

Commentary

Spatial planning and/as caring for more-than-human place

The academic landscape of planning studies has for a long time been marked by a split between on the one hand more critical scholars who see as their mission to serve democracy, emancipation, etc by vigilantly and critically keeping an eye out for and shedding light on ‘the dark side of planning’, and on the other hand those researchers who are not so wary about offering direct policy advice with the purpose of just ‘fine tuning’ or providing information to feed into existing planning regimes. There are other patterns of differentiation between these two very loosely defined groups, where scholarship in the first vein often takes on a somewhat more cynical ‘nothing new under the sun’ tone than the sanguine inclination of the second group, whose work I often find infused with a generally implicit belief in the possibility of ‘progress’. In enacting this dichotomy I am of course making myself responsible for a gross oversimplification of a landscape that in actuality is criss-crossed by all sorts of dividing lines and connections, but nevertheless I cannot avoid feeling that when I meet a planning scholar for the first time I always sense a somewhat anxiety-mixed curiosity and an implicit question hanging in the air: ‘so which team are you on then’? The problem for me in trying to find my way in an academic landscape marked by this dividing line is that I constantly find myself straddling the gap between these two loose groupings, and I experience the need to recurrently ask myself the question how I can find ways to navigate between the Scylla of becoming just a useful idiot for the powers that be, and on the other hand the Charybdis of social critique run amok all the way into self-righteous zealotry or cynical nihilism.

Personally, I have come to the conclusion that this is the ethicopolitical dire strait that planning scholars (and also planners) must learn to productively dwell in—to recognize the practical value of critical reflection and a critical vigilance against being ‘useful’ at any cost, but without succumbing to an arrogant denigration or unqualified condemnation of all the hard and passionate work constantly undertaken by planning practitioners to labor towards a more democratic, just, and equitable world. Many of these dedicated and passionate practitioners and activists I have found to be driven by an energy or force that I in a previous text have tried to grasp through the concept of “caring for place” (Metzger, 2013). Without finding an opportunity in that context to more extensively discuss or unpack this somewhat curious expression in any greater detail, I suggested that planning practices sometimes can function to enact and extend or strengthen such a caring for place. Nevertheless, unpacked it needs to be. And I will therefore take the opportunity to make use of this commentary to more carefully elaborate this proposed concept, and particularly explore how it relates to spatial planning practice.

My argument, in brief, is that caring for place is an ethicopolitical inclination that can lead to good things. But the key term here is *can*, which in turn is dependent on the *how*. Different enactments, different articulations, will lead to different outcomes of varied ethicopolitical valence. So caring for place cannot be considered inherently good or evil according to some universal moral register, and therefore deserves neither our unreserved condemnation nor uncritical embrace. I suggest that a more productive approach is that of critical engagement by way of asking: what can be done here? What can become here? And at what price? To unfold this argument I will begin by presenting my sources of inspiration in cobbling together the concept of ‘caring for place’, which come primarily from feminist

STS (science and technology studies).⁽¹⁾ Then I will try to show how this concept is relevant to our understanding of planning practice, primarily by relating to some of the later writings of planning scholar Patsy Healey (eg, 2007; 2010). Borrowing a concept from philosopher Bernard Stiegler (2010) and with the help of Doreen Massey's (2004) idea of "geographies of responsibility", I will then discuss how this type of practice is always by necessity "pharmacological": that is, ethicopolitically ambivalent. I will then round off by suggesting that the productive response to the recognition of this conundrum is not abandonment or condemnation but rather critical attention and tinkering.

