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Advocacy planning: were expectations fulfilled?

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ABSTRACT

Civil society engagement in the spatial planning of neighborhoods has been an increasing trend from the middle of the 1960s. Advocacy planning has been a branch of planning theory and a strategy for activist planning practice ever since. This study surveys the properties of advocacy planning cases reported in English in academic journals and books between 1980 and 2020. The main purpose is to provide a reality check intended both for scholars teaching advocacy planning and activists practicing it: Do preconceived expectations and claims concerning the features and effects of advocacy planning correspond with reality as portrayed in the twenty identified case studies? To what extent have advocacy planning processes been successful? The empirical results show that community goals were wholly or partly achieved in the great majority of cases. Further, some expectations held by planning scholars turned out to be quite different from reality, especially regarding how confrontational advocacy planning is in practice, how much attention is given to means and substance relative to ends and process, and how participatory and empowering the process designs are.

KEYWORDS

Advocacy planning; activist planning; planning theory; community resistance; community empowerment

Introduction

The purpose of the article is to show what advocacy planning has actually been in practice since 1980 and to compare the characteristics of real-world cases with the assumptions and expectations expressed by planning scholars in the period 1965–1979. Advocacy planning was introduced in the mid-1960s. The article studies how the ambitions of advocacy planners were fulfilled in the long term, after the early wave of enthusiasm for this new approach to community planning had cooled down. That is why only case studies from 1980 onwards are included. Attention is mainly given to properties related to activism and planning, and not least to the success or failure of the advocacy efforts in spatial planning. In teaching as well as in radical practice planners need to know whether advocacy planning has proven to be worth the effort.

On advocacy planning

Advocacy planning is here defined as a form of activist planning where the planners are affiliated with civil society,¹ where their motivation springs from commitment to a client group or a client

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community they do not belong to, and where they make and promote a plan for this community on behalf of the client. Activist planners do planning-related work in an activist style and in (explicit or implicit) opposition to plans, policies or anticipated interventions prepared or started up by public authorities or private stakeholders with the power to affect spatial organization.² An activist style implies taking a clear stand on a planning controversy and following up with partisan activities beyond desk work. This means close cooperation with client community members, practical problem solving vis-à-vis third parties, and frontline contact with adversaries in meetings, negotiations and sometimes direct action.

Activist planners are hands-on and engaged in specific cases, actually working on the planning process or the plan for a particular area. They may belong to groups or movements that are members of umbrella organizations one step removed from the concrete planning situation and the stress and strain of direct action and conflict. A number of such networks are active on the citywide, national and international scales. Some are umbrellas over poor people's local grass-roots organizations, such as Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI).³ Other umbrella organizations offer planning advice to individuals and communities or administer the networks and resource supplies of progressive planners, such as the Planning Aid section of the Royal Town Planning Institute (UK)⁴ and the Planners Network (USA), respectively. The work of umbrella organizations is treated as activist planning only when they are directly engaged in a local planning process.

The term advocacy planning is here reserved for planners from civil society. This has important consequences, as it leaves out initiatives led by governments, public institutions and commercial business companies. Planners hired by for-profit firms to advance company interests are excluded, as this is neither civil society activity nor activist planning. More specifically, campus-based outreach led by planning academics in colleges or universities is outside the scope of this study. However, oppositional political parties are considered part of civil society, allowing the inclusion of cases where Hezbollah and the South African Communist Party act as advocacy planners.

The literature on urban regeneration offers many accounts of vulnerable communities receiving a helping hand toward capacity building and empowerment by external actors. However, the latter are most often affiliated with the political-bureaucratic structure rather than civil society.⁵ Moreover, the cases seem to deal with co-production rather than planning in opposition to outside intervention.

