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INVITED ARTICLES

John FRIEDMANN***AUSTRIANS-IN-THE-WORLD. CONVERSATIONS
AND DEBATES ABOUT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Abstract. John Friedmann has taught at MIT, the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, UCLA, the University of Melbourne, the National University of Taiwan, and is currently an Honorary Professor in the School of Community and Regional Planning at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. Throughout his life, he has been an advisor to governments in Brazil, Venezuela, Chile, Mozambique, and China where he was appointed Honorary Foreign Advisor to the China Academy of Planning and Urban Design.

Key words: planning theory, Hoselitz, Hayek, Schumpeter, Mannheim, Buber, Wittgenstein, Popper, Feyerabend, Polanyi.

In preparation for this talk, I read an on-line article on the *eurozine* website by the Austrian writer Wolfgang Müller-Funk, entitled: ‘So viel Österreich: Mutmaßungen über die Erfindung eines Landes’ (‘So much Austria: Conjectures Concerning the Invention of a Country’). The gist of it was that Austria being such a small and insignificant country, it is always overlooked in world affairs. In that perspective, it is as though Austria did not exist for the world. And so, the usual identity crisis.

That essay gave me the title for my talk. I would write, not about the multi-lingual *Alpenland* with its 8 million people,¹ but about Austrians-in-the-world as conveyed through the many contributions of its intellectuals, writers, and academ-

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¹ Native languages spoken in Austria, in addition to German which is the dominant language, include Austro-Bavarian, Alemannic in Vorarlberg and locally also Slovenian, Burgenland Croatian and Hungarian. To this must be added the many languages spoken by its immigrant population which number more than 700,000.

ics who for one reason or another had gone out into the world and carried something of Austria's and more specifically Vienna's history, culture, and spirit into the world beyond the country's borders. I decided I would do so by writing about some of these cultural emissaries who have shaped my own thinking as I encountered them in my wanderings over a span of more than four decades. I will focus on how they influenced my own thinking about spatial planning and development, because this is what I have studied, practiced, and professed.

Here then are the nine principal characters with whom my story will be concerned: three of them represent a spectrum of economists (Bertram Hoselitz, Friedrich Hayek, and Joseph Schumpeter); the sociologist Karl Mannheim; Martin Buber, a philosopher and Judaic scholar; Ludwig Wittgenstein, a philosopher of language; Karl Popper, a philosopher of science; Paul Feyerabend, also a philosopher of science and a critic of Popper; and Karl Polanyi, an economic historian and social anthropologist. You will have noticed that there is not a planner among them. Planning has become an inherently transdisciplinary field of studies.

In the rest of my talk, I will briefly describe how these men have shaped my thinking about planning and how they provoked me to think with them or against them. But first, let me begin with a few words about my father, Robert Friedmann, who in mid-life, became an Austrian-in-the-world like the others. An historian of the Reformation as well as a philosopher who in his later years taught at the Western Michigan State University in Kalamazoo, he encouraged and challenged my intellectual curiosity. He made me presents of books by Oswald Spengler, Lewis Mumford, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hannah Arendt, and Martin Buber, and aroused in me an interest in the philosophy of science. From him I inherited a strong sense of moral purpose, a philosophical disposition, and (somewhat belatedly) a sense of history that interrogated the possibilities of reason as a force in history. I say belatedly, because, idealist that I was from early on, I believed for longer than I care to remember that history could somehow be shaped by human reason. This belief, which I now take to have been seriously misguided, was partly why I chose to study planning rather than follow in his footsteps as an historian. Historians looked backward in time; as a young man, I wanted to look forward.

1. CHICAGO (1949–1955)

I entered the Graduate Program in Education and Research in Planning at the University of Chicago in 1949, where I remained until 1955. During two of these years, I worked for the Division of Regional Studies of the Tennessee Valley Authority in Knoxville, Tennessee, where in addition to my other duties, I also

collected the basic data for my dissertation. It was at the university, however, where I had my first encounters with Austrian scholars-in-the-world.

Let me start with Karl Mannheim (1893–1947), an Austrian by virtue of his birth and upbringing in imperial Austro-Hungary. From 1922 onwards, he taught in Heidelberg, Frankfurt, and London. During his German phase, he wrote two books that initially made him famous. The first was *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. The second, initially published in the Netherlands where Mannheim had sojourned on his way to England he left Germany in 1933 was *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction* (German edition 1935; expanded English version, 1940). It was a visionary book, despite the somewhat rambling text in which Mannheim explored the new terrain of planning by the state.