Caring for place

Although the concept 'caring for place' has not previously been recurrently used in scholarly contexts (except for a few passing mentions in more esoterically inclined Heideggerian spatial philosophy) it consists of a yoking together of two terms that come with a heavy theoretical luggage, particularly in the context of human and cultural geography. The type of questions and issues that can intuitively be associated with the concept are also central to, and have hence also been debated for a long time, within this discipline. This is not the place to delve into a lengthy excursion on the history of the concept of place in human geography (see instead, eg, Agnew, 2011; Cresswell, 2004, Massey and Thrift, 2003). Suffice to say, my understanding of the concept is deeply inspired by poststructuralist philosophy and the more-than-human geography of, for example, Sarah Whatmore (see, eg, Whatmore, 2002). From those inspirations I have landed in a relational-materialist conceptualization of places as ontologically and epistemologically messy entities, complex compounds of entangled subject-object relations and often friction-ridden nexuses of strong attachments. Thus conceptualized, places are both fully 'real' and 'really-out-there', but at the same time collectively and relationally constituted phenomena prone to both iterative evolution and radical mutation (Metzger, in press). A crucial part of this way of apprehending place is the recognition of the link between place and territory, which—through a more-than-human understanding—also leads to the insight that the phenomenon of place is in no way exclusive to human existence. Rather, if we sharpen our skills for reading the material-semiotic signals of nonhumans, we can also learn to better recognize and then also decide if the territorial articulations and attachments of other-than-human beings and entities are worthy of our respect and consideration. I thus generally agree with Massey (2005, page 140) that

“what is specific about place is not some romance of a pre-given collective identity or the eternity of the hills. Rather, what is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating a here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres); and a negotiation that must take place within and between both human and nonhuman.”

Caring for place can thus in the best of cases engender a sensitivity towards “the intimate connections between care for both humans and the nonhuman” (Lawson, 2007, page 6) with a basis in experiences of heterogeneous existences bumping into and rubbing up against each other in specific locales.

A second insight related to this understanding of place is the recognition of the crucial function of attachments of various types in the becoming of places. Drawing upon the sociology of attachments I explore this at some length elsewhere (Metzger, 2013), where I further argue that caring for place constitutes the enactment of a quite specific type of

⁽¹⁾On the merits and risks of applying 'feminist STS' as a designator or label, see Bauchspies and de la Bellacasa (2009). It is important to recognize that the scholars who are sometimes grouped under this heading comprise a highly heterogeneous crowd, representing a wide variety of approaches and research interests. What perhaps unites them across their differences is that they are all active as scholars in the field of STS and in various ways find inspiration in, and contribute to, feminist theory and practice.

attachment—territorial attachment. Territorial attachments build upon not just an analytical but also normative association of things and issues that are framed as geographically proximate and related: “if you care about issue x you *should also* care about issues y and z.” Such associations articulate a ‘space of solidarity’ implicating a seeing of oneself as part of and also as caring for a specific place, seeing the interests of the place to be one’s own interests, and one’s own interests to be a part of the interests of the place (Metzger, 2013, page 778). It thus builds upon ideas of territorial identity, in the sense of envisaged and enacted shared concerns and/or features based on proximity in Cartesian space, and further enacts this as a territorial logic which allows the perceived well-being of a specific place to some extent to guide or overtake or guide action, inscribing the self in a particular territorial(ized) collectivity.

This recognition takes us to that other constitutive term of the concept ‘caring for place’. The relevance of the concept of ‘care’ in relation to issues of place have since long been debated in human geography (for reviews see, eg, Lawson, 2007; Milligan and Wiles, 2010). Notwithstanding this, my primary source of inspiration when formulating the concept came from elsewhere: namely, feminist STS. Just like geographical scholarship on care, feminist STS scholars such as Donna Haraway, Annemarie Mol, and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa take as their point of departure the seminal work by, for example, Joan C Tronto and Selma Sevenhuijsen on care ethics which conceptualizes care as an often unrecognized “species activity” that “includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible” (Fischer and Tronto, 1990, page 40), further defining care as “an ability and willingness to ‘see’ and to ‘hear’ needs and to take responsibility for these needs being met” (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, page 83).

