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Reading Professor Law-Yone's essay reminded me of when I was first introduced to planning theory in the 1970s. In particular, I recalled several articles that appeared in the aftermath of the 1960s' upheavals, as capitalism faced a crisis in both industrialized and newly industrializing nations: Grabow and Heskin's article on radical planning (1973); Friedmann and Hudson's creative use of the 'R' of radical planning to construct a taxonomy of planning called SITAR (1974); Roweis and Scott's scathing criticism of planning theory as a field (1977); Harvey's dismissal of planning theory in 'On Planning the Ideology of Planning' (1984), among others.

A decade later, Friedmann (1985) captured this intellectual turmoil well in his book, in which he traced the intellectual and ideological origins of some planning traditions to normative yearnings of historical materialism, the Frankfurt School, and utopians, social anarchists and radicals. According to Friedmann, 'social mobilization' is a planning tradition with a long history, dating as far back as the early 1800s to the social criticisms of Owen, Fourier, Prudhomme and, of course, Marx and Engels. Later, this illustrious group was joined by others including Bakunin, Kropotkin, Sorel, Mumford, Alinsky, Illich and Piven and Cloward. So, Professor Law-Yone is in good company when he advocates 'Social Mobilization' as the way out of what he considers the 'cacophony' and incoherence of the body of literature called planning theory. His criticisms and suggestions, though not new, are welcome among the diverse range of traditions in the field of planning theory.

Professor Law-Yone describes himself as 'active in counter-hegemonic planning projects and the promotion of skepticism towards planning'. In general, I agree with him that the hegemonic discourse of neo-liberalism and entrepreneurial planning for 'marketing of places' needs to be challenged, more so now that communism has collapsed. His call for an anti-hegemonic critique of 'totalizing dystopias' is, however, not a fresh insight. As a student of

modernization theories, I am reminded of 'alternative' and 'critical' theories advocated as far back as the late 1960s, at least a decade before the term neoliberalism appeared in development discourse.

It is true that the search for alternatives – be it with regards to national development objectives, or to personal lifestyles – has subsided somewhat since the tumultuous 1960s. Russell Jacoby describes this well, with a touch of melancholy and without moral arrogance, in *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (2005). Susan Sontag's book *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003) evokes in a literary way the same yearning for a crack in the stone wall of the status quo. Earlier books by Nussbaum (2001), Mansbridge and Morris (2001) and Unger and West (1998) also confirm that reflexive idealism has not evaporated in the glaring heat of the bull market.

There is a distinct difference, however, between Professor Law-Yone's critique and the positions of Jacoby, Nussbaum and others who are more appreciative of the role of the state in ensuring a decent quality of life for citizens. This new appreciation of the state's role in planning emerged in the early 1990s after repeated attacks on the state from both the right and left, joined in an unholy alliance (Sanyal, 1994). The battle, of course, is not over – perhaps it will never be over – but the arguments against the state have evolved over time as more is known about what is achieved, or not achieved, by dismantling the state (Chaug, 2002; Killick, 1989).

Professor Law-Yone does not engage in this debate, however: he relies on Bourdieu, Foucault and Lefebvre to dismiss the state as an instrument of social coercion, and then calls for 'a renewed social practice' which could be built up, he claims, 'by means of a counter-discourse that builds upon the strategies and tactics of resistance while undermining the dictates of hegemonic discourse'. We have heard this line of argument before, but it no longer inspires as it did when I was a graduate student. Since then, I have grown equally skeptical of the claims for hegemony and those for counter-hegemony of the kind Professor Law-Yone espouses.

How could one not be skeptical? The evidence from the last 30 years of state bashing is clear. The state is not only an instrument for social control, it is also a necessary institution for social improvement (Nussbaum and Sen, 1993); and who can better manage the state apparatus matters more than who can dismantle it faster! True, the rationale for either state bashing or state building is not the same everywhere. Perhaps Professor Law-Yone's critique is valid in some contexts. But then why make a general argument against the state everywhere? Since this intellectual tendency was in vogue in the 1960s, we have realized how important it is to preserve both the welfare state and the developmental state (Evans et al., 1985).