I discovered Mannheim in my first planning theory seminar at the University of Chicago. From him I learned that planning could be thought of as an intellectual pursuit in its own right, that it was more than merely a profession but a whole new perspective on social life. In *Man and Society*, his main thesis was that democratic planning could become a third path between totalitarian fascism and soviet communism; that good planning was a pre-condition for a democratic life; and that the national state could and should intervene in the market for the benefit of society as a whole. When *Man and Society* was first published, we still had to ask and answer the Hamlet-like question: ‘to plan or not to plan?’ For me, as it was for many in the immediate post-war era, the answer was self-evident. We believed in the possibilities of a constructive democratic planning by the state. More precisely, we believed in a beneficent state dedicated to the common welfare.

In his earlier book on the sociology of knowledge, Mannheim had argued for the social positionality of all knowledge, and struggled to overcome the latent relativism of what we claim to know and thus retrieve a grain of universal ‘truth’. Intellectuals, he thought, were somehow free-floating (*freischwebend*), i.e., without a fixed class position. Perhaps, then, planners could also be *freischwebend*. I will return to this question later on, in my encounter with Paul Feyerabend’s anarchistic thesis of science. Let me just say for now that, 90 years later, I believe that this idea of a free-floating intelligentsia is a fantasy, that we are all already ‘socially positioned’ as Pierre Bourdieu has taught us. Nevertheless, Mannheim’s analysis, illustrated with historical examples, is both insightful and challenging.

The next character in my story is Friedrich von Hayek (1899–1992). I met Hayek during my student years at the University of Chicago, where he held a professorship in the Committee on Social Thought.² At the time, my passing interest

² The economics department at that time included Milton Friedman, one of the gurus of the neo-liberal revolution in the mid-1970s whose brilliant lectures were delivered in a standing-room only class room. But in those days, Hayek played the role of social philosopher and for reasons that are not clear to me, was not allowed to teach in the economics department. Perhaps he lacked a Ph.D. in the discipline.

in his work was in his polemic, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), where he argued that socialist state management was a recipe for disaster that would inevitably lead to the suppression of individual freedom. Hayek was a determined opponent of all forms of planning in short, all forms of state intervention in a supposedly free market which he deemed to be just another socialist plot, arguing specifically against Mannheim's speculations concerning a possible 'third way'. Fascinated as I was by Mannheim's writings, I dismissed Hayek's libertarian polemics as irrelevant. Hayek was an outspoken opponent of the British Labour Party, and believed that even the British Conservatives had excessively compromised his principles of 'freedom'. In 1974, he was crowned with the Nobel Prize in economics, but to everyone's surprise, had to share the prize with the Swedish social scientist Gunnar Myrdal who, like Mannheim, stood counter to Hayek for a social democratic philosophy and ardently defended a planning for economic growth and development. Later, engaged in research for my own book, *Planning in the Public Domain* (1987), I gained respect for Hayek's penetrating analysis of the 18th century Enlightenment and more particularly of Saint Simon and his followers at the *école polytechnique* where planning came to be linked to civil engineering.

My third mentor from these years in Chicago was Bertram Hoselitz (1913–1995). Much less famous than Hayek, Hoselitz was an economic historian and founding editor of the first academic journal on the subject, the *Journal of Economic Development and Cultural Change* (1952), which after 60 years, is still in print. Hoselitz was also among those who initiated the multi-disciplinary study of socio-economic development, which struck me as an exciting new field of research and practice. An early issue of the journal was devoted to the role of cities in economic development and this led me to the study of urban-centred regions (in my doctoral dissertation), the core-periphery (or growth pole) theorem, and in the early 1980s, the world city hypothesis. It also launched me on a career in development planning that over the next 14 years would take me to Brazil, Korea, Venezuela, Mexico, Japan and Chile. Hoselitz was by no means the only influence during my student years in the early 1950s, but his pioneering work on the journal was a catalyst that for me brought development studies and particularly the role of cities into sharp focus.

Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950) is the fourth Austrian-in-the-world who influenced my thinking. Like Mannheim, he was born of German-speaking parents in the Habsburg Empire, more specifically in Moravia, and received his doctorate in law from the University of Vienna in 1906. A heterodox thinker, like so many of the Austrian scholars I encountered abroad, Schumpeter and his work has continued to percolate in my mind. The first of his books I read as a student and also perhaps his best known, was *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. Published just as I entered graduate school in September 1949, I was immediately swept up by its grandiose claims. But ultimately of greater significance for me was his earlier work, *The Theory of Economic Development*, which he had originally published

as a young man as early as 1911 (when he was only 28) and whose second, definitive edition appeared 15 years later, in 1926, which happens to be also the year of my birth.³ Innovation was the central idea of this path-breaking work, more specifically the role of innovation in capitalist production. It was also the idea that drove his model of business cycles the work for which among economists he is perhaps best known. But technical or institutional innovations require risk takers whom he called entrepreneurs (*Unternehmer*). The idea caught on, and research into entrepreneurship became a minor academic industry at Harvard where Schumpeter taught from the 1930s onward. For me, however, it resonated in other ways, and I linked it to Hannah Arendt's understanding of 'action' (*handeln*), by which she meant 'setting something new into the world', to make a new beginning. For me, then, planning was of interest primarily as a form of programmatic or institutional innovation.⁴

But the idea that made Schumpeter a by-word for many was a phrase he invented to describe the ruthlessness of capitalism's continuous striving for innovation which he called a process of 'creative destruction'. Development in the capitalist mode (including the state capitalism of the Soviet Union and the Chinese form of a state-managed market economy today) inevitably brings forth the new even as it destroys the old and has to be viewed comprehensively as an historical process.

It is easy to see how the related concepts of *entropy* and *negative entropy* (dissipation and articulated growth) can be inserted into Schumpeter's model that is based on a succession of disequilibria that every few decades toll the bell for an era in the grip of entropic decline, even as it announces the arrival of new culture heroes (the entrepreneurs), who initiate another cycle of capitalist accumulation. According to Schumpeter, these cyclical transitions are compressed into relatively short, intense bursts of ruthless innovation a form of primitive accumulation dominated by bundles of new technologies, both hard and soft. In the core areas of the global economy, so-called negentropic energies have somehow succeeded, at least until recent decades, in overcoming entropic degradation, calming our nerves with the illusion of universal progress. But on the world periphery the balance of forces is now mostly the other way around, and 'development' in much of the world comes often with a negative sign. The new forces (and the social, political, and economic entrepreneurs who are supposed to energize the process) never appear in sufficient numbers.⁵

³ The first English version was published in 1934.

⁴ I never had much use for planning's other signification of regulation and control (as, for instance, in urban land use planning, zoning, and subdivision control), which I associate more with land management than with planning in a context of socio-economic development.

⁵ The idea of negative entropy is the achievement of the theoretical physicist Erwin Schroedinger, another Viennese whom I probably should add to my nine Austrians-in-the-world. His 1945 essay, 'What is Life' greatly influenced my thinking on development.

2. WANDERJAHRE/JOURNEYMAN'S YEARS (1955–1969)

After receiving my doctorate in 1955, I accepted a job with the US Agency for International Development (USAID), initially to participate in a course about regional development and planning in Belém do Pará (Brazil) which had been organized by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation for a group of functionaries in the newly created Amazon Development Corporation. I remained in Brazil for more than two years on other assignments, then continued working for the USAID in South Korea. Four years as an associate professor in regional planning at MIT followed, where I did research on spatial development strategies in Venezuela. In 1965, I went to work for the Ford Foundation in Chile, where I remained until 1969. In June of that year, I moved to Los Angeles as founding professor of the new planning department at UCLA in what would eventually be the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning under Dean Harvey S. Perloff. I will end my story there. But I will bracket the 14 years I call my *Wanderjahre* or Journeyman years, because to write of these years would be another story. I will therefore pick up the thread in 1969, or more precisely in 1973, when my first commercially published book, *Retracking America: A Theory of Transactive Planning*, appeared.⁶

3. LOS ANGELES (1969–1996)

Retracking had grown out of my experiences as an advisor to the Chilean Christian Democratic government under President Eduardo Frei and was pitched at two levels. The first was as a radical re-thinking of planning that for me no longer meant a form of rationally drawing up plans for an abstract future by professionals accountable to politicians, but a completely new formulation that, for purposes of theory-building, proposed to look at planning as the reciprocal relation between knowledge and action. At its core, this was a proposal for what I called 'mutual learning' between planner and potential actors, a form of learning that entailed direct and interpersonal dialogue. The second was as a sketch of a possible but inherently utopian system of planning based on local communities with extensive citizen involvement, a Jeffersonian Republic of the Wards.

