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Mobilising Situated Local Knowledge for Participatory Urban Planning Through Storytelling

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Abstract
Participatory urban planning does not take place outside of social systems of privilege and discrimination; likewise, the negotiation of knowledge claims in planning processes is embedded in social relations defined by "gender," "race," and "class." In this article, we argue that positionalities play out in the social construction of knowledge in participatory planning and that, consequently, a certain type of knowledge—typically represented by well-educated and resourceful residential groups—is privileged over other forms of everyday knowledge. We present storytelling as an inclusive approach to co-producing knowledge and reflecting on the extent to which the findings can be applied to participatory urban planning. This article is based on a three-year inter- and transdisciplinary research project based on real-world laboratories in two German neighbourhoods. Regarding feminist geographies, we first explore the role of power, positionality, and situated knowledge in shaping participatory planning, both theoretically and empirically. We outline the extent to which the methodological framework and the socio-spatial setting have an impact on the co-production of knowledge. We present insights from two storytelling interventions and reflect on the possibilities and limits of narrative knowledge production for participatory urban planning.

Keywords
participation; positionality; power relations; situated knowledge; storytelling

1. Introduction

> In planning, we see not only the filtering of issues and ideas but the filtering of people, by skin colour, gender, ethnicity, or territory. Such power shapes the flow of information and identities, too, as some people are seen, heard, and valued, recognized and respected, while others are treated as invisible, voiceless, separate, worthless. (Forester, 1999, p. 184)

The professional self-understanding of urban planning has changed significantly over the past decades—from the god-father-model of rationalist planning to a collaborative planning model (Healey, 1997; Innes, 1995). Often with reference to the work of Habermas (1981)

and his understanding that knowledge is socially constructed, the collaborative model shows that planners need to address power asymmetries when it comes to decision-making and consensus-seeking (Albrechts, 2003, p. 906). The social construction of planning and the employed concepts, representations, scales, etc. are a key focus of the interpretative tradition in planning (Davoudi, 2012). In this tradition, knowledge is fuzzy and context-dependent instead of objective and positive:

> Instead of thinking about knowledge as having an instrumental place in the planning process (i.e., to inform action), it is more useful to think about planning as a process of knowing and learning. This means articulating knowledge and action as recursively

interlinked rather than considering the former as a precondition to, or coming before, the latter in a linear, causal chain. (Davoudi, 2015, p. 317)

According to Davoudi (2015, p. 323), planning as a practice of knowing is "a dynamic process that is situated and provisional, collective and distributed, pragmatic and purposive, and mediated and contested." Against this background, a large part of planners' work is communication—with different groups of stakeholders, citizens, politicians, etc. In participatory planning processes, they co-produce knowledge about problem definitions, local contexts, stakeholders' opinions and needs, and scopes for action. However, in line with the introductory quote by Forester, studies show that it is difficult to design these processes in a way that planners successfully reach out to and mobilize the broad variety of stakeholders potentially affected by a planning process. As Flyvbjerg (1998) argues, power relations are inherent to any communication, no matter how elaborate and transparent the design of the setting is.

In German urban planning, particularly "deprived" groups—such as poor households, with low education levels and ethnic minority or immigrant backgrounds—have been found to be missing from planning debates (Huning et al., 2021; Selle, 2019). Thus, results of participation often represent certain groups' perspectives and neglect those of others. Planners have discussed and tested more inclusive approaches to participation for years, e.g., in "strategic integration management" since the early 2000s (Gesemann, 2016, p. 284). Diversity is a regular political demand in objectives, methods and instruments of participation (Selle, 2019, p. 37). Nevertheless, a "code of interculture" for planning processes does not exist (Selle, 2019, p. 41).

In a three-year research project on interculture in participatory planning in two German neighbourhoods, we (the authors) and an inter- and transdisciplinary team of colleagues sought to identify the barriers that prevent people from participating. In two real-world laboratories (RWL), academics and local stakeholders researched and tested how planners can design more inclusive participation processes (Huning et al., 2021). We co-defined the research agenda and the problems with local stakeholders, residents and community activists before collectively testing potential solutions in an iterative process. Among other activities (see Section 3), we employed storytelling both as a methodological framework and as a socio-spatial setting to mobilize local knowledge in order to abandon "exclusive claims to authoritative knowledge and singular forms of expertise" (Good et al., 2017, p. 304).