Note that clientless advocacy is ignored in this study, even if Davidoff wrote about – and sometimes practiced – ‘*ideological advocacy* in which the advocate represented his own point of view, rather than that of a client’.⁶ A case in point is the feminist advocacy outlined by Jacqueline Leavitt: ‘Feminist advocacy planning broadens earlier advocacy planning by incorporating issues related to women’.⁷

It is not clear in all cases whether commitment to the client community is the external experts’ overriding consideration. Planners assisting a community may simultaneously pursue a substantive cause, for example, protection of the natural environment. When such a political motive

¹Ross, ‘Impact of Social Movements’, 434.

²Sager, ‘Activist Planning’.

³Mitlin, ‘A Class Act’ analyzes the relations between SDI support professionals and local organizations of the urban poor across the Global South.

⁴Parker and Street, *Enabling Participatory Planning*.

⁵Adamson and Bromiley, ‘Community Empowerment’; Bailey, ‘Understanding Community Empowerment’; O’Hare, ‘Resisting the Long Arm’.

⁶Davidoff et al., ‘Suburban Action’, 12. Peattie, ‘Reflections’, 88, associated ideological advocacy with radical planning.

⁷Leavitt, ‘Feminist Advocacy’, 184.

dominates, labels such as radical planning, ideological advocacy or critical-alternative initiative may fit better. In some cases, this is a difficult delimitation problem that admittedly requires good judgement.

Davidoff's seminal article on advocacy planning from 1965⁸ sparked off lively academic debates. One of them dealt with the issue of plural plans, an idea already explored by Paul Davidoff in a co-authored article on the choice theory of planning.⁹ Appropriate planning action cannot be prescribed from a position of value neutrality and a unitary conception of the public interest. The message was that interests with contrasting values and goals should therefore launch different plans, and democratic decision-making bodies should somehow choose among them or amalgamate them into a compromise.

A significant contribution made by the Davidoffs on the practical-political side was the argumentation against exclusionary zoning in the suburbs. It was based on the conviction that open zoning would give people of color many more housing opportunities. The quest for plural, competing plans provided legitimacy to advocacy planning, while the quest for open zoning established a policy field for meaningful applications of the advocacy planning mode. While these themes came nicely together in Paul and Linda Davidoff's work for an equitable society, it is necessary to simplify in the present article format. The discussion on plural plans and exclusionary zoning is therefore set aside in the following. For practical reasons, attention is concentrated on the debate on who would be helped and what could be achieved by advocacy planning. Critical points as well as optimistic claims are presented and used for analytic purposes in the present article.

Paul Davidoff's theoretical work matched his practice. He was a founder of the Suburban Action Institute in 1969. This advocacy agency challenged exclusionary zoning in the suburbs and was important for the development of the 'open suburbs' movement. The Institute's program and goals were spelled out in an article he co-authored with two close colleagues at the Institute in 1970; Linda Davidoff and Neil Newton Gold.¹⁰ Each of the two co-authored several journal articles and reports with Paul Davidoff on advocacy planning and on opening the suburbs to affordable housing development. Paul was Linda Stone Davidoff's first husband.

Paul Davidoff died in 1984 and experienced just the first three years of Reagan-style neoliberalism in the US. However, already one year into the presidency it was clear to him that:

This is a terrible time for those who wish to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, the white and the black, the male and the female. Under Reagan the gaps grow larger, the affluent are favored. It is not a time to mourn; now more than ever it is a time to organize for change.¹¹

The ever-increasing inequities in many countries under neoliberal influence throughout the following decades may help to explain the continued academic interest in advocacy planning.¹² Theoretical interest notwithstanding, no more than twenty well-described cases have been identified from 1980 to 2020. Although the number may not be impressive, these studies say much about what advocacy planning is in practice. Eight of the reported cases took place in Europe,

⁸Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Pluralism'.

⁹Davidoff and Reiner, 'A Choice Theory'.

¹⁰Davidoff et al., 'Suburban Action'.

¹¹Davidoff, 'Comment', 180.