Central to my ideas for transactive planning is the role of face-to-face dialogue, which I had discovered over the course of my Chilean experience.⁷ I had bor-

⁶ For details of these 'bracketed' years, please see John Friedmann, *The Prospect of Cities*, University of Minnesota Press, 2002, chapter 7, 'A Life in Planning'.

⁷ The communicative planning paradigm which informs much Anglo-American planning today was based on a parallel concept of 'speech acts' developed by Jürgen Habermas about the same time and was introduced to planning literature by John Forester of Cornell University.

rowed the term from my fifth Austrian-in-the-world, Martin Buber (1878–1965), the Vienna-born philosopher and biblical scholar whose small book, *Ich und Du* (*I and Thou*), was originally published in 1923. Buber's idea of dialogue was based on a philosophical anthropology of what he called *das Zwischenmenschliche* (perhaps best but awkwardly translated as the inter-human), which is the concrete reality that arises when we live towards each other in personal encounters. Years earlier, I had attended a special convocation held in Buber's honor at the University of Chicago, where he appeared very much the biblical patriarch, complete with flowing white beard. I no longer remember what he said on that occasion, but the memory of that event has stayed with me through the years. Besides the dialogic principle, what attracted me to Buber was his utopian disposition as revealed in *Paths in Utopia*, originally published in 1950 (re-issued in 1996). Though not convinced by Buber's arguments for communitarian experiments, I have always been interested in utopian projects so long as they remain on a small scale and refuse to totalize their ideology. Today I would argue that innovative planning is inconceivable without a utopian imagination, which is also an expression of hope in the ever-present possibilities of social life.

Karl Popper (1902–1994) and Paul Feyerabend (1924–1994) are the sixth and seventh of my Austrians-in-the-world. I devoted the next several years to an amplification of some of the ideas expressed in 'transactive planning', specifically the critical connection between knowledge and action. I was especially interested in an epistemology that was no longer modeled on the natural sciences and the illusion that a completely objective form of knowing is possible, by which I mean the widely held belief that some ultimate certainty or Truth (with a capital T) is, in principle, attainable.

In 1975, I spent a year in London as a Guggenheim Fellow at the Centre for Community Studies (soon to be abolished by Margaret Thatcher), where I came upon Feyerabend's newly published *Against Method: An Outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge*. I was enthralled by this book's message, which was a head-on attack on Karl Popper's *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach* (1972). Popper was considered to be the world's leading philosopher of science (a science that took physics as its highest and foremost expression and as the model for evaluating all other scientific endeavors). This signification of science is peculiar to Anglo-Saxon countries, however, and is much more narrowly conceived than the German *Wissenschaft* (used more often than not in its plural form) that extends to all sorts of academic research and as such has no particular methodology attached to it. In any event, planning was not a 'science' as such, but an active engagement with world-changing practices of various kinds. My knowledge/action paradigm of planning thus posed the question of what sort of knowledge was sufficiently reliable for practice, and how such knowledge might be obtained.

Popper and Feyerabend were of different generations, but both were of Viennese origin. Popper had the foresight to leave Austria already in 1937, accepting a teaching position in Christchurch, New Zealand in 1937 where he spent the war years writing his two-volume work, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. A manifesto of liberal thinking, this book was very popular for a time, especially in Britain and the United States. Unlike his friend Hayek, however, Popper allowed for some social welfare functions of the state to mitigate human misery, but planning by the state, which in any case, had only a tangential connection with welfare as such, was not one of them. Like Hayek, he rejected system-wide planning as an unacceptable limitation on freedom.

After the war, Popper moved to Britain, where he lectured on the philosophy of science at the London School of Economics. Feyerabend eventually became one of his students. He had stayed on in Austria after the country was annexed by Nazi Germany in 1938 and was eventually drafted into the *Wehrmacht*. Sent to the eastern front, he returned badly wounded, remaining physically impaired for the rest of his life. He had met Popper at a scientific gathering in Salzburg in 1948 and three years later secured a scholarship from the British Council with which he hoped to study at Cambridge under Ludwig Wittgenstein. By the time he arrived, however, Wittgenstein had died, and Feyerabend opted to study under Karl Popper instead. Although initially enthralled by his teachings, he eventually came to reject Popper's rule-bound methodology for engaging in scientific work with its claims for the inevitability of scientific progress through a process of falsification. The self-proclaimed anarchistic theory of science which Feyerabend championed (but was careful to hedge in with the condition that it assumed the existence of scientific research in the broad sense) declared that methods could not be prescribed. Both Popper and Feyerabend looked for evidence in support of their claims but came to very different, indeed opposite conclusions. In the end, Feyerabend rejected the notion that the only valid form of 'knowing' was rooted in objective science. Instead, he argued for a multiplicity of *knowledges* that avoided ultimate truth claims altogether. In this regard, he appears to have approached the pragmatist position of John Dewey and Richard Rorty, as well as our own field of research, as argued, for instance in Leonie Sandercock's work in *Towards Cosmopolis* (1998) and its sequel, *Cosmopolis II* (2003).