So what is particular to the feminist STS take on care? To begin with: it enacts a critical attention to the materiality of practices and the agency of nonhumans, which is perhaps typical of much STS scholarship. The partially nondiscursive dimensions of care practices are already evident in the work of Trento, but further highlighted by, for example, Haraway, Mol, and de la Bellacasa. For instance, Mol (2008, page 10) notes that the caring contexts generated by care practices do not necessarily have to be recognized in language as such, but can just as well be implicit and embedded in practices, buildings, habits, and machines. And here feminist STS offers an interesting twist and important corrective. Recognizing a lingering Heideggerian dismay over technology in general in much work on care ethics, feminist STS scholars such as Mol stress that, in the context of care, it is counterproductive to apprehend technology, in the broad as well as narrow sense of the term, as inherently evil. The world is far too messy for such categorical distinctions to be of any help:

“as long as care is primarily associated with ‘tender love’, it may be cast as something that is opposed to technology. A pre-modern remainder in a modern world The care I will come to talk about is not opposed to, but includes, technology. And the technology I will come to talk about is not transparent and predictable, but has to be handled with care” (Mol, 2008, pages 5–6).

This further leads towards a recognition of all the experience and subtle skills that go into caring work, experiences that can be developed and skills that can be improved to actually do *better* caring work, however we come to define ‘better’ (Mol et al, 2010, page 14).

This way of conceptualizing care strongly resonates with recent work by French philosopher Bernhard Stiegler. There is no room in this text for any longer excursions into the fascinating nuances of Stiegler’s philosophy of care (although they no doubt resonate with central issues of planning practice), nor for highlighting some deeply problematic and quite murky aspects of his thinking which are certainly deserving of critical scrutiny. What is interesting about Stiegler’s thinking in this context is how he highlights the capacity to care as crucial to sociability in general and then explores how care practices are fundamentally entangled with questions of technology (in his terminology: ‘technics’), and how these

questions—the ‘how’ and ‘whats’ of caring—should be a crucial societal concern. For Stiegler, to avoid becoming inhuman, not only do we need to care, we need to *care about caring* for others through recognizing and identifying with complex ecologies of humans and nonhumans—making care a collective societal project (2010, page 25).

Both Stiegler and Mol make the argument that at present in many societies too little care is currently taken of care, and that this is the time to begin to care more about caring, and caring about how and what we care for. In the terminology of Stiegler we need to become less care-less in our worldly doings. So how can we then develop, foster, and nurture less care-less practices? As previously mentioned, Stiegler does not see this as a question of personal responsibility or ethos, but rather as a crucial task of societal organization which must now according to him put much more effort into “inventing techniques, technologies, and social structures of attention formation corresponding to the organological specificities of our times, and by developing an industrial system that functions *endogenously* as a system of care: *making care its ‘value chain’—its economy*” (2010, page 48, emphasis in original). Further, according to Stiegler, this can be achieved by “*paying attention to psychotechniques of attention formation, paying attention to technological reflectivity*” (page 70, emphasis in original). For Stiegler, attention—that is, “the mental faculty of concentrating on an object”—is also concomitantly “the social faculty of taking care of this object—as of another, or as the representative of another, as the object of the other: attention is also the name of civility as it is founded on *philia*, that is, on socialised libidinal energy ... to pay attention is also to take care” (quoted in Stiegler and Rogoff, 2010, page 2). To learn to pay attention is thus fundamental to learning to care, as attention formation *sensitizes* us to that on which we focus our attention (Haché and Latour, 2010). Thus, drawing upon feminist STS and Stiegler’s work we can venture to speculate that ‘caring for place’ could potentially be of help in focusing our attention on, sensitizing us to, and making us care for the complex more-than-human ecologies of our own existence as a species, further localizing our own situated part in them (cf de la Bellacasa, 2011; Lawson, 2007; Smith, 1998).

Spatial planning as a technology enacting caring for place

Stiegler’s strong linking of care with attention brings to mind John Forester’s by now well-cited assertion that planning practitioners to a large extent work as “selective organizers of attention” (Forester, 1989, page 14). It also resonates in interesting ways with the sociology of attachments, and its examination of attachment formation as a collective as well as collectivizing practice, where attachments are considered to be emergent effects that emerge in collective practices mediated by ‘dispositifs’: that is, devices and practices that permit, in situated settings, to produce effects of transformations (Landri, 2007, page 418). Paolo Landri goes on to note that:

“Devotion to an object of activity does not depend on the object’s intrinsic properties; devotion is a reflexive activity (a ‘gesture of attention’) that resides on collective ‘frames’ magnifying the presence of the object. The collective frames the action, guarantees the results, provides identity, etc. It renews, transmits, reproduces and mobilises passion for the objects of activity. In a reciprocal sense, passion for the object produces its collectives, and stabilizes in communities of practitioners or amateurs who share a set of common practices” (page 418).