¹²Allmendinger, *Planning Theory*; Benner and Pastor, 'Collaboration'; Dadashpoor and Alvandipour, 'A Genealogy of the Five Schools'; Feinstein and DeFilippis, *Readings in Planning Theory*; Parker and Street, *Enabling Participatory Planning*; Reardon and Raciti, 'Advocacy Planning in the Age of Trump'; Reaven, 'Neighborhood Activism'; Reece, 'In Pursuit'; Whittemore, 'Exclusionary Zoning'. Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance* offers an in-depth analysis of the advocacy planning group Architects' Renewal Committee in Harlem, where Paul Davidoff sat at the board of directors.

another nine in the Global South and three in North America. The Global South cases originate in eight different countries. Because of the low numbers, results and comments are not given for each separate world region.

Advocacy-related planning modes – contemporaneous and in the wake of Davidoff

The ideas of citizen participation, plural plans and professional advocacy gave rise to several varieties of activist planning around the time of Paul Davidoff's 1965-article. Here, I only mention some new planning modes that are close to advocacy planning in chronology and redistribution intent.

Planning with the aim of advancing equal opportunities existed years before Paul Davidoff provided the theoretical underpinning of advocacy as a particular style of planning. The organization Planners for Equal Opportunity (PEO) was officially launched in August 1964, at the convention of the American Institute of Planners (AIP). Paul Davidoff and several other advocacy planners were prominent members. Walter Thabit was Temporary Chairman, then President of PEO from 1964 to 1970. His long-lasting work on the Cooper Square Alternate Plan (New York) from 1959 onwards is an early example of advocacy planning.¹³

Not surprisingly, the equal opportunity planners supported advocacy planning. At the 1967 convention of AIP, PEO presented the Board of Governors with the following formal resolution:

Advocate Planning Recommendations: Poor and minority groups must have substantial control over plans and programs which affect their lives; advocate planners should be supplied to poor and minority groups affected; planners are urged to work as advocates for such groups.¹⁴

The PEO was disbanded in 1974. A year later, when questioned on what he had learned that could help strengthen radical movements in planning and design, part of Walter Thabit's answer was: 'Most importantly, seek to advance the concept of advocate planning, of planning with and for the people affected by our plans. Down with elitist planning.'¹⁵

While advocacy plans were civil society initiatives, it did not take long before some planners working in government agencies found that advocacy for the poor might be possible also from that position. Norman Krumholz's equity planning in Cleveland is the most well-known.¹⁶ He was 'advocating minority interests through agency efforts', and he put the substantial capabilities of his staff 'in service to those who *need* planners, not in service to those who *have* planners'.¹⁷ Krumholz applied the term advocacy planning in the heading of some early presentations of his work, and it is clear that he regarded equity planning as advocacy planning from the inside of public agencies.¹⁸ In fact, he concluded a conference paper by saying that 'I am beginning to think that all planning agencies in our older central cities should be, or will soon become, advocates for the "have-nots" of our society'.¹⁹ Some years later Norman Krumholz and John Forester agreed that: 'Born of the desire to serve the urban poor, equity planning and "advocacy planning" are siblings – related but distinct'.²⁰

¹³Reaven, 'Neighborhood Activism'.

¹⁴Thabit, *A History of PEO*, 19.

¹⁵Thabit, *A History of PEO*, 42.

¹⁶Krumholz, 'Retrospective View'.

¹⁷Krumholz, 'Planning in Cleveland', 3 and 2, respectively.

¹⁸Krumholz, 'Planning in Cleveland' and 'Advocacy Planning in Cleveland'.

¹⁹Krumholz, 'Planning in Cleveland', 7.

²⁰Krumholz and Forester, *Making Equity Planning Work*, 210.

While Krumholz was playing with open cards in his workplace, others saw a planning role for undercover agents.²¹ Some planning scholars imagined a combination of advocacy planning and bureaucratic guerillas in public agencies.²²

Empowerment planning is yet another advocacy-based mode of planning. The term may be more often encountered in broad capacity-building community planning and health promotion than in spatial planning. It is sometimes used to characterize the community outreach efforts of universities. A well-documented case is the work of students and faculty from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign seeking to enhance the quality of life in East St. Louis's poorest residential neighborhoods.²³ This capacity-building project started in 1987 and can be seen as campus-based advocacy planning.