In any event, Feyerabend's polemic had created an intellectual/philosophical space for what, in a 1978 paper entitled 'The Epistemology of Social Practice', I called social learning. Allow me to close my encounter with these two brilliant, if wayward Viennese philosophers by quoting a short passage from Feyerabend's major work:

Knowledge [...] is not a series of self-consistent theories that converges towards an ideal view; it is not a gradual approach to truth. It is rather an ever-increasing ocean of mutually incompatible (and perhaps incommensurable) alternatives, each single theory, each fairy tale, each myth that is

part of the collection forcing then others into greater articulation and all of them contributing, via the process of competition, to the development of consciousness. Nothing is ever settled, no view can ever be omitted from a comprehensive account (p. 30).

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) is another Viennese philosopher who was formative in my life as a planning academic. Like so many others, I have always been drawn to the enigmatic Wittgenstein, to the man as much as his work. Multi-talented, a rebel without cause, he had come from Vienna to pursue his philosophical studies at Cambridge. For all his reputation and fame, however, he actually published little in his life time, most famously his *Tractatus* (1921), which he chose to present as a series of numbered paragraphs and aphorisms that had their first incarnation, as was so much of his other work, written on index cards (*Zettel*) that he liked to sort into boxes. I go to the end of the *Tractatus*, beginning with aphorism 6.522, where I read:

6.522 There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical [...].

6.54 My propositions serve as elucidation in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it. He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright).

7 What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence (p. 151).

By the mid-1970s, I started to think about a book that I came to call *The Good Society*. It took some time to put it together, and was published in 1979 by the MIT Press. It was an unconventional work in which I tried to find a foundation for my own thinking about a form of planning that would no longer be dominated by the state. Somewhat like Wittgenstein's famous *Tractatus*, I wrote it in an aphoristic style, interlaced with poems and quotations from a diversity of authors. I thought of it like a musical composition, with themes, sub-themes, variations, repetitions, and so forth. Although it never became one of my more popular books, it was important for me to have written it. As I later wrote in a note to myself,

I have penetrated into Wittgenstein's 'zone of silence' in a double sense: of what cannot be said in propositional language and that other zone of silence, the world of planning by the state, which is the anonymous world of non-dialogic communication. *The Good Society* is a book about the moral basis of social relations and social practice, a book concerning ethics [...]. One major difference with Wittgenstein, however, is this: my ethics is not propositional, but something that can only be pointed to, because it is entirely contained within relations of dialogue, and thus cannot be spoken of.

I come now to Karl Polanyi (1886–1964), my final encounter with an Austrian mind at large. From the highly theoretical, somewhat abstruse philosophical issues of *The Good Society*, I now returned to more manageable questions of socio-economic development, particularly a development that would increase the

life chances of the poorest in the world periphery. The neo-liberal revolution was already underway and had shunted much of the industrialized West's productive power to the new spaces of industrialization in South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, and ultimately China and India. Some critics called this period beginning in the 1980s as the 're-capitalization of capital', another instance of 'creative destruction'. In what is now called the global North, income inequalities were on the rise as was unemployment. At the same time, much of the rest of the world was sliding into deeper poverty, while the rich countries converted many of their former economic aid programs by channeling support to non-profit organizations to work in rural villages in Africa and elsewhere. But the non-profits were clearly incapable of attacking the multiple structural problems that beset most of the so-called developing (actually de-developing) countries. An effort by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in the 1970s to promote the idea of Basic Needs as a proper focus for national development policy had come to nothing, and by the 1980s, 'development' itself had lost much of its sheen as a subfield of economics.