In this article, we present selected findings from our research. We found, firstly, that the material and organisational design of participatory processes plays a crucial role in who becomes involved in the social construction of knowledge in planning. Secondly, we found storytelling to be a strong approach not only to mobilize

those who tend to remain absent in "regular" planning processes but also to co-construct a common understanding of different stakeholders' needs and desires when it comes to participation at a rather abstract level. Concerning the role of emotions and their effects in planning, and particularly planning conflicts, we imagine that storytelling might also be a promising approach to develop planners' professional reflections on positionality further and to promote a better understanding of potential conflict sources and solutions.

The structure of the article is as follows. In Section 2, we discuss how different positionalities and situated knowledge play out in participatory planning and how planners can use storytelling to address this in collective knowledge production. In Section 3, we provide information on our concrete research context, database, and methods. Section 4 presents findings from our case studies, split into two parts: In Section 4.1 we show, based on the first project phase, how planners' communication privileges certain groups; Section 4.2 provides insights we gained from storytelling in terms of the type of stories and what can be learnt from them. In Section 5, we discuss the implications of our findings for participatory planning and potential limitations. In Section 6, we end with questions for future research.

2. Knowledge Co-Production Through Storytelling

Through participation, planners seek to elicit local knowledge related to everyday life and place (Bradley, 2018, p. 27). The interaction with urban residents initiated by planners for this purpose is the social space, shaped by the interaction and its design, where planners and participants co-produce a particular kind of knowledge. Yet planners have considerable influence over knowledge construction: They set the agenda, design the process, interpret the outcomes, take them away, and give them meaning. During the socio-spatial process of participation, planners and participants not only represent but also (re)construct and challenge identities. Unequal power relations play out throughout the interaction, as planning processes affect different groups of stakeholders in different ways, stakeholders who have different interests, but also different resources to assert their interests in the planning process. There is the risk that participation is selective (Listerborn, 2007, p. 61) if power relations are not addressed but obscured. Interest-driven power strategies influence the delimitation of what kind of knowledge is "valid" and important and which kind is not (Schuster, 2016, p. 195). Planners are not "detached explorers" who produce neutral, objective knowledge (Bondi & Domosh, 1992, p. 202). Instead, the stance of assumed neutrality implies concepts that are oppressive and fail to capture the complexity and contingency of the world. The privilege of being able to view one's position as "neutral'' or "generic" is linked to social categories such as "gender," "race," "class," "body," etc. that intersect (Listerborn, 2007).

Feminists speak of "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1988, p. 581), which means that there can be neither a universalist nor a relativist standpoint, but positions and positionalities need to be contextualized within power-driven and embodied discourses and processes of knowledge co-construction. Power is also constituted through bodies and what they represent (Coole, 2007) since "bodies are always…interlocked with racial, cultural, and class particularities" (Pedwell, 2007, p. 72). In this context, the body is not a physical object separate from the mind, but a dynamic, organic site of meaningful experience and knowledge (Vacchelli, 2018, p. 2). Planners need to reflect on their own positioning in their interactions with others, such as local actors and stakeholders, rather than relying on their functional role as neutral experts who can make unbiased decisions, as the positivist planning tradition suggests (Davoudi, 2012).

These debates are not new to planning, and accordingly, new forms of knowledge production have been explored that aim to take into account the situatedness of knowledge and the positionalities of actors. In the context of the "pluralization of knowledge" (Fahrenwald, 2005, p. 49), experiential knowledge is currently being recognized again as a form of knowledge, and the cultural practice of storytelling exhibits characteristics of knowledge production to generate experiential knowledge (Schmidt, 2018, p. 4):

> Storytelling was long considered a non-objective, diffuse form of knowledge that was excluded from the scientific world. Recent research in organisational science and knowledge management, however, is concerned with how storytelling, as a methodological approach, brings individual experiential knowledge to the surface and generates shared knowledge. (Schmidt, 2018, p. 2; translated by the authors)

Experiential knowledge is "personal, situated, episodic, bodily, implicit and at the same time reflexive knowledge" (Reinmann & Vohle, 2005, p. 9; translated by the authors). Episodic knowledge stores knowledge about places and (significant) events associated with a concrete experience (Schmidt, 2018, p. 18). For the coming discussion, we hold at this point: situated knowledge includes experiential knowledge that is produced in the form of episodic knowledge through storytelling.

Conceptually, narrative theory distinguishes "storytelling," "story," and "narrative." Storytelling refers to the act of telling and sharing a story while someone is listening. According to traditional narratology, a story is a sequence of events that has a beginning, middle, and end (Fludernik, 2009; Martínez, 2017). Finally, a narrative is an account of successive events in time and space, often so extended and loaded with meaning that it contains a multiplicity of stories (Canning & Reinsborough, 2017/2020, p. 278).