Transactive planning was developed by John Friedmann from the late 1960s until its book-length presentation in 1974.²⁴ In an early formulation he describes action planning, where there is no gap between planning and implementation, involving the planner directly in community action. Regarding this aspect of his transactive ideal, Friedmann concludes that the planner's 'success will in large measure depend on his skill in managing interpersonal relations', and he suggests that 'this conclusion is implicit in all discussions on "advocacy planning"'.²⁵ There is little in Friedmann's writings to indicate an interest in advocacy planning. Yet he regarded the advocacy planning movement as '(t)he beginnings of the transactive style',²⁶ which was his own favored mode of urban planning. It was based on dialogue between planners and clients and was a precursor to communicative planning – first articulated in John Forester's PhD dissertation from 1977.²⁷

A word on article structure: An outline of method precedes the three sections presenting empirical results. Case properties, degree of success, and reality check of preconceptions about advocacy planning are analyzed. The results of the analysis are summed up before the twenty cases are listed in the Appendix.

Method

The method section explains how the search for cases is undertaken and considers the possibility of biased results. This is a literature study of the twenty well-described advocacy planning cases that have been identified by the present research. Information is drawn from all available academic journal articles and book chapters dealing with the cases, thus not only from the publications referred to in the case list of the Appendix.

Delimitation and search

The search for advocacy planning cases to this study is delimited in several ways:

- Only contributions written in English are considered.
- The case, as well as its publication, must have taken place in the period 1980–2020.

²¹Needleman and Needleman, *Guerillas*.

²²Hartnett, 'Bureaucratic Guerillas' and Mogulof, 'Advocates and Adversaries'.

²³Reardon, 'Enhancing the Capacity' and 'Empowerment Planning'.

²⁴Friedmann, 'Notes' and *Retracking*.

²⁵Friedmann, 'Notes', 317 and 318, respectively.

²⁶Friedmann, *Retracking*, 280.

²⁷Forester, *Questioning and Shaping Attention*.

- Cases must contain elements of spatial planning, that is, deal with the coordination of practices and policies affecting spatial organization and the preparation for decisions relating to the location and distribution of activities demanding land.
- The searched data bases are Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science and the *Journal of Planning Literature*. The magazines *Shelterforce* and *Progressive Planning* have also been searched for cases.
- The case must be reported in at least one scholarly journal article or book chapter.
- Case descriptions must include sufficient detail. That is, the available sources dealing with a case must give information about the contentious issue, the involved community and advocate planners, their goals, activism, planning-related activities and achievements.

The search for a specific term, such as ‘advocacy planning’, generates different collections of articles and book chapters from different data bases. First, the databases do not catalogue the same sets of publications. Second, some bases search for the term in titles, keywords and abstracts (Scopus), while others permit search in the entire text of articles and chapters (Google Scholar), thus giving more hits. The cases in the Appendix would be found neither in Scopus nor in the Web of Science by using ‘advocacy planning’ as the search term.

An opinion of Davidoff’s was that ‘(t)he view that equates physical planning with city planning is myopic’.²⁸ A number of planners in various sectors agreed, and advocacy planning came to have an effect in several fields of work, such as architecture, law, social welfare planning and mental health service.²⁹ This study nevertheless concentrates on spatial planning for pragmatic reasons: The delimitation makes it possible to stay within the article format, and the author’s expertise is in the field of spatial planning theory. Besides, a large part of planning studies is dealing with the spatial organization of cities, making it reasonable to focus on the spatial aspect also when analyzing the advocacy planning literature. One consequence is that a few cases of potential interest to planners are left out, for example, Attili’s account of his and Leonie Sandercock’s film project advocating for the Collingwood Neighborhood House in Vancouver.³⁰ The project was, in Attili’s words, ‘an attempt to embody a new form of advocacy planning research’.³¹ Obviously, still other cases are excluded because the search period starts in 1980. Two examples are Guy’s story about Hank Williams Village, which was planned as part of a local resistance strategy in Uptown Chicago in the late 1960s,³² and Aponte-Parés’s analysis of the East Harlem Real Great Society 1968–1970.³³