Silvia Gherardi et al (2007, page 323) further argue that the maintenance and transmission of “passion” (attachment/engagement/care) is “a societal practice within work practices”. I have previously argued that spatial planning can function exactly as such a ‘passion-enacting’ work practice that generates territorial attachments through generating a learning to be (co)affected (Metzger, 2013; cf Latour, 2004). Bringing in the more-than-human perspective, it also resonates with Jonathan Murdoch’s claim that spatial planning

could have the potential to, and also indeed *should* be reconceptualized as a form of “green governmentality”, a crucial technology for organizing a more ecological human sensibility and society by way of paying attention to spatial patterns and entanglements across the human–nonhuman divide (2006, page 155).⁽²⁾ But are there any signals indicating that planning methodology is moving in such a direction?

Not many would be my short answer. But, nevertheless, there are some promising tendencies that deserve to be highlighted as potential sources of inspiration. Among these I would here particularly like to highlight Healey’s later writings as one potential starting point for the development of such an ecological planning sensibility and practice.⁽³⁾ Healey’s work has been getting a somewhat bad rep among many planning scholars of a more critical inclination, but what is often forgotten is that her work—when it emerged—was a quite subversive minoritarian reading of planning practice championing a more transformative, emancipatory, and politicized planning practice in the face of the then-dominant high modernist technocratism, generating a line of flight that was then unfortunately co-opted into the mainstream of planning practice in sometimes quite disturbing ways. I have repeatedly discussed the troublesome consequences of these (mis)appropriations (Metzger, 2011; Metzger et al, in press), but that is not my errand here. Rather, what interests me is how Healey’s post-Habermasian writings can function as an opening towards developing democratic and inclusionary planning methods for generating collective caring for place as a more-than-human entity. The particular book I want to focus on in doing so is *Making Better Places: The Planning Project in the Twenty-first Century* (Healey, 2010), which almost takes the form of a manifesto and is appealing precisely because of its clarity of reasoning and its forthrightness in engagement, as well as the clearly communicated passion for the subject at hand.⁽⁴⁾

In her broad conceptualization of the “planning project” or “place governance with a planning inclination” Healey champions five broad principles or “attributes” which she sees as fundamental for a “progressive interpretation of the planning project in the contemporary period”. These are:

- an orientation to the future and a belief that action now can shape future potentialities
- an emphasis on liveability and sustainability for the many, not the few
- an emphasis on interdependences and interconnectivities between one phenomenon and another, across time and space
- an emphasis on expanding the knowledgeability of public action, expanding the ‘intelligence’ of a polity
- a commitment to open, transparent government processes, to open processes of reasoning in and about the public realm (Healey, 2010, page 19).

⁽²⁾The helpfulness of conceptualizing planning theories and methods as ‘technologies’ or sets of technologies is a moot point. Healey (2013) has argued that it could be problematic to conceptualize planning ideas and methods as “technologies” since such “policy ideas” are “more fluid substances than technologies” and “easily [can] be reshaped by the dominant forces which play around the networks within which an idea travels” (2013, page 1516). This critique against conceptualizing planning as a ‘technology’ is highly pertinent in relation to theories that envisage technology to be a dominant determining factor in societal affairs. Nevertheless, later developments in, for example, actor-network theory, such as so-called ‘after-ANT’ strands of scholarship, have focused their attention on highlighting how also more readily identifiable technological devices than planning theories and methods, such as water-pumps or ambulances, often can be highly “fluid” and subject to contextual reshaping, while nevertheless retaining some aspect or degree of continuity or integrity (see, eg, Beisel and Schneider, 2012; de Laet and Mol, 2000).

⁽³⁾There are other potential sources of inspiration that could have been examined more closely here (for instance, Hillier, 2007), but due to length constraints I here limit myself to discussing Healey’s work.

⁽⁴⁾Nevertheless, many of the ideas presented in this accessible book are discussed in greater detail and nuance in Healey (2007).