Stories connect the knowledge of what happened with the understanding of why it happened and the sense of what it means to us, and they organize knowledge about the need for action and moral concerns (Sandercock, 2003, p. 19). Consequently, storytelling cannot only provide planners with new information (in the sense of "facts" or "data"), but it brings to the fore different socio-spatial positions, identities and (power) relations that are negotiated through stories.

For collective co-production of knowledge, storytelling allows planners to immerse themselves in the complexity of local values, contexts, and knowledge (Good et al., 2017, p. 294). Stories shape meaning and clarify what is important to individuals and what is not (van Hulst, 2012). According to Sandercock (2003, p. 12), "stories are central to planning practice: to the knowledge it draws from the social sciences and humanities, to the knowledge it produces about the city, and to the way it acts in the city." For planners, concrete local experiences and the everyday life of citizens can thus be a source of inspiration (Willinger, 2019, p. 106). By co-production, we mean the joint production through individual and social practices of different individuals or groups in cooperative collaboration (Krön et al., 2019, p. 35). Within co-production, urban dwellers are seen as self-aware experts who have resources, skills, and abilities in their everyday lives (Krön et al., 2019, p. 35).

Storytelling is not only about the product, i.e., the narrative or story, but also its communicative functions. Storytellers use their stories to explain something, to convince someone, to give advice, etc., including life histories and personal accounts (Nooijer & Sol Cueva, 2022, p. 237). Further, storytelling as a communicative procedure serves to form an identity, in which self-positioning and othering are negotiated. Last, but not least, it is a way to challenge dominant narratives that only contain a few voices, experiences and perspectives (Smith, 2017, p. 196). Storytelling can thus serve to name, analyse, and criticize power and domination relations. It can also help to uncover and become aware of positionalities, adopt an attitude of mindfulness and reflect on questions of ethics and responsibility, because "planning that ignores diverse ways of knowing undermines the experience and shared meaning of those living in a city" (Goldstein et al., 2015, p. 1285). In this regard, stories offer space for local perspectives that are difficult to mobilize and capture otherwise. Thus, they may provide planners with deeper insights into local situations, reflect on their own (personal or professional) positionality and raise awareness for voices that often remain unheard (e.g., Devos et al., 2018; Lake & Zitcer, 2012; Sandercock, 2003; Willinger, 2019).

3. Research Context, Database, and Methods

This article is based on research in two RWL (Schäpke et al., 2018) which aimed at an intercultural opening of participatory urban planning. RWL provide a concrete socio-spatial and temporal setting for academics, professionals and civil society to collectively define

local problems and then develop and test potential solutions. RWL combine theoretical-scientific knowledge with experiential knowledge from professional and community practice in an iterative process. The permanent exchange and collective interpretations of observations and provisional results lead to modified questions and new tools in the following round of co-research.

The research group consisted of academics from two universities' urban planning and design research departments, staff from local administrations, and representatives of planning offices and consultancies. During the research, we also engaged with administrative staff from other departments, local non-profits and community workers, and urban dwellers. In the first research phase, we conducted 23 interviews with local administrative staff and 19 interviews with civil society as theory-generating semi-structured expert interviews (Flick, 2011, pp. 166–167). These interviews served as an introduction to the local context. We then co-developed a broad range of activities (Huning et al., 2021), including participatory interventions in open space, guerrilla testing for a mobile-first participation tool, or inter-departmental workshops in the local administrations. During the iterative research process, story-based methods became more and more important (Seydel et al., 2021) to unravel local narratives and shed light on different perspectives. The project developed several participatory storytelling interventions in face-to-face settings ("story-corner," "story-circle") and later—due to the pandemic—as digital dialogue in a podcast series. In this article, we focus on face-to-face interventions. In the following, we first describe the material design of the settings before we explain our methodology and methods.

3.1. Material Design

As design researchers were part of the core research team, the project paid particular attention to the mate-rial design of the storytelling interventions, because the design has a significant impact on whether and how individuals or groups interact (Suchman, 2007). The arrangement of seating, the use of technologies, the concrete visibility in public space, or the distance or proximity between individual participants are all artefacts that actively shape social orders and interactions (Latour, 2014). At participatory events, the constellation of the "opposition" of audience and podium is still common, implying hierarchical arrangements and pre-structured patterns of communication. We tried to arrange the spatial settings so that they did not express power relations from the outset, but allowed for diverse forms of communication and signalled openness. While these material settings could certainly neither compensate for an unequal distribution of power nor hide social privileges, we hoped that they would offer the chance to give previously overlooked and overheard voices access to participation if they conveyed openness, multilingualism, and a willingness to listen.