The search for advocacy planning cases was global, and numerous combinations of search terms related to activism, advocacy, participation, planning, resistance, protest, community empowerment, capacity building, citizen initiatives and the like have been tried. Nevertheless, many additional cases were found by using the ‘snowball method’ of sifting through the reference lists of relevant articles and chapters. For cases meeting the above requirements for inclusion, the portrayal of the advocacy planning processes in the references of the Appendix is supplemented with information from additional sources when available, such as other articles, conference papers, PhD dissertations, research reports and internet pages.

Even if the search for scholarly analyzed advocacy planning cases has been extensive, it is unlikely that the collection is complete. One reason is that cases reported in literature outside planning,

²⁸Davidoff, ‘Advocacy and Pluralism’, 335.

²⁹See, respectively: Progressive Architecture, ‘Advocacy Planning: What It is’; Mogulof, ‘Advocates and Adversaries’; Cloward and Elman, ‘Advocacy in the Ghetto’; Guskin and Ross, ‘Advocacy and Democracy’.

³⁰Attili, ‘Ethical Awareness in Advocacy’.

³¹Ibid. 213.

³²Guy, ‘We Shall Not Be Moved’.

³³Aponte-Parés, ‘Lessons from El Barrio’.

urban geography and development studies may apply keywords different from those usually selected in planning-related literature. Undetected cases may also be published as chapters in monographs and anthologies, which seem to be less easily found than journal articles.

Potential sources of bias

The authors of the academic articles and book chapters describing and analyzing the twenty advocacy planning processes seem to have sympathy with the activists and the advocacy mode of resistance. They consistently write from an oppositional community perspective. The arguments of government agencies or private developers are peripheral in the accounts. This may sometimes lead to a positive bias when the results of the advocacy planning are recorded. For example, positive indirect effects may be surmised by the authors even when the planning effort ended without leaving any useful tangible impact for the client community: Cohen-Blankshtain sees it as ‘far from trivial and ... as a significant success’ when a stalled plan has allegedly become a model for other planning processes.³⁴

One aim of this research is to find out how successful advocacy planning processes have been in practice. It is problematic then, that seven of the twenty case studies are written by internals, meaning that at least one of the authors is a member of the advocacy organization or closely connected with it. Those who are internal to such organizations may have a stronger motive than those who are external to them to describe the advocacy effort and its outcome in euphemistic terms. This eventuality turns out to cause only minor difficulties, however. In two cases, the internal author does not conclude about the outcome, as it is uncertain. In a third case, the internal author is self-critical to an extent that leaves no room for suspecting sugar-coating of the outcome description. In two other cases, facts about the outcome have been checked. Only two of the seven cases with internal author display a positive outcome description that is very hard to check.

Publication bias occurs when journal or book editors’ endorsement of study results is based on the direction or significance of the findings.³⁵ It is known from other academic fields that experiments and tests with ‘positive’ results are published more often than research showing that something does not work. If this tendency is present in the field of spatial planning, the success rate of the advocacy planning cases in the Appendix may be higher than for the whole population of advocacy planning processes.

Properties of the advocacy planning cases

This section surveys common characteristics of the reported advocacy planning cases. The first part deals with the problems of the client communities and how their situation affected advocacy planners’ work. The second part is about the advocacy planners, who they are and what they do.

Client community characteristics

The dangers facing communities opting for the advocacy planning strategy are in nearly all cases very serious. The housing problem is the issue most frequently dealt with. The problem has two

³⁴Cohen-Blankshtain et al., ‘When an NGO Takes on Public Participation’, 75. Dawson, ‘District Planning’, takes a similar position in the case of the Institute for Local Democracy.