It was under these circumstances that I decided to write a book on an alternative development that would at least partly be freed from the language of neo-classical economics and its categories. I had been reading some of Karl Polanyi's essays which had been published after his death as *The Livelihood of Man* (1977) and was deeply impressed by his argument for embedding the economic sphere of production into the matrix of social and cultural relations. Here is what I subsequently wrote in a note to myself:

[...] proponents of an alternative development question the assertion that 'creative destruction' is inextricably linked to the story of human progress. They demand that the question of what furthers human life be examined on its own merits. If social and economic development means anything at all, it must mean a clear improvement [or betterment] in the conditions of life and livelihood of ordinary people.

According to Polanyi, economic relations 'denote bearing reference to the process of satisfying material wants'. They include both economizing relations and substantive relations with the environment without which human life cannot be sustained. For Polanyi, 'to study human livelihood is to study the economy in this substantive sense of the term'. This methodological commitment led him to look at institutions and, more broadly, at socio-cultural relations through which our relations with the natural environment are mediated through the process of gaining a livelihood.

Like several other of my Austrians-in-the-world, Karl Polanyi was born in the second of the two capitals of the dual monarchy, and studied philosophy and law at both the Universities of Budapest and Vienna. During World War I, he served in the Austrian army, and from 1924 onwards, worked in Vienna, where among multiple editorial activities, he also lectured at the People's University or *Volk-*

sheim. Soon after Chancellor Dolfuss, following Mussolini's example in Italy, had succeeded in abolishing the young Republic's democratic institutions, Polanyi departed for London. Eventually appointed to teach at Bennington College, Vermont, he spent the years of World War II writing his masterful treatise, *The Great Transformation* (1944). Following the war, he was appointed to a chair at Columbia University (1947), but because his wife Ilona, a former communist, was not permitted to enter the United States, the family settled in Pickering, Ontario (Canada), from where Karl commuted to New York for his lectures. His other major work, *Trade and Markets in the Early Empires*, was published in 1957 and established his name also as an economic anthropologist.

Polanyi's substantive economics, focused as it was on people's livelihood, led me to the threshold of the household economy, the central role of which is the production of life and livelihood through the allocation of its own disposable labor time between the production of use values in the moral economy and the production of exchange values in the money economy. It was this fundamental distinction and its focus on the household as a universal social institution (rather than on the utility-maximizing individual) that led me to the concept of *social empowerment* and a view of poverty that I defined as a lack of access to the bases of social power. This was the central theme of my 1992 book, *Empowerment: The Politics of Alternative Development*.

4. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

With this I have come to the end of my encounters with Austrians-in-the-world. But I think it will have become plainly evident that my Austrian or, as I would now prefer to call it, my European heritage, has profoundly shaped my intellectual development. The varied contributions of these nine men (and ten including my father) have been contributions to the world of the mind that is shared by all of us and knows no boundaries.

Let me close with a few observations about planning and its meditations on theory. As I mentioned earlier, I am interested in planning as an innovative activity. This is something I learned from Hannah Arendt, another European-in-the-world: innovation, she wrote, is to set something new into the world; it is an initiating action, a new beginning. This, I suppose, is the reason I ended up working in international development, where my focal interest, the role of cities, could also be observed at close range. My definition of planning for the purposes of theory is the relationship between knowing and acting, and where this has led me is the experience of planning as part of the ongoing historical process of a globalizing world.

We are not often aware of this, but the acceleration of social and spatial change that we see under conditions of development is actually an acceleration of *local* history, and we are aware of this only in retrospect. Even in a so-called global age, history is not moving at the same speed everywhere. Vienna today is not the Shanghai that burst out of its shell in the 1990s; spatial planning in Austria is far more cautious and, on the whole, more regulatory than in China. But to argue from this that development planning is a kind of soft technology for guiding (or ‘steering’) history would, of course, be nonsense. Because when we observe things more closely, what we discover is that the historical practices by the multiple actors in city-building processes on the scale of a Shanghai are actually not prescribed in some holistic plan (Chinese like Austrian planners are supposed to draw up strategic long-term plans), but rather form a dynamic pattern of interacting forces so complex that we are unable to grasp the pattern as a whole. As a colleague, Michael Leaf, has written, China’s formal planning practice is more like a ritual than a guiding force. I do not know if this is the case also for the more leisurely pace of Austrian planning. In any event, planning theory is for me part of a theory of socio-spatial change. Could such a theory, if one existed, also be called a theory of history? I am not sure of it, but doubt it. Whereas planning is normative, history has no finality. It just goes on and on and on.

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