The "*story-corner*" (see Figure 1) was a cabin with a solid roof and wall in the back and to one side. Participants could lean against the walls if they wished, and the walls offered protection from ambient noise. The opening to one side was important so that people around could see the conversations. A recording device was deliberately placed on the sidewall and not between the interlocutors so that the technology would not be a barrier between the bodies. In both storytelling interventions, the stories were recorded and transcribed with the consent of the participants. In contrast, the spatial concept for the "*story-circle*" (see Figure 2) was a geodesic wooden dome. The participants sat on small chairs in a circle. Through the particular height of the chairs, participants sat on a different level from people outside the dome. We covered some of the triangular surfaces of the dome construction with fabric to create a permeable storytelling space that offered adequate protection and
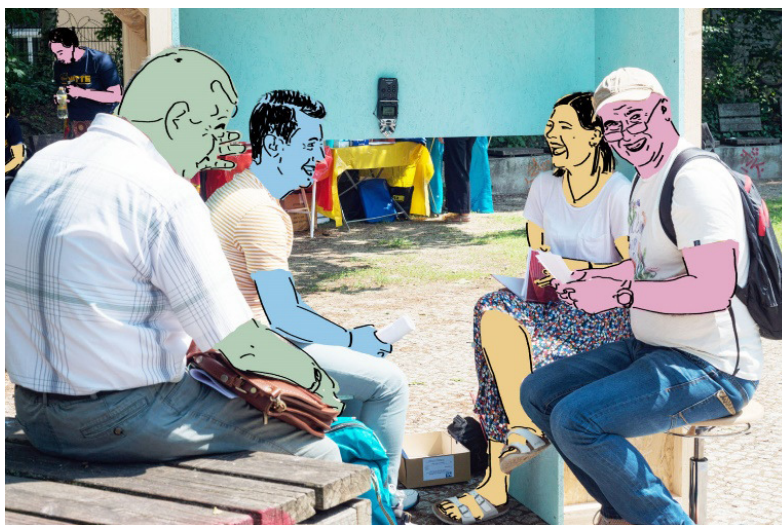

Figure 1. Story-corner. Photograph by Michael Shenbrot and illustrations by Zeynep Keskin. Source: Courtesy of © INTERPART.

Figure 2. Story-circle. Photograph by Michael Shenbrot and illustrations by Zeynep Keskin. Source: Courtesy of © INTERPART.

yet could be seen from outside. We assumed that people would find it easier to sit down if they felt the space was open and they could decide for themselves when to come and go.

3.2. Methodological Design

The "*story-corner*" was a wooden construction, designed to host a one-to-one conversation between the researcher and passers-by. Based on the episodic interview method, the setting was supposed to activate (narrative-) episodic knowledge, which consists of memories of situations, through narrative prompts (Flick, 2011, p. 273). A narrative prompt means to ask a person to talk about a specific topic in depth. They can be completely open-ended, but they can also include the topic of inquiry and time constraints that provide a framework or limitation for the narrator (Rosenthal & Loch, 2002, p. 7). For this project, a part of a narrative prompt was: "What does "Typical Neighbourhood A/B" mean to you? Please share with us stories about intercultural experiences and encounters in your neighbourhood."

Narrative-episodic knowledge is experiential and related to concrete situations; the sequence of the situation in its context is its central unit (Flick, 2019, pp. 238–239). To create a level playing field, the storytellers were free to not only react to the researchers" prompts but also propose topics they wanted to talk about. For those who were more comfortable telling their stories in another language, language mediators from local organisations supported the conversations. Without them, access to some of the stories would have been impossible. However, it was clear that the language mediators were part of the common knowledge production and that there was a difference between the author and the narrator, so some meaning might have been "lost in translation," while in other regards the translations made collective knowledge production possible in

the first place. Overall, 17 residents aged 23–74 years old told their stories in the story-corner. Eight stated they had a migrant background, eight self-identified as female, and nine as male. Stories addressed negotiations of identity and belonging in the neighbourhoods, gender roles, lifestyles and experiences with analogue and digital participation. We avoided "labelling" the storytellers, but asked them to self-identify to interpret and map the stories, their positions, and their relationships (meaning they did not have to tell us). We validated our interpretations in group discussions. However, we realize that it is never possible to keep all personal biases out of an analysis.