³⁵Franco et al., ‘Publication Bias’, 1502.

main aspects, the need for more affordable housing units and the threat of gentrification and displacement. Nearly half of the neighborhoods risk demolitions and destruction. The issue calling for advocacy planning is related directly to housing in two thirds of the cases, while the prospect for most of the other communities was general deterioration of the entire neighborhood.

The political costs for governments and powerful interest groups of trying to override a poor community are typically lower than the costs of provoking a well-off and resourceful one. Consequently, all the communities scared into advocacy planning are poor or working-class. They most often lack resources of the type needed to negotiate effectively with governmental and political bodies throughout expert-oriented planning processes. In about half of the cases, the community has the additional and associated disadvantage (seen from a power perspective) of being informal and/or consisting of ethnic or religious minority people. Poor neighborhoods exist both in inner cities and on the urban fringe, and the reported advocacy planning cases split quite evenly between center and periphery.

Planning for economic and general development of the neighborhood is part of the issue in nearly half of the cases. The task of the advocate planners is often to help reverse a downward economic and social spiral. Contrary to what might be expected from the ongoing extensive discourse on natural environment and urban greening in many countries, the need for parks and open public space was a main issue in only one out of the twenty cases. Greening is mentioned as a goal in only two cases.

Another international discussion turns on the role that identity, recognition and respect – in short, identity politics – has got in political rhetoric to the neglect of class and economic differences. Ethnic discrimination, sometimes in combination with menace to neighborhood identity or character, is part of the contentious issue in at least six of the cases. Nevertheless, only a couple of cases list goal formulations focusing on identity.

It was realized in the late 1960s that lack of contact with inclusive residents' organizations could be a problem in advocacy planning, as the preferences and aims of activist community leaders might deviate considerably from those of other residents.³⁶ In several of the reported cases, a group representing the community had to be established by the outsiders, or the advocate planners had to make do interacting with a few activists or other unorganized residents. This situation reflects the low level of resident organization in many of the twenty communities, which is an important reason why the community resistance was organized as advocacy planning in the first place.

The vulnerable community invited the advocate planners in two thirds of the cases. The advocacy organization itself decided to intervene in some unorganized communities. Advocacy planning is facilitated by a mutually trustful relationship between an external planning entity and – directly or indirectly – the members of the client community. The external partner is an NGO (local or national) or nonprofit in a majority of the cases. The interaction with residents can be mediated by municipalities, chiefs, clan leaders, councils, action committees or other types of local organizations. The externals can also communicate directly with the residents – unorganized or in residents' associations. However, a broadly based residents' association was the advocate planners' main contact in only four communities.

³⁶Gilbert and Eaton, 'Who Speaks'.

Advocacy planners and their tasks

The main task of the advocate planner is typically to draw up some sort of spatial plan for the neighborhood, often giving special attention to technical issues. The outcome is in most cases an alternative to an official plan. Additional tasks may be community organizing, enumerations, and implementation of more participatory processes than designed by the local authorities. This corresponds to the qualifications of the advocate planners, usually being planning expertise, technical competence, access to an influential network and knowledge of the intricacies of the bureaucratic and political system. Most advocacy NGOs are well positioned to lobby, approach donors and marshal support from universities as well as nonprofits in the field of community development.

Already in the mid-1960s it was conceived as the task of advocate planners to affirm the client's position 'in language understandable to his client and to the decision makers he seeks to convince'.³⁷ The Dolphin House case (No. 2 in the Appendix) exemplifies such translation work on the part of the advocate planners. Motivating and teaching tenants to apply the human rights approach 'took several months and became a continual educational process throughout the campaign'.³⁸ Community activists had to rephrase their complaints and demands into a human rights rhetoric and make the Dublin city government acknowledge its obligations concerning people's right to housing that does not endanger health. The stronger position of the United Nations' human rights over the last decades has opened for new argumentative strategies in some activist planning cases, as seen, for example, in advocacy for the Bedouin Arabs in the Negev,³⁹ the account of the Human Rights City Alliance in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,⁴⁰ and the displacement resistance of Wat Tai in Bangkok (No. 17 in the Appendix).