Another reason Professor Law-Yone's article evoked a sense of déjà-vu is his use of terms such as *praxis* and *theoria*. He argues that emancipated planners need to combine both praxis and theoria to form 'a coherent and desirable world view'. When the term praxis was introduced in planning theory discourse, it conveyed more theoretical awareness than the rather simple term *practice*. Around the same time, planning theorists had also begun to argue that planners

must bridge practice and theory through praxis, which meant application of knowledge to action, and that this would generate new insights about power relationships in particular historical moments. Personally, I date this awareness back to the early 1970s when Marxism and critical theory of the Frankfurt School variety were first introduced to planning theory deliberations. Over the years I have sometimes wondered how I applied knowledge to action, and bridged theory with practice, and whether I ever was engaged in praxis! Professor Law-Yone does not seem to suffer from this anxiety; he is quite confident in his advice that planning theorists must pursue a different kind of theory – what David Harvey calls revolutionary theory – which, I assume, would require a blending of praxis and theoria.

Should planning theorists worry about why planners cannot blend praxis and theoria, or is it time to acknowledge that asking this sort of question over the last 35 years has not been particularly illuminating? Professor Law-Yone makes a strong case that past deliberations regarding planning theory have not been fruitful, but then proposes a type of intellectual inquiry which, I am afraid, will not get us out of the cul de sac. What will, one may ask? For the sake of brevity, let me suggest two alternatives.

First, instead of worrying about how planners connect theory with practice, it may be more useful to understand how common people apply theory to action, or, as Don Schön would have asked: do planners understand people's theories of action? I suggest humbly, and without the conviction of Professor Law-Yone, that perhaps it is time to stop obsessing about planners and their theories, and instead focus on the people and the theories they carry in their heads, and how such theories shape their actions. Whether people learn from applying theory to action is not a new question, I realize. A growing number of planning scholars are asking this sort of question, perhaps in different ways, but with the same aim: to understand better not what planners do, but what people do. How do they make meaning out of their daily lives? And do they see planners as important social actors who could help them cope with the uncertainties which disrupt the meaning of their lives (Marris, 1996; Tester, 1997)?

Second, it may be time to get out of abstract theorizing of the kind exemplified by the quote from Lefebvre with which Professor Law-Yone concludes his article. Instead of using terms like 'agents of the state' and describing how such agents inflict violence, why not focus on actual institutions, like the Ministry of Public Works or public utility agencies, and try to understand how each institution addresses the very important issue of social conflict. I would even go one step further and argue that terms such as social conflict may be too broad for planners. Not all disagreements can be called conflicts, and all conflicts are not the same. Struggle for land is not the same as labor opposition to plant closures. Both may lead to social conflicts, but of very different kinds, and planners must understand these differences if they want to be effective in mediating such conflicts. To stimulate such thinking about planning in a concrete and institutional way – and one which is also more politically potent than abstract theorizing – planners need to study, in depth, institutions such as labor unions,

or public sector agencies created to assist labor groups, and recommend concrete strategies for the renewal of the labor movement.

The example of labor unions came to mind because I happen to be reading about the unionization of informal laborers in India and have been thinking about why these newly formed unions have hesitated to join with old unions of formal workers to push for pro-labor policies, such as social security for all (Ginneken, 1998). Needless to say, Indian labor unions cannot be studied without understanding how and why the Ministry of Labor in India pursues certain policies. So, we are back to the study of the state again, but not as an abstraction in which concepts of social control, coercion and centralized modes of production are all lumped together to portray the state as an evil social force from which we must turn away towards 'a global project of another society in another space'.

Planning theorists will be well advised to analyze and better understand whichever society or space they currently inhabit. To do so, they should stop thinking about themselves and instead focus on the workings of institutions. The ultimate goal is to create a more level playing field, and institutional changes are necessary in order to achieve this noble goal of planning. Professor Law-Yone may argue that to do so planners need a coherent view of the world, blending praxis with theoria, but it is my hunch that what he considers prerequisites for our action are usually outcomes of our action.

Hence, let's act without a comprehensive world view, without the perfect blend of praxis and theoria, and try to use the state as an instrument of progressive social change. Professor Law-Yone may not follow my advice and instead join forces with social movements to practice radical planning. But I hesitate to follow him in leaving the powerful state apparatus to be run by others who may be more interested in social control than social change.

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