In the next research phase, the "*story-circle*" took the idea of knowledge production through storytelling one step further based on the principles of the storytelling-salon, which combines narrative interviews and group discussions (Richter & Rohnstock, 2016). In participatory research, storytelling-salons serve as a strategic means of trust-building, self-empowerment, as well as negotiations and representations of individual and collective identities (Richter & Rohnstock, 2016; Sommer, 2017). In our research, the story-circle was a storytelling space where participants were free to leave and enter in the course of the conversation. A neighbourhood activist and a researcher shared the role of facilitator. For this article, we refer to a story-circle of six participants, four females and two males, two with a migrant background. The story-circle unravelled (a) different perspectives on urban development and community that were addressed in the conversation of a diverse neighbourhood group, and (b) people's desires and wishes for communicating with each other, related emotions, and ideas for the design of intercultural dialogue in low-threshold and inclusive settings. The aim was to observe to what extent it is possible to create a trustful space for conversation that reflects the diversity of the neighbourhood's population and different definitions of belonging.

In line with the research methodology of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the analysis of the data from both the story-corner and the story-circle consisted of theoretical coding, a combined procedure of open and selective coding (Flick, 2019). Doing this collectively helped to structure and understand the data while constantly questioning the researchers" pre-assumptions and making new discoveries before returning to the field (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We extracted individual narrative sequences as episodic knowledge. They consisted of (a) the initial situation ("how everything began"), (b) the events relevant for the narrative, selected from the wealth of experiences and presented as a coherent sequence of events ("how things developed"), and (c) up to the presentation of the situation at the end of the development ("what resulted"; Flick, 2019, pp. 227–228). These "small stories" provided "short (everyday) narratives that, in contrast to elaborate biographical narratives, are told in everyday…interaction contexts and in which communicative procedures of identity negotiation, self—and other-positioning also play an important role" (Martínez, 2017, p. 236; see also Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008).

4. Storytelling Interventions

This section presents findings from the RWL according to the progress during the iterative research process. In the first phase, mechanisms of in—and excluding different groups of residents were discovered (Section 4.1). This phase led to the design of the storytelling interventions (described in Section 3) to promote inclusive settings for participatory knowledge production. Section 4.2 presents stories that were told and the ways they can be interpreted and contribute to a better understanding of both local frameworks, barriers to participation and potential conclusions.

4.1. "Whoever Is Coming, Is There"

All interviewed planners stressed the importance of participatory planning (a) to get a better understanding of local interests, and (b) to give residents the opportunity to influence democratic decision-making. They emphasized the public character of participation and equal opportunities for everyone to get involved. Although they were aware that only certain groups took part in participatory events, they did not think there was much they could do about it: "Whoever is coming, is there" (#hs_025). For example, most of them realized that language might be an issue for who comes and who stays away. In the same breath, they argued that either they did not have the resources to organize translation services, or that there were too many potential languages, so that providing for some and not for others would again be exclusive. Although this may make sense from an administrative point of view, it discourages residents with poor German language or rhetoric skills from speak-

ing out. As one interlocutor argued:

> To put it casually, who is involved in this? They are white, older men, well-educated and wealthy. This is of course because of the format that is chosen. It takes place in certain public spaces, [for example] the town hall. You have to be very eloquent or articulate to participate, you can't be shy to speak in front of groups, and [should] of course have some experience of participating or speaking. Therefore, logically, this method only appeals to a certain target group. (#cd_003; all direct quotes are translated by the authors)

Many people do not necessarily feel addressed when asked to participate in discussions on urban development:

> Usually there is an event where many people…are invited, then an urban design is presented and you can say a bit about it and comment, right? And of course, that's something that doesn't exactly encourage people, especially in large groups. Only a few people can express their opinion in a large group anyway. (#hs_013)

This became particularly clear in one of the neighbourhoods with a very active self-organized initiative of academics and well-educated citizens who were confident about their position and the validity and importance of their knowledge. Its members took it for granted to have a "right to the neighbourhood," to belong, and to be heard in participatory planning. They were urban planners, architects, landscape architects, and educators, who were used to networking and discussing. Planners reassured the group of its importance and appreciated the work they did at the local level: "They are already doing a lot of the work for us, i.e., in our local partnership. They are an association of very active residents who have a wide variety of ideas for the neighbourhood" (#hs_031). Planners encouraged and valued the group's input because they found it hard to mobilize the local community. Thus, they considered the initiative an important representative of the neighbourhood, which in return confirmed the initiative's self-understanding as a key actor in participatory planning.

However, barriers for others to get involved not only had to do with language issues due to other-than-German mother tongues. Other residential groups were intimidated by the small group of very articulate people who already had expertise in the field of planning and seemed to possess much more relevant knowledge than they themselves did. A local planner confirmed that others might feel overrun:

> They [the members of the initiative] know what they are talking about….They have a completely different attitude from the representatives of the Alzheimer's

Association, who have more to do with older people, are mainly active in the field of social care and…can easily feel overrun by an architect who rushes ahead and is the spokesperson for the initiative. (#hs_031)

While planners succeeded in encouraging the representative of the Alzheimer's Association to become part of the neighbourhood planning, they found that other groups were much more difficult to reach. The local planner talked about their efforts:

Unfortunately, we found it very difficult to gain access to some of the religious and cultural communities in the neighbourhood, which is simply because there are no contact details for some of them in the telephone book or anywhere else in the neighbourhood….We tried to contact the Turkish community, for example, and we found someone. We contacted the Greek community and unfortunately, their representative could not take part. (#hs_031)

Not everyone felt invited or competent enough to participate in urban development. People were often not aware of the relevance of their own (everyday) knowledge. Published invitations to participation events did not emphasise enough that it was precisely everyday experiential knowledge that was valuable to the process. Based on these observations and findings, the research project developed storytelling interventions (see Section 3) to design and test potential strategies for more interculture in participatory planning.

4.2. "I'm More the Personal Type"

My experience with participation is rather mixed…in the sense that this is such a colourful neighbourhood, but participation usually takes place [only] in the German communities….I don't think that migrants are aware of [the opportunity to participate] at all. (#hs_015)

Both types of storytelling interventions aimed to better understand potential barriers to participation, particularly from an intercultural perspective. In the story-corner, storytellers shared the conviction that participation is "for Germans." Their stories and interpretations differed, however. While native German academics involved in participatory planning stated that "others" are simply not interested, without reflecting on their own positionality, resident groups with migration history did not feel addressed and had the impression that participatory planning was not meant for them. Stories about individual experiences with bureaucracy, participation events and different forms of social engagement added up to a more or less consistent narrative. One important topic was the storytellers' potential influence on realising their own needs in the city and/or neighbourhood, e.g., in the field of housing:

I once went to the mayor with a friend. She had not gotten an apartment she had applied for. She had registered with the housing office, and she had waited so long. She has five children, so there are seven of them in total. There was this four-room apartment and it went constantly back and forth. Then we went there. "Look, I'm tired of this. I've been waiting for years now, been on the waiting list…." Then we talked to the secretary, who was very obliging. She didn't try to block us or pretend that she couldn't do anything. Instead, she said: "Yes, wait a minute." She called and talked to someone, and then told us, "Go home, it'll be fine." After my friend got home, she called me quite happily: "Do you know who just called? I'm getting the apartment after all!" (#hs_016)

Although the successful search for a flat was the central plot of the story, the narrative behind it was the moment of self-efficacy. This experience strengthened the narrator in her experience that personal contact with the administration was a prerequisite for her to have an influence and to see the sense of getting involved at all, which was confirmed in another quote: "I'm more the personal one….I like personal contact [better]. Then I also have a face to the voice." (#hs_016)

The second story came from a storyteller who had originally immigrated to Germany from Syria. He only spoke a little German, and a language mediator helped with the translation of his story. The narrator shared that for financial/tax reasons it does not make sense to register a child's year of birth in Syria if it is born in the second half of the year. Therefore, many Syrians' registered birthday is the 1st of January. In contact with authorities, the storyteller had experienced incomprehension and annoyance on the part of the staff, as the following short example illustrates:

He tells us of his experience when he was once in hospital and then the doctor asked when the child was born. He said January 1st, and then she put the pen on the table and said: All Syrians are born on January 1st. How is that possible? (#hs_009)

The stories showed that misunderstandings and problems with bureaucracy lead to permanent barriers toward officials, institutions and bureaucracies among immigrants to Germany. However, residents without a migration history of their own also showed suspicions towards administrative decisions, which seemed incomprehensible to them. People felt they had no say in what happened in their neighbourhood since many decisions are not subject to local consultation. One example was a story about a former hostel and homeless shelter, which at the time of the intervention was used as a hostel for newly arrived refugees:

This [house], which is now the arrival centre for refugees, used to be a district-owned house, a

homeless shelter. I don't know exactly when it was privatised. Well, in the early 2000s, many municipal housing associations were sold, but also this one. Of course, it needed some renovation, but the homeless people who lived here were quite happy. They had two-bed rooms, it was cheap for them….Many of them had a job, so they lost their flat, but they had a job…they could pay for it….So, then it was rebuilt. First, it was a normal hostel. And now it's an arrival centre for refugees, a rented hostel from the district. So, I mean, that's madness—to give away this house to save the renovation costs….Of course, you can kind of get your doubts about the administration, can't you? (#hs_013)

Her story criticized "the administrative structures" and the storyteller blamed them for their "madness." She addressed the listener as an outsider, to make clear the effects of administrative action on the people in the district. The story was also about highlighting the powerlessness of city dwellers that experienced change but could not intervene. These experiences led to mistrust in participation in general and to seeing the administration as opposition rather than representative of collective action.

In the story-circle, the focus was on the direct co-production of knowledge about the neighbourhood, the communities, local identities, and living together. Participants exchanged their knowledge about the neighbourhood and negotiated positions and power relations. During the story-circle, participants took on different roles: some actively participated as storytellers and shaped the narratives. Others followed the lead and contributed stories about their experiences. One narrative particularly dominated the story-circle and was reflected in many small stories. It was about the conflict between newcomers and long-established residents as an effect of local gentrification.

Right at the beginning of the story-circle, one woman, who positioned herself as an informed and long-term resident, introduced gentrification as a topic: "I think it's still a good mix, not yet too gentrified, but [the district] is changing rapidly and many people have been displaced…in recent times" (#hs_026). This statement made gentrification a central storyline. Participants took up the theme and added their own small stories. It became clear how people define and perceive gentrification ("not that touristy," "new, fancy, modern [flats]," "places that I wish would stay" [#hs_027]). In addition to that, they developed a collective "we"—those who had lived in the district for a long time and perceived the changes, and the "others" who were new to the district and part of the change. The story of one participant will serve as an example:

They [new residents] expect nothing but the best. The first meeting where many of them came and completely beat a path to the door was when this architect presented the new plan for the supermarket parking lot: "No one told us that they were going to build here! How is that possible? We've just moved in and they're doing construction work here?" We had to show them the ropes: "What have we been living through here for the last few years? Your houses were built here, too!" (#hs_027)

The stories showed conflicts between the long-established residents and the newcomers that might have an impact on participation events and planning processes. The dynamics in the story-circle changed when a woman who self-identified as a newcomer entered the group. She talked less positively about the district than the previous speakers, and told stories about drug addicts and litter in public spaces. The agreed narrative of the conversation confirmed in many small stories had to be renegotiated due to the new participant's positionalities. This was a moment when the collective "we" of the group no longer existed and particularly the person who had opened up the conversation kept quiet. In the context of urban development, this dynamic revealed existing conflicts and different perspectives on topics of urban development.

Since planning is about "wicked problems" (Rittel & Webber, 1973), action depends on problem definition. Listening to stories from residents confronts the (emotional) complexity of neighbourhood dynamics. It is also clear, however, that stories as situated knowledge are never neutral. Storytellers adapted their stories to their counterparts (Norrick, 2010), whom they considered to come from the "outside." Most likely, they would not tell the same stories to a person working in the administration. Thus, while stories revealed how identities and positionalities were co-constructed, it was also necessary to reflect on the blind spots that will always exist. While there will be no consensus on which reading is "right" or "wrong," awareness of these dynamics may make planners more sensitive to the difference in perspectives and positionalities and their relevance to the planning problem, its definition and potential solutions.

5. Reflection on the Co-Production of Knowledge Through Storytelling

Stories are situated knowledge. Storytellers always have their point of view, based on their subjective experiences, and concerning the listener. This leads to the question of the validity of stories and their "truth" (Innes & Booher, 2015, p. 200; Koschorke, 2010, pp. 91–93). Stories can be fictional, and it is difficult to say whether they correspond to facts. More important than the question of "truth," however, is what stories reveal about the storyteller and his or her view of the world. Stories contain experiential knowledge about communities, networks, and social relations. Through storytelling interventions, everyday experiences get recognition as expert knowledge, which empowers people who did not

consider their knowledge relevant. Storytelling is part of the interpretive tradition in planning, which refers to knowledge and action as being recursively linked, rather than the former being a precondition for the latter or preceding the latter in a linear, causal chain (Davoudi, 2015).