Further, Healey repeatedly stresses the centrality of notions of “attention” and “care” to the planning project as she sees it. The planning idea not only “*pays* attention” to complex spatial entanglements, it “*cultivates* attention”: “not merely to our individual interests, but to the complex interdependencies and obligations we have with other people, other places and other times, in the past and in the future” (page 20, emphasis added). Thus, planning is a “setting out on a collective trajectory” which contributes to “stabilising our collective concerns” (pages 18–19). By way of this we may “sort out how to live with each other and with non-humans” (page 21).

The “planning project”, in Healey’s guise, thus crucially appears as a “matter of care” combining a “worry and thoughtfulness about an issue as well as the de facto belonging of those ‘affected’ by it” with a “strong sense of attachment and commitment” (de la Bellacasa, 2011, pages 89–90). The planning project is articulated as just as much a transformatory and emancipatory ethicopolitical calling, as a set of concrete material practices for stabilizing collective concerns. By setting a group of disparate but proximate existences on a collective trajectory towards the future it assembles and enacts them as a specific type of collective thing, a “place” in the form of a nexus of complex spatial entanglements containing interdependencies and obligations with other beings, near and far in both space and time. In the words of de la Bellacasa, thus conceived planning practice is at the same time “an affective state, a material vital doing, and an ethico-political obligation” (2011, page 90).

“Its value lies not only in encouraging conditions that may enhance the potential for human flourishing through promoting the inclusive livability and sustainability of places in ways that recognize interdependencies and connectivities. It also emphasizes the importance of creating and sustaining a vigorous, active and inclusive political community, in which a politics of place and spatial responsibilities can be articulated” (Healey, 2010, page 74).

Further:

“It is not only about creating better opportunities and chances for individual people, or particular social groups, or people in a particular place, or even just the human species as a whole. It is about how we relate to all others who inhabit the world with us and to the broader natural forces that shape our planetary existence. Such a project demands that we try, in thinking about and acting with respect to place management and development, to see the larger issues in small actions and the little implications of greater endeavours” (page 226).

The crux of the matter of Healey’s argument is that this type of sensibility does not come about by itself. It requires active cultivation through skills, tools, and technologies. Pace Mol and Stiegler—care and technical tinkering, broadly conceived, go hand in hand in the collective and collectivizing tinkering on possible collective place futures that we call spatial planning. But Mol also cautions: “Technologies always have unexpected effects: they generate forms of pain and pleasure that nobody predicted” (2008, page 56). She further notes that while this for some might be but “a fascinating insight ... in the logic of care it is something that points towards a task ... Watch out for the ways in which your ‘means’ mess up your ‘ends’. Do not just pay attention to what technologies are supposed to do, but also to what they happen to do, even if this is unexpected” (page 56). This insight dovetails what Stiegler has framed as the inherently *pharmacological* properties of technologies. This has nothing to do with medicine specifically, but is rather a concept drawn from Plato’s (and later Jacques Derrida’s) discussion of the ancient Greek concept of *pharmakon*, which denotes a substance that can—dependent on the context and situation of its application—either function as a curing remedy or as a deadly poison and in extension: how any technical tool can function productively as well as destructively dependent on the context and situation and the criteria of evaluation (Stiegler, 2010, page 26).

The ethicopolitical ambivalence of caring for place

From Mol's or Stiegler's perspective the outcomes of caring practices and the effects of their supporting technologies cannot always automatically be considered ethicopolitically 'good'. We can put our skills and technologies to use for caring for and fostering traits, projects, and entities that any adherent of a strong democratic, egalitarian, and emancipatory ethos can find objectionable or even repugnant. This is exactly what much important critical work in planning studies has taught us about spatial planning through recurrently reminding us of how this set of techniques can very easily be put into service of oppression, dispossession, and even ethnic cleansing. Again, this insight therefore brings us back to the critical question of *how*. If care in itself does not automatically bring ethicopolitical valence to a project, there are better and worse ways to care, and better and worse things to care for, always also of course dependent on the register or criteria of ethicopolitical worth being directly or implicitly invoked.