Is there a division of work between the advocate planners and activists in the client community? The external experts are adapting the community's complaints, goals and ideas for discussions and negotiations with bureaucrats and politicians in the formal planning process. One hypothesis could therefore be that advocacy NGOs usually seek cooperative solutions, while the community activists are more inclined to take advantage of the many types of provocative direct action stirring the politicians and creating mass media interest. The case studies confirm that the advocating NGOs prefer cooperative modes of interaction with the political decision-makers and/or opposition within the frames set by the authorities. However, community behavior is not in line with the hypothesis. The twenty reported cases do not reveal high degrees of direct action in the struggling neighborhoods. Only six communities showed clear instances of oppositional direct action. The others concentrate on interaction with the advocate planners – providing information, attending meetings and commenting on documents and web pages – supplemented by sporadic and moderate protest behavior. One can surmise that the engagement of an advocacy NGO external to the client community is a palliative to local activists and makes the community less likely to pursue the strategy of direct confrontation with the authorities.

It has been observed in reported cases of community-driven activist planning, that artists and university scholars sometimes play a part in community resistance.⁴¹ Activist-minded members of these occupational groups did also take part in some of the advocacy planning cases. An artist led the process for realization of The Orchard (Glasgow), and artists managed the planning of the

³⁷Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Pluralism', 332.

³⁸Hearne, 'Creating Utopia', 138.

³⁹Amara et al., *Indigenous (In)Justice*.

⁴⁰Smith, 'Local Responses to Right-wing Populism'.

⁴¹A list of forty-two community-driven activist planning cases can be obtained from the author, please email tore.sager@ntnu.no. Six cases on the list are marked as involving scholars, and another six cases are marked as involving artists.

civic hub and the community center in the Public Works case (London). Scholars worked in Kamza (Tirana) as members of Engineers Without Frontiers. University academics formed STOP (Simir Tanimayan Otonom Plancilar / Autonomous Planners without Borders), launching an alternative to the Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project in Istanbul.⁴² The InterAct civic hub was created by scholars and their students in the Public Works case (London). Moreover, at an early stage (1987), the Voorhees Neighborhood Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago helped the South Armor Square Neighborhood Coalition (Wentworth Gardens) to develop an alternative neighborhood plan. Finally, University College Dublin partnered with Dolphin House Community Development Association to guarantee the scientific integrity of the community's *Dolphin Decides* report.⁴³

At least five of the initiatives making use of advocacy planning were led by women. This goes for the two artist-led processes just mentioned, as well as the Wentworth Gardens resistance, the branch of Save the Children cooperating with the Institute for Local Democracy, and the Vosloorus Steering Committee.⁴⁴ The gender representation of the Vosloorus project, which received assistance from Planact, was nearly seventy per cent female-headed households. Planact's policy 'was the involvement of women in all aspects of the project, including construction'.⁴⁵

Summing up: The choice of the advocacy planning strategy follows from the combined effects of certain community features and the discriminating practices and insensibilities of governments. Discrimination takes the form of not facilitating development, undercompensating for evictions and under-providing basic services compared to well-off neighborhoods. The poor communities subject to such policies tend to be weakly organized, and in Europe and North America their members do in many cases belong to ethnic minorities. The case material strongly indicates that a community's situation has usually become very onerous before it decides to start an advocacy planning process. In addition to dire material prospects, denial of recognition and respect often mobilizes people.

Success and failure in advocacy planning

This section first discusses how the speaking-on-behalf-of element in advocacy planning may affect internal tension and thus the effectiveness of resistance. Thereafter, the process outcomes recorded in the case material are used for investigating the success rate of the advocacy planning strategy.

Speaking on behalf of the client community: tensions and outcomes

A criticism of advocacy planning repeatedly raised in the planning literature is that the external experts talk on behalf of the neighborhood's residents.⁴⁶ Pushing things to extremes: Can a young, white, male planner adequately grasp the problems of an elderly, poor, black woman? Will he be able to translate her stories about daily life in a run-down, crime-ridden neighborhood into planning parlance and convey them to decision-makers in a way making an impression?⁴⁷

⁴²Uysal, 'An Urban Social Movement', 16.