If certain residential groups remain absent from participation events, this may be the case because they are simply not interested, as planners sometimes assume. However, storytelling interventions reveal that these formal participation events often are not "open to all," despite the lack of physical or other barriers at first sight. Even though absent residents may not be able to contribute readymade expert knowledge for planners, their stories also raise awareness concerning the one-sidedness of knowledge production if they are not heard and planners only rely on well-informed and well-articulated groups. They show that planners are not "neutral" experts who gather objective knowledge, but that their knowledge is situated within powerful discourses and social relations. When experiential knowledge is recognised by planners and people experience self-efficacy, this can lead to a long-term change in people's participation behaviour. One result can be increased participation in urban development by people who previously did not participate due to various barriers. In addition, planners gather information that is currently not accessible to them. This may actually help to fulfil planners" own expectations and hopes in terms of participatory planning.

However, storytelling cannot—and is not intended to—replace other planning tools (Sandercock, 2003, p. 12) or magically get everyone to participate. Even if storytelling increases the diversity of participants, there is always someone missing. Not everyone enjoys workshops, not everyone is willing or able to tell stories, especially when it comes to an intercultural setting (Taehwan, 2017). Language can be the greatest obstacle if people do not speak the common language equally well or at all. Another obstacle can be the fear of telling a personal story to a stranger. Some people dare to tell a story in public, others prefer face-to-face conversations, writing it down or drawing it. Therefore, other tools such as storytelling salons (Richter & Rohnstock, 2016) or digital interventions (Lambert & Hessler, 2018) like podcasts or photography might be adequate as well. Equally, storytelling does not create ideal speech situations. Even if the settings are designed purposefully to limit hierarchical power relations in the communication, these never disappear. The story-circle can especially be a situation where the academic citizens are still the most dominant. The presented storytelling interventions are not universal tools, and storytelling is not inherently inclusive. It is important to recognize the limitations.

In addition to the variations in narrative skills, it is also important to consider ethical issues: Personal stories can involve trauma. Telling them to strangers requires a high level of trust and respect. As planners usually reach out as outsiders, it is important to create a safe space for sharing stories, e.g., with the help of a trusted person as a facilitator, inform people how the stories are recorded or further used, anonymised, etc. Moreover, storytelling should always be linked to the question of (self-)efficacy and change. Simply telling stories does not necessarily lead to a participatory moment. Thinking about storytelling as a method for place-making (Timmermans et al., 2013) or urban design (Schmidt, 2018) can help planners find a field for using storytelling in participatory practice.

In terms of costs and benefits, storytelling interventions require time and skills to implement and make sense of the large amount of "data" that stories generate, whether audio recordings, written texts or images. There is no easy way, and because of the high level of in-person interaction, stories may contain information that is far from what planners consider relevant. Moreover, the question arises whether listening and working with everyday stories are still part of planning tasks and to what extent planners (are supposed to) have these competencies. Although cooperation with other professions such as architecture, social work or local studies will be useful, we nonetheless argue that stories provide planners with a sense of situated knowledge and that this embodied and personal experience is an essential prerequisite for planning as a practice of knowing.

6. Conclusions and Perspectives

Attention to situated knowledge in storytelling interventions reveals multiple perspectives on a neighbourhood. Beyond identity definitions along categories such as age, gender, or migration background, storytellers identify as Christians, foreigners, mothers or grandfathers, etc. Through stories, people reveal places where they go and feel safe, but also the circumstances in which they feel empowered to participate. Knowing people's different understandings of participation and gaining insight into their different social activities allows conclusions about participation (barriers, approach, issues). Therefore, thinking in terms of processes, stories can be important for gaining insight into engaging people at further stages. Particularly concerning the role of emotions and their effects in planning, e.g., in the context of planning conflicts, we imagine that storytelling might also be a promising approach to develop planners" professional reflection on positionality further and to promote a better understanding of potential conflict sources and solutions.

Nevertheless, this research was the first step. During the research, many ideas came up to think about storytelling in the participatory planning context further, particularly in terms of cross-media use linking online and offline methods: publishing stories in public space (via QR codes or other digital interfaces), establishing neighbourhood-based story-mapping, or stories in audio-guides that address different life-worlds and make positionalities of storytellers visible. In the end, this multi-modality and variety of methods may actually

help to address more urban residents and stakeholders through participatory planning, and to extend planning as the practice of knowledge and knowledge production beyond professionals with academic backgrounds.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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