One of the ever-present ethicopolitical challenges associated with planning relates to the necessarily reductionistic nature of its practices in the face of a world marked by irreducible relational complexity and transscalar ecological connections across every known geographical scale and neat ontological categorization. Spatial planning processes always have to set boundaries as to what constitutes 'here', that which belongs to 'this place'—which is concomitantly enacted as worthy of care, thus normatively enacting spaces of care of an unavoidably exclusionary nature. It is crucial for any critically self-reflective planning practice to always keep this in mind and constantly work towards taking responsibility for the perhaps necessary exclusions and Otherings that have to be part of any planning process aiming at generating some form of agency. But a wicked related challenge is of course that in an almost unfathomably complex world, it isn't always so easy—or rather it is impossible—to guess beforehand the extended effects of any intervention beyond the directly obvious. How can we ever begin to take responsibility for our "agential cuts" (Barad, 2003), separating 'this' from 'that' and 'here' from 'there' in the face of this insight?

This question of how to develop "geographies of responsibility" (Massey, 2004) that do not fetishize bounded enactments of place or automatically grant ethicopolitical privilege to the geographically proximate, is a problem that has preoccupied Massey from the early 1990s and onwards. Massey has highlighted the ethical ramifications of living in an era in which it is becoming increasingly impossible to ignore that no problem or phenomenon is today only 'local', but that any place is a nexus of relations stretching far in both time and space and that any action in the world by necessity will have temporally and geographically distributed effects most probably reaching way beyond what we could ever conceive of. She encourages, or rather—more forcibly—*demands* us to ask: in a complex world, why would it automatically be ethicopolitically more desirable to care for 'this' place more than 'that', no matter how 'more-than-humanly' conceived (cf also Hillier, 2009)? Why privilege the geographically proximate, no matter in what topological structure we define 'near' and 'far'? Isn't one of the great ethicopolitical challenges precisely that, to not privilege that which is more available to us, but to learn to care for and to understand also that which upon initial experience appears as alien and different—and to learn how we also may bear a responsibility for this, the Other(s)?

Spatial planning will never be able to fully escape from enacting geographies of responsibility and spaces of care that by necessity will be exclusionary in one way or the other. Therefore it will never stop being pertinent, in relation to spatial planning practices, to pose the challenging questions: "responsibility in what spaces, places, times and for which people? What are the limits to responsibility and how are these worked through in different spatial arrangements? When does acting responsibly mean refusing to be responsible?" (Raghuram et al, 2009, page 9; cf also Smith, 1998). And, perhaps, also to add: under what circumstances

and in which ways could a caring for ‘here and us’ be enacted so as to also engender a caring for ‘them and there’, or contribute towards recognizing ‘them’ as also constituting part of ‘us’?⁽⁵⁾ Unfortunately, much ongoing contemporary spatial planning practice lacks even the faintest self-reflexivity concerning these kinds of issues. If even a minimal awareness in this regard could become a future norm, we could also begin to consider how spatial planning could potentially come to function as a technology for extending rather than shrinking geographies of responsibility, to begin to learn to recognize in more inclusionary ways that who ‘we’ are is relationally constituted and dependent upon links that stretch far beyond ourselves both in time and space, to places and beings wholly Other to what we see as that which constitutes our proper selves (see also Healey, 2010; Massey, 2004). Such a new practice could further function to help us dwell upon how we ever can legitimize that *this* is more important right now than *that*, *here* more than *there*, however conceived. What are the arguments and grounds upon which we exclude some places and entities from our collective to be cared for? Can we admit to our decisions and take responsibility for the legitimacy of the grounds upon which we acted—even if we cannot reasonably be made responsible for every aspect of the outcomes of those actions; and can we then look the inevitable victims (more or less literally) in the eyes and explain as well as take responsibility for our decisions, for caring for this and not that, for here and not there (cf Stengers, 2005)?

Be attentive, take responsibility, don’t give up

As related above, taking such responsibility appears to be a far cry from any really existing contemporary planning practice, at least to my knowledge. So is this but a pipe-dream or an important calling for a truly ‘ecologized’ planning democracy-to-come? I honestly don’t know, but one thing I am certain about—we will never find out if we as planning scholars turn our back on the domain of ongoing practice or only smirk at it from a distance. With inspiration from Mol (2008, page 56) we need to treat every planning intervention as “yet another experiment” and “again and again, be attentive to whatever it is that emerges” (cf also Hillier, 2007). As she further goes on to note:

“In the logic of care uncertainty is chronic, and additional arguments cannot hope to alter this. You do what you can, you try and try again. You doctor, but you have no control. And ultimately the result is not glorious ... Be sad, get yourself together or let someone comfort you, and then try once more to act” (2008, pages 90–91).

And this is also what Healey tells us in *Making Better Places*: there is no one-size-fits-all and once-and-for-all ‘better’ spatial planning. It must be an ongoing project, a constant tinkering. But in no way does this imply that planning scholars should replace critical attention with unreflected ‘care’. On the contrary, one of the key points of Stiegler is that care and criticality go hand in hand. Or as de la Bellacasa succinctly puts it (2011, page 91), “To promote care in our world we cannot throw out critical standpoints with the bathwater of corrosive critique.”

This is the message both Massey and Healey appear to be trying to get across with regards to geographies of responsibility. As Massey puts it: “[s]ometimes you have to blow apart the imagination of a space or place to find within it its potential” (2005, page 158). This also goes hand in hand with Michel Foucault’s observation that the etymological roots of the word ‘curiosity’ relates to “the care taken of what exists and what might exist” (cited in de la Bellacasa, 2012, page 212). The planning process should therefore focus on “not only detecting what is there, what is given in the thing we are studying, but also think about what is not included in it and about what this thing could become—for instance if other

⁽⁵⁾In light of our rising awareness that, as already suggested by Darwin, all life on this planet may be knitted together in a coevolutionary and codependent “inextricable web of affinities” (1859, page 434), perhaps the only reasonable ‘place’ to care for today is planetary. See, for example, the discussion in Roy (forthcoming) and Bruno Latour’s 2013 Gifford Lectures.

participants were gathered by/in it” (de la Bellacasa, 2011, page 96). As de la Bellacasa goes on to note: “An account of a thing produced with and for care can indeed create divergence and conflict by criticizing the way an issue is assembled. It can produce visions that ‘cut’ differently the shape of a thing.” This is exactly what Healey passionately argues that spatial planning can potentially do for places. In such processes, hard work would be put towards enacting more-than-human places as motley *res publica* within which existences may come together in their multidimensional differences, and where “the only agreement may be that attention to places and their qualities are important. Beyond that, it is the arguing, monitoring and criticizing within a political community that help sustain the focus of place-governance practices” (Healey, 2010, page 240). Such a practice would thus be dependent on “taking risks” (Healey, 2010, page 241). And as Lynn Staeheli and Michael Brown (2003, page 775) have argued, albeit in a different context, “the creation of these spaces, then, is not simply a means to some objective end of policy change, but is an end in itself”, as when they allow both true conflict as well as becoming-in-alterity, they can potentially truly become the incarnation and instantiation of “democracy in practice” (Metzger et al, in press).

In the face of these reflections, what would then be a ‘good’ way of caring for place in spatial planning processes? To some extent it is but “persistent tinkering in a world full of complex ambivalence and shifting tensions” (Mol et al, 2010, page 14). But perhaps it is also a “taking care of *movement*” (Stiegler, 2010, page 80; cf Hillier, 2007), always staying attentive to the possible—and probable—ethicopolitical ambivalence of any intervention into the world. As I see it, it is therefore the role, or even duty, of the planning scholar to help planning practitioners in asking the horribly daunting question: *what are we really busy doing here* (cf Stengers, 2005)? If we are serious about developing spatial planning as a technology aiming towards actively enacting a more-than-human caring for place it might be that we have to develop a whole new methodological toolbox so as to avoid just reproducing existing dominant, and ecologically as well as socially and economically highly destructive, patterns of action. Healey might not provide us with any concrete, radically alternative tools towards facilitating this shift, but she definitely offers some important threads from which we may begin to stitch together a new more-than-human planning ethos for the 21st century.

Jonathan Metzger

Division of Urban and Regional Studies, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm

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