⁴³DHCDA, *Dolphin Decides*, 27.

⁴⁴Himlin, 'Lessons from Vosloorus', 242.

⁴⁵Ibid, 243.

⁴⁶Attili, 'Ethical Awareness'; Park et al., 'Do Residents of Low-income Communities Trust'; Stieglitz, 'Advocacy Planning and the Question'.

⁴⁷Marshall Kaplan, leader of an advocacy planning team, admitted that 'we erred in assuming that we could convey the objectives of residents of West Oakland to the city task force'. Kaplan, 'Advocacy and Urban Planning', 76.

Other critics have voiced doubts about whether it is at all ethical to speak on behalf of other adults accountable for their actions.⁴⁸ Their principled critique threatens to knock the bottom off external advocacy as a legitimate mode of spatial planning.

In his 1965 article, Davidoff takes some of the sting off later criticism by suggesting that advocacy planning can go hand in hand with organizing in order to empower client communities, enabling them to speak for themselves.⁴⁹ Five years later, he and his co-authors acknowledged the problem that ‘only a narrow line exists between representation of a client’s interests and attempted imposition of the planner’s values on his client when he acts as organizer as well as technician in advocate projects in the ghetto.’⁵⁰ They go on to explain that the new strategy for circumventing the speaking-on-behalf-of difficulty is simply to admit that they are speaking for themselves as white planners who want social change.

Since outsiders have difficulties, in principle, with eliciting, translating and representing the problems and preferences of the client community, one might assume that advocate/client tensions would emerge and adversely affect the ability to achieve community goals by advocacy planning. Kirk thinks that ‘(t)he problem of defining interests may easily lead to severe argument in practice, with the “advocate” isolated from more “radical” or “reactionary” opinion from within the “client” community’.⁵¹ Fainstein and Fainstein concur that ‘there may be significant conflict between the advocate planner and his client’.⁵² This does not seem to cause much of a practical problem, however, judging from the following three observations.

First, quite few advocate/client conflicts are reported. Two significant exceptions are due to diverging aims:⁵³ (1) Bimkom (Case 4 in the Appendix) faced ‘vocal objections from the people of Isawiyah, who viewed the plan as unfair, harmful to their property rights, and involving disproportionate cost ... to a few families while leaving other families to enjoy the benefits’.⁵⁴ (2) Beyond Housing (Case 19) proposed transit-oriented development (TOD), while ‘the baseline survey of ninety-seven residents and riders of MetroLink found deep opposition to the very idea of TOD’.⁵⁵ Besides, both Dolphin House (Case 2) and Barrio San Jorge (Case 9) experienced tensions between residents’ immediate needs and advocate planners’ long-term aims. Hearne admits that ‘at times, it was decided to compromise on certain aims in order to achieve some immediate progress, rather than continuing to struggle for longer-term, more large-scale, transformations’.⁵⁶ Schusterman and Hardoy assent that ‘(w)hen community activities meant immediate and tangible improvements in their material conditions of life, many neighbors took part; but where there were no immediate, tangible benefits, they were reluctant to participate’.⁵⁷

Second, in the cases of Bimkom and Beyond Housing, where internal controversy was significant, advocate planners and residents were able to develop solutions putting the conflict to rest.

⁴⁸Alcoff, ‘The Problem of Speaking’; Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’.

⁴⁹Davidoff, ‘Advocacy and Pluralism’, 333: ‘In order to make his client more powerful politically the advocate might also become engaged in expanding the size and scope of his client organization’.

⁵⁰Davidoff et al., ‘Suburban Action’, 20.

⁵¹Kirk, *Urban Planning*, 142.

⁵²Fainstein and Fainstein, ‘City Planning and Political Values’, 346.

⁵³A third internal conflict developed in Vosloorus (Case 14 in the Appendix), see Winkler, ‘For the Equitable City’, