implies a process of 'theorising from place' (Bhan *et al.*, 2018).

The paper concludes by proposing a framework based on a working definition of 'knowledge translation processes', as spaces of encounter between research and practice, stressing the relevance of 'interfaces of knowledge translation'. Aware of existing power imbalances, we propose that is key to look at 'interfaces' as non-neutral spaces that privilege some actors, typologies, tactics, and instruments over others. To advance in the possible operationalisation of the proposed framework, we conclude by reflecting on its limitations and potentials. This paper is an invitation to reflect on the relational aspects of research impact, and particularly on the ways in which research and other forms of knowledge production can better support policies and planning for urban equality.

Current debates: the *schism* between planning research and practice

The undeniably complex relationship between research and practice has been present in planning discussions for several decades (see Schön, 1983), becoming a more central disciplinary issue in recent years. This is particularly true in the context of more demanding expectations regarding the role of planning in achieving development goals within uncertain global scenarios (Bhan *et al.*, 2018). These debates, however, tend to rely on a seemingly linear approach to the relationship between research and practice; assuming a unidirectional flow of knowledge *from* research *to* practice. However, knowledge is produced through multiple means, actions, and networks. Research and practice shape and are shaped by each other in various ways, and the importance attributed to some kinds of knowledge (i.e. that which has emerged from particular kinds of research institutions) over others reflects power relationships and socio-cultural constructions. In other words, "the social construction of knowledge (whose knowledge, what information is included or excluded, and how it is utilised) is embedded in the political processes of urban governance networks" (Baud, 2015: 114).

This linearity is reinforced by a discussion that tends to focus on the relationship between the professional body of planners and researchers as two discrete and separated entities (see Balducci & Bertolini, 2007; MacDonald, 2014). This distinction can leave out of the discussion other actors and ways of producing knowledge and practicing planning that have been increasingly recognised as forms of planning in various contexts. These non-dominant practices can have different forms and natures: while some have been recognised as radical, insurgent, or agonistic forms of planning (see Mirafteb, 2009; Legacy, 2017; Thorpe, 2017), others have been labelled as processes of knowledge co-production (Ostrom, 1996; Mitlin, 2008), or more specifically as

movement-initiated co-production (Watson, 2014). Processes of self-enumeration, survey, and mapping, for example, have become more and more relevant as sources of official knowledge in cities with a dominant presence of informal settlements (Roy, 2009a; Boonyabancha, 2005; Mitlin & Satterthwaite, 2007).

The recognition of these less-dominant forms of planning and knowledge production has taken place within wider debates about the role of experts and expert-knowledge in dealing with public issues, particularly when facing complex problems. Discussions about planning for complex and uncertain scenarios in relation to climate change, for example, have built upon notions of collaborative planning (Healey, 2006); acknowledging the need for knowledges emerging from different rationalities and views. As Castán-Broto *et al.*, (2015: 10) have argued, "[e]xperts cannot provide a complete response to the questions of planning, let alone defining adaptation and mitigation pathways. Instead, much planning theory and practice has been directed towards enabling dialogue between multiple actors." In this way, claims for a 'collaborative rationality' have emerged; understood as "an alternative to the traditional linear model, with its emphasis on expert knowledge and reasoning based upon argumentations. (...) A process is collaboratively rational to the extent that all the affected interests jointly engage in face to face dialogue, bringing their various perspectives to the table to deliberate on the problems they face together" (Innes & Booher, 2010: 6).

Beyond the field of climate change, a particularly rich debate has taken place in recent years about the relationship between planning research and practice, focusing both on the involvement of planning scholars in practice, as well as practitioners in research, and the possible synergies between these two groups:

what should the relationship between scholars and practitioners be in our field? Why is that relationship so difficult and troubled, a trend that seems to be deepening rather than lightening? Are the worlds of planning scholarship and planning practice incommensurable? And if so, why? What, if anything, might we do about it? (Porter, 2015: 293).

A considerable body of work has been produced exploring these questions and trying to understand the existing spaces of collaboration as well as the barriers to research-practice exchange in planning. There are concerns about the fact that, "current developments seem to be pulling planning academics and practitioners further away from each other, with each becoming more self-referential and distant" (Balducci & Bertolini, 2007: 532). Due to the imposition of differentiated procedures, metrics and pressures to deliver in each field, there seems to be "a deep schism in the relationships between research, teaching and practice" (Whitzman & Goodman, 2017:1). This has consequences for both academics and practitioners. For scholars, this schism would be a problem as "practice-based experiences provide academic research material of unique richness" (Balducci & Bertolini, 2007: 532). Moreover, it limits planning scholars' capacity to influence the work of urban

planners, as Taylor and Hurley (2016) discuss under the title 'Not a Lot of People Read the Stuff'. For practitioners, various pressures could hinder their capacity to put into practice ideas that had emerged from researchers, as "a range of unanticipated and complex stumbling blocks [are] encountered at every turn, significantly slowing progress and raising tensions around delivery" (Charlton, 2007: 383).

These discussions tend to call for an 'engaged scholarship' that combines education, teaching, and policy and practice (Hambleton, 2007). Similar claims have emerged from other disciplines such as urban design, in which authors have called to identify effective channels for interactions between theorists and practitioners (see Foroughmand Araabi, 2018). However, the debates also identify risks in the encounters between research and practice, questioning, for example, whether the direct involvement of academics with practice could "impede more critical and fundamental reflection" (Balducci & Bertolini, 2007: 533). Likewise, Porter identifies three contradictions regarding the incentives for academic work to focus on its 'impact' in practice: the distinction between *used* and *useful* knowledge; the focus on the *enterprise* of a global knowledge market; and "the willingness to hold onto a very marked distinction between the worlds of 'scholarship' and 'practice'" (Porter, 2015: 295).

The concerns raised by Porter are key to our discussion about the role of planning research and practice in advancing urban equality for at least two reasons. First, since most of the discussion about the schism tend to focus on *professional* planners and scholars, they often portray these two spheres as discrete and separated bodies. This assumption leaves out of the discussion other actors and ways of practicing urban planning and producing knowledge. In reality, in many cities, there are community-based and civil society organisations that have been able to advance planning practices and co-produce knowledge through different forms of coalitions, informal practices, and social mobilisations, to name but a few. These forms of practice – either radical or reactionary – should be recognised as part of the debate, as a way to grasp the constellation of actors and knowledges needed to advance in the urban equality agenda.

Second, the focus on 'impact' tends to assume a unidirectional influence; from research to practice. Research organisations often understand impact in terms of "the demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy" (ESRC, n.d.). To this end the UK's Economic and Social Research Council², for example, encourages 'knowledge exchange' activities that can be 'people-based', 'community-based', or 'problem-solving' in nature (Bullock & Hughes, 2016). In this context, knowledge exchange is seen as a key means through which knowledge produced in research activities might impact upon the rest of society, but not necessarily as a process through which other forms of knowledge production might impact upon academic research activities.

² The ESRC is one of the UK Research Councils that provide funding and support for research and training in social and economic issues. For more than 50 years it has been one of the key research funders in the UK.

In this regard, Porter identifies:

ethical, political and indeed *ontological* dimensions of that debate. What kinds of knowledge come to be produced, under what conditions, and who gets to say? Why does some knowledge come to be seen as "the evidence base", and other forms of knowledge become marginalized and indeed rendered invisible in the worlds of policy? And why is policy and practitioner knowledge not valorized to the same extent as this category of "academic" knowledge? (Porter, 2015: 293).

These observations are key to building an alternative agenda for the relationship between research and practice and to interrogate the capacity of planning to build pathways to urban equality. Porter mainly asks about the efforts of scholars to *translate* discussions and debates in a way that can reach, appeal to, and influence practitioners. We want to build upon this discussion, recognising that there are two further limitations to current debates: the supposedly linear relationship between research and practice; and the limited understanding of the geographies of knowledge production and circulation, which frequently overlook the role of translocal processes of knowledge exchange and grassroots networks. To do so, in the following section, we review some of these debates from a Southern perspective, in order to identify possible approaches that can challenge current assumptions about geographies of knowledge and planning.

Southern perspectives: alternative geographies for planning practice and theory

The relationship between research and practice has gained centrality in planning debates and has become a key point of concern within the community of international urban scholars, as discussed in the previous section. However, these discussions have stopped short of explicitly addressing the ways in which groups with less power strategise around processes of knowledge co-production and translation. In this section we identify possible routes to contest some assumptions in these debates, looking at the geographies of knowledge production and the ways ideas circulate and influence policies, locally and globally. Debates on encounters between research and practice tend to be dominated by a particular vision of global and local circulation of knowledge: assuming a unidirectional flow of knowledge from (typically) Northern institutions; and/or a neat dichotomy between global North and South. These visions overlook the rich network of flows, and the circulation of knowledge and practices, that take place across places. The evidence for translocal processes of knowledge exchange, including by consolidated grassroots networks, can shed light on the importance of place and location in the production and circulation of knowledge.

Four decades ago, with the publication of his seminal book 'The Shared Space' (1979), Milton Santos proposed a theory for understanding urbanisation in 'Third World cities'. Santos argued for the need to look at the 'inherent characteristics'

of urban 'lower circuits' in cities in developing countries. He asserted that, "[the] fundamental mistake that many researchers have made is to rely on comparisons between the developed and the less developed world (...) an assumption that all social evolution is simultaneously comparable and complementary" (1979: 6). Almost half a century later, the exclusivity of some geographical centres as the only source of knowledge has been widely questioned; as Robinson and Parnell point out, "the flow of ideas about cities is likely to become ever more multi-directional and varied and the global salience of theory generated by the traditional hubs of urban studies will be eroded and diffused" (2011: 522). The need for a situated theory and practice of urban planning, re-framed from Southern perspectives and appropriate for diverse geographies, has become a core challenge for urban planning scholars. As we describe in this section, great contributions have been made by authors from different fields and geographies, many of whom situate their work within decolonising efforts and look to build a Southern perspective for planning beyond their geographical focus. Likewise, in the past few years, the politics of knowledge production and circulation have been in the spotlight through major agendas of the United Nations and other multilateral organisations (Acuto & Parnell, 2016; McPhearson *et al.*, 2016).

Connell (2014) discusses the political economy that shapes the global infrastructure of research; exploring particularly how structural conditions of the global academy generate dependency for scholars from peripheral geographies. In the field of planning, authors have called for the production of knowledge and theory that are relevant for contexts outside dominant circuits, calling "to theorise from practice and to engage in empirical work based in contexts where conventional planning theory has had little relevance" (Parnell, Pieterse & Watson 2009: 237). In the recent publication of *The Routledge Companion to Planning in the Global South*, Vanessa Watson reflects:

While the location of knowledge production may be less of an issue in some fields, the discipline and profession of city and regional planning, for me, cannot escape the importance of the socio-spatial and environmental context in which knowledge about it emerges and in which it is applied and practical ideas are put to work. A concentration of planning knowledge from territories usually classified as global North is particularly problematic when this work fails to specify the contextual informants on which it is based (such as Western liberal democracy or well-resourced institutions) (Watson, in Bhan *et al.*, 2018: 12).

Claims for a distinctive approach to knowledge that acknowledges geographical differences emerge for various reasons. One is the recognition of what can be called *different trajectories* of modernisation and urbanisation, and the necessity for distinctive knowledges for such trajectories, recognising 'the existence of multiple or "plural modernities"' (Sintusingha & Mirgholami, 2013: 123). Concepts such as 'knowledge sovereignty' have emerged from the discussions around 'indigenous knowledge systems', acknowledging the multiplicity of 'ways of knowing', and the potentials for cross-fertilisation between different knowledge systems. In Zeremariam Fre's

words, "to be knowledge-sovereign is to have the ability to choose one's knowledge system, and to be able to use it freely to critique dissimilar constructions of knowledge without being subsumed by them" (2018: 16). In practice, hierarchies of knowledge trajectories are undeniably linked to histories of colonisation and imperialism; in this regard, authors such as Spivak (1994) have referred to the idea of 'epistemic violence' in the constitution of the colonial subject and the development of the imperialist project. Likewise, L.T. Smith has drawn on Edward Said's seminal work on 'Orientalism' (1978), proposing the construction of 'decolonised methodologies'; contesting the "positional superiority of Western knowledge" (Smith, 1999: 59) imposed through the modernist project. As Harrison points out, "if we accept that different regions in the South are the locus of differentiated modernities, then the recovery of subalternised knowledge is potentially critical to the construction of other ways of thinking" (Harrison, 2006: 324).

In terms of planning (research and practice), these differentiated trajectories would imply in first instance that the knowledge that emerges from certain geographies is not necessarily appropriate to be applied in other contexts. Again, this is something that was pointed out decades ago by Santos, calling attention to inappropriate approaches to data collection "on the basis of Western models" (Santos, 1979). In the current context of increasing policy mobility, there is a growing concern about the inappropriateness of some of these knowledge transfers (McCann, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2015). These concerns stress the failure of any 'universal law' to explain and answer situated challenges (Ong, 2011), as 'universal' knowledge is in fact always dominated and controlled by certain geographies and views. As Harrison explains, the "gross imbalance in the geography of knowledge production may place a major limitation on the ability of planning theory to provide substantive guidance to planning and policy-making beyond the confines of western Europe and North America" (Harrison, 2006: 320). As global urbanisation patterns change, the displacement of the 'gravity centre' of urban realities demands "urban theory from the new urban epicentre" (Robinson & Parnell, 2011: 1091). This concern has also emerged as a claim for the implementation of the 'global' urban agenda. Reflecting on global agendas in African cities, for example, Parnell *et al.* stress out how "cities suffer from failed attempts by international aid and development agencies to address urban issues through development models based on assumptions that rarely hold in this part of the world" (Parnell *et al.* 2009: 233).

However, invoking a Southern approach to knowledge in planning requires more than an attention to the geographic origins of knowledge. It does not preclude, indeed it recognises, perspectives that have emerged from non-Southern contexts; the limitations of existing geographies of knowledge are wider than the suitability of planning practices and theories to certain countries. In order to bring to the discussion and to strategise for the ways in which groups with less power could participate in the co-production of knowledge that contributes to urban equality, alternative approaches to the geographies of knowledge are

needed. Following previous discussions, a Southern – or a ‘global South’ – perspective can be seen as a project rather than a place. As the authors of the referred *Companion* reflect, the global South is a relational and yet specific project in which *place matters*. It is “a perspective, a theoretical orientation, or a provocation to debate difference” (Bhan *et al.*, 2018: 4). Gautam Bhan reflects specifically on the idea of “the South as an ethos of inquiry”, in which the questions come from the act of locating, “and looking from rather than looking at” (*ibid.*: 5), to deal with the ‘dislocation’ that planning theory usually confronts when facing peripheries.

Peripheries move across scale, space and time: the peripheries of the world economic and political system both historically and today; peripheries within cities themselves; peripheries of geographies of alternative knowledge. Seen as a periphery, the global South is then a relational geography. It is not just a collection of previously underdeveloped countries or the boundaries of the post-colonial world but a dynamic and changing set of locations (*ibid.*: 5).

There is a long history of efforts and works looking to build an alternative Southern approach to knowledge in planning, many of which fall into the postcolonial tradition, but not necessarily fitting into the view of “a universal condition of postcoloniality” (Ong, 2011: 7). Ananya Roy, for example, has proposed “a genre of postcolonial analytics that critically deconstructs the “worlding’ of knowledge”, which calls to “rethink the geography of authoritative knowledge that attends our study of cities” (Roy, 2011: 308), in order to approach, with situated knowledge, what she has termed the ‘idioms of urbanisation’ (Roy, 2009b). Likewise, Jennifer Robinson (2006) has looked to deconstruct the assumed dichotomy between ‘global cities’ and ‘Third World cities’, envisioning an urban theory that works for comparative ends within the complexity of ‘ordinary cities’, as an attempt to contribute to the “de-Westernisation’ of urban theory” (Choplin, 2012: 1).

An alternative geography of knowledge that inform planning theory and practice might take different forms. While Connell calls “to assert alternative knowledge systems” (2014: 212) to contest patterns of centrality in academia globally, Ong (2011) claims for the development of “subaltern resistances.” Drawing on the work of Roy, Ong, McIntyre, Robinson, and others, Harrison (2006) argues that a post-colonial planning project will require support for other ways of seeing and acting, asserting multiple rationalities, recovering forms of knowledge suppressed by colonialism, searching for in-between spaces, and recognising the emancipatory potential of multiple rationalities. Bhan (2019), on the other hand, has proposed a new vocabulary to better build theory on Southern planning, which should include terms such as ‘squat’, ‘repair’ and ‘consolidate’ as modes of Southern practice drawn from the experience of Indian cities.

A Southern project that recognises differentiated trajectories of knowledge, such as those discussed in this section, can provide an entry point to contest existing assumptions about the relationship between planning research and practice, and the ways knowledge is produced and circulated. Within a

framework of a decentralised Southern urban theory, the next section discusses what we have called ‘knowledge translation’, proposing an approach to researching these processes.

Knowledge translation as a space of encounter: a proposal

In order to interrogate the geographies of knowledge production and circulation, and the ways in which planning research and practice interact, we focus on processes of ‘knowledge translation’. Our definition of knowledge translation is not neutral and tries to challenge the assumptions we have singled out by drawing on the debates discussed in the previous sections. We understand knowledge translation as the multi-scalar and non-linear processes of encounter between research and practices in which different forms of knowledge are articulated. We are particularly interested in examining translation processes by which co-produced and situated knowledge is operationalised towards citizens’ needs and aspirations. To operationalise this definition, we draw on previous debates to discuss two aspects: first, to understand translation as a multidirectional process, shaped by power; and second, as a process in which alternative ways of producing knowledge might be misrecognised or mainstreamed, raising questions of marginality and resistance.

Knowledge translation, process and power

The term ‘translation’ has been the focus of study for many disciplines, finding its main home in the field of ‘translation studies’, which focuses on the theory, practice, and phenomena of translation (see Munday, 2016). Specifically, translation has been used as part of a wide range of concepts that have emerged to approach the production and circulation of knowledge. In this regard, the term has been used either to approach specific sectorial fields such as health (CIHR, 2004; Huzair *et al.*, 2013), or the knowledge field more widely³. However, many of these discussions present translation as a linear route; as “the process of translating knowledge from one format to another so that the receiver can understand it; often from specialists to non-specialists” (Shaxson *et al.*, 2012: 2). For this inquiry, and in accordance with the lens of co-production we are proposing, these definitions seem limited for the reasons discussed above.

Several traditions have approached the idea of knowledge translation in the past in more comprehensive ways, discussing power as a central issue. Within the translation studies field, for

³ Symptomatic of this variety, in 2012 a meeting under the name of the ‘K* conference’ was held on Canada, coining the term K* (KStar) as an overarching concept to describe various terms: Knowledge Management, Transfer, Exchange, Brokering, Mobilisation and Translation. As a result of the conference, K* was defined as “the collective term for the set of functions and processes at the various interfaces between knowledge, practice, and policy. K* improves the ways in which knowledge is shared and applied; improving processes already in place to bring about more effective and sustainable change” (Shaxson *et al.*, 2012: 12). The authors of the conference report proposed an approach to “the K* spectrum”, which would include processes from “linear dissemination of knowledge from producer to user” to “co-production of knowledge, social learning & innovation” (2012: 3).

example, Emily Apter (2006) has outlined what she terms, 'the translation zone', as a way to interrogate power and investigate issues such as the tension between textual and cultural translation. In the 1980s, a 'sociology of translation' emerged as part of wider sociological approaches to science and technology, seen as an analytical approach to "the role played by science and technology in structuring power relationships" (Callon, 1986: 197). Callon defines translation as an inherently political process, "during which the identity of actors, the possibility of interaction and the margins of manoeuvre are negotiated and delimited" (*ibid.*: 203); pointing out that the result of a translation "is a situation in which certain entities control others" (*ibid.*: 224).⁴ He describes it as a process that is never accomplished, and within which exists a continuity of displacements and transformations:

To translate is to displace (...) But to translate is also to express in one's own language what others say and want, why they act in the way they do and how they associate with each other: it is to establish oneself as a spokesman. At the end of the process, if it is successful, only voices speaking in unison will be heard (*ibid.*: 223).

Building upon the same tradition as Callon, and consolidating his contribution to the body of work on science studies, Bruno Latour has used the idea of translation in various ways that shed light on this discussion: he proposed 'a model of translation' to explain the notion of power, claiming that power is not *held* by 'the powerful' but rather has to be explained by those who 'obey' (Latour, 1986); to explore the idea of 'science in action', he defines translation as "the interpretation given by the fact-builders of their interests and that of the people they enrol" (Latour, 1987: 108); and more specifically in the context of science studies, he has defined translation as "all the displacements through other actors whose mediation is indispensable for any action to occur. (...) chains of translation refer to the work through which actors modify, displace, and translate their various and contradictory interests" (Latour, 1999: 311).

Latour's ideas have been used to interrogate more explicitly the role of knowledge in planning and development. Colin McFarlane, for example, has examined the ways that knowledge and learning are produced *through translation*, in order to better understand processes of knowledge circulation and transformation. He asks:

How is knowledge transformed by the process of its circulation? What form does this circulation take? Who are the agents who circulate knowledge and appropriate it? How are local practices shaped by the interaction between situated knowledge and formalized knowledge? How is knowing constructed and sustained in practice? (McFarlane, 2006: 293).

More specifically, McFarlane has argued that *learning* is the product of the interactions between three different processes: translation, coordination, and dwelling (2011). He proposes that we "see learning as a process of translating experiences and information that is then organised in different ways according to

context" (2018: 326); recognising and discussing the central role of differential power relations between the actors involved in the learning process; and interrogating "what kind of learning is privileged in the planning context" (McFarlane, 2018: 326). These discussions draw directly on previous debates on collaborative planning (Healey, 2006), pointing out that "the question of 'whose knowledge counts?' is an old and familiar one, but it remains politically vital" (McFarlane, 2018: 323). This is important for our enquiry, as it underlines the need to look at translation processes through the lens of power inequalities, avoiding the trap of assembling everything and missing out asymmetries, and providing a base to explore how urban groups with less power can strategise for processes of knowledge production and translation. He reflects:

Given that the unequal circuits of urban planning tend to create truncated space, when they create space at all, for marginalised knowledges of the city, the ethical and political challenges here are vast, and cannot be stepped around or wished away (McFarlane, 2018: 324).

Misrecognised knowledge, feminism, marginality, and resistance

What do those *marginalised knowledges of the city* look like? In order to address the relationships between power and knowledge, it is important to consider the contributions of feminist theory. As stated previously, we argue that urban inequality can only be addressed if unequal relations of power in knowledge production and circulation are challenged. Feminism has produced one of the most relevant bodies of work in this regard, seeking to understand and address deep, underlying systems of disparity that govern gender inequalities. Particularly, structural perspectives within feminism have pointed out the importance of looking at power with an emphasis on difference, rather than assuming liberal approaches to equality that tend to deny disparities and oppositions. This recognition and emphasis on difference allows us to embrace the centrality of *privilege* in the reproduction of unequal settings that, according to different feminist perspectives, relies on structures of capitalism –*Marxist feminism*–, patriarchy –*Radical feminism*–, or racism –*Black feminism* (see Halford & Leonard, 2001). Feminist theory brings to light the multiple natures of inequality and power; it is through recognition of this multiple nature that we can build an approach to knowledge translation that has co-production at the centre. Doing so also allows us to interrogate asymmetries of power inside co-production processes; challenging and questioning the supposed absence of conflict in the production of collaborative rationalities.

Feminists have looked at knowledge with special emphasis on recognising privilege and the ways in which knowledge reinforces or perpetuates disparities. As with Southern approaches, interrogating power and knowledge from a feminist perspective is not exclusively about looking at where knowledge comes from (i.e. geographies or genders), but about the recognition of the ways that some forms of knowledge are privileged over others. In this regard, for example, the feminist Sara Ahmed (2004) has

⁴ Callon (1986) defines four faces of the translation process: Problematisation (or how to become indispensable); Interestment (or how the allies are locked into place); enrolment (or alliances and definition of interrelated roles).

explored the importance of *the cultural politics of emotion* in the construction of knowledge; challenging the assumption that knowledge production always has a rational root that is irreconcilable with emotions.

These discussions are relevant for our task as they point to the deep challenges faced in recognising alternative understandings of knowledge that do not fall into the most-frequently valued forms of production and circulation. This is crystallised in the difficulties of the process of mainstreaming knowledge that emerges from unprivileged sources. In this respect, there has been important work on gender in organisations and the institutionalisation of gender that provides lessons about the challenge of mainstreaming women and gender in different settings; placing power as a central question. While Eyben and Turquet (2013) have looked at the role of feminist bureaucrats within organisations, Halford and Leonard have explored ways to challenge gendered inequality within organisations, recognising four main categories: “individual resistances, collective actions, legislative challenges and voluntary initiatives undertaken by particular organisations” (2001: 179). Likewise, Levy (1998) discusses the process of making gender issues part of development practices, and the need of transformation within and between at least thirteen ‘sites of power’ that together constitute what she terms the ‘web of institutionalisation’.

The discussions about mainstreaming positions and knowledges that are usually marginalised, open up other questions about the role of marginality as a site of resistance and liberation, as has been widely examined by feminist authors such as bell hooks (1991). From a cultural criticism perspective she discusses, for example, changes in the cultural representation of black people and how the mainstreaming in popular culture of non-white people has affected the way in which resistance is exercised; moving from a site of marginality to one of acceptance in existing structures. Then, one of the questions for us becomes how to mainstream knowledge that is usually considered marginal, making it part of processes of translation that influence policy and planning, without losing the qualities of marginality as resistance? How to reconcile the processes of translating and mainstreaming co-produced knowledge with the idea of “choosing the margin as a space of radical openness”? (hooks, 1991: 145) And how to avoid processes of co-option or de-politicisation of co-produced knowledges? Following bell hooks and other thinkers, such as Paulo Freire and his work on the pedagogy of the oppressed, the answer to this dilemma falls in the necessity of decolonised pedagogies that are able to create oppositional worldviews and in seeing education as a liberatory process that allows resistance. We see knowledge translation processes as spaces in which those resistances can be recognised.

Researching knowledge translation and interfaces

Our definition of ‘knowledge translation processes’ as spaces of encounters is then not neutral. We hope to understand these

processes in order to find ways in which different knowledges can influence policies and decision making, building personal, collective and institutional capabilities, and helping to reframe institutional agendas and practices. This definition has co-production at its core as a way to recognise subalternate knowledges. Conscious of existing imbalances of power both within co-production and in translation processes, we propose that understanding the interfaces of translation is key to fostering processes that can support urban equality policies and practices.

Through this proposed framework we want to address the assumptions discussed so far about the linear relationship from research to practice, and about the politics of translocal geographies of knowledge production and circulation. We propose to do so by looking at *interfaces* in which constellations of actors at different scales interact. Interfaces are never neutral, as they define the spaces and norms in which knowledge is translated. They are the arenas in which the exchanges between research and practice occur at different scales and geographies, and in which different kinds of knowledge are – or are not – recognised. In the current global context, interfaces are often constituted by policy transfer processes; with circuits of policy exchange that do not always include research circulation. These processes of knowledge mobility are often dominated by notions such as ‘best practices’, frequently imported planning and policy models (McCann, 2011), and accelerated processes that have been termed ‘fast policy’ (Peck & Theodore, 2015). Then, we recognise that an interface is not a neat space that supports a linear process, but rather complex multi-directional exchanges in which constellations of what we call *typologies, tactics, instruments,* and *actors* are articulated. We understand that ‘typologies’ of knowledge translation are given by the nature of the relationship between research and practice, from *research-oriented* to *practice-oriented* typologies, with the whole possible spectrum between them. ‘Tactics’ are the mechanisms that different actors use to channel and mobilise knowledge, position and mainstream agendas. ‘Instruments’ are the specific means used by actors to deploy these tactics and typologies (see Figure 1).

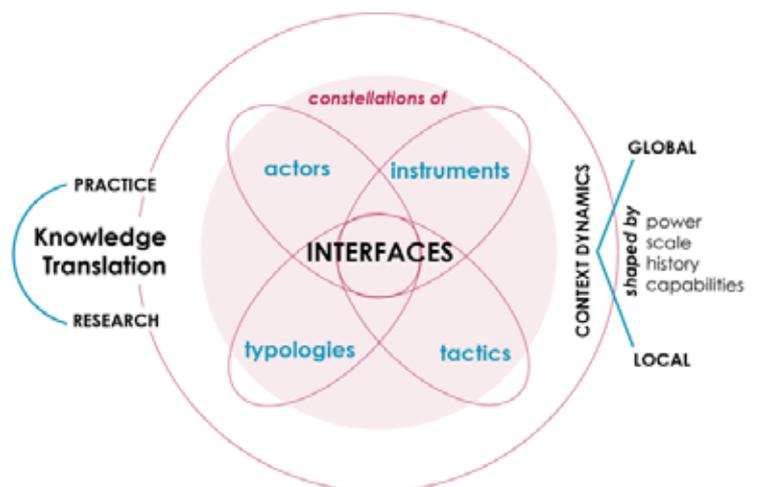


Figure 1 Interfaces of knowledge translation

An understanding of the different aspects that shape the interfaces of knowledge translation is key to analyse, engage with, and support various processes of knowledge co-production, especially those led by groups with less power. To achieve this goal, we propose to focus on interfaces that capture this complex picture, exploring in particular their history and the stakeholders at the local- and international-level, and by analysing how different knowledges are displayed through typologies, tactics, and instruments. The overall aim here, for us, has been to develop more strategic approaches that can give a space for co-production processes that incorporate marginal, subaltern, or under-valued knowledges at different scales. This is key to both influence local and global processes and to address the impact of international and translocal agendas in different urban contexts. Furthermore, this also contributes to find ways to understand “how the recovery and deployment of subalternised knowledge and practices materially impact on the local outcome of global forces” (Harrison, 2006: 324)

Final comments: towards alternative geographies of translation

The discussion has attempted to outline a theoretical approach to understanding and supporting knowledge translation processes and their contributions towards urban equality. In this concluding section we reflect on the extent to which the proposed framework addresses the tensions discussed, identifying the main potentialities and limitations of the suggested approach. By focusing on the complexities and heterogeneous nature of interfaces, we propose that this theoretical approach has the potential to bring to the surface alternative geographies of translation. To do so, the proposed framework offers a more fluid understanding of the relationship between research and practice. Additionally, we hope that the notion of ‘interfaces’ can contribute to a more situated comprehension of the specific spaces in which translation takes place.

However, there are important limitations to the discussion presented so far. This working paper does not engage with particular cases, remaining within the sphere of theory. The potential practicalities of a framework like this can only be fully explored if it is developed in the context of strong partnerships of collaboration. In order to fully grasp local contexts, and their relationships with global dynamics, these partnerships need to be grounded in an ethics of research and practice that allows for horizontal collaborations at different scales. Without partnerships with equivalence and a principled engagement, the use of the proposed framework will inevitably fail in understanding and supporting processes of translation that are situated and able to recognise various marginalised and subaltern knowledges. The contribution of this working paper has been to provide a framework for inquiry, which recognises the complexity of processes of knowledge translation. As part of the KNOW project, we hope to operationalise this framework for researching and supporting knowledge translation interfaces with city-partners;

for seeking to translate the learning generated by the research activities into policy and planning practices, strengthening pathways to urban equality.

Recognising constellations of knowledge translation is a major challenge, particularly those in which diverse forms of research and practices interact. In this regard, urban planning should be seen as a rich setting to explore such a challenge. Planning “represents a privileged site to assess the translation of an ethos of inquiry into the political field of practice, intervention and engagement” (Bhan *et al.*, 2018: 8). To support and research these processes, it is critical to understand the arenas in which marginalised and subaltern forms of knowledge co-production are incorporated to planning research and practice. Through the process of implementing an urban equality agenda, unequal social dynamics can only be transformed if relations and geographies of power in knowledge production and circulation, as well as the spaces of translation of those knowledges, are challenged.

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Verdict set

Handwritten text at the bottom of the page, including names like 'AYMAN SHAH', 'UMESH', 'AMEEK', 'TAREKA SANEH', 'TEJESH SHARMA', and 'SABER'. There are also some decorative drawings like a crescent moon and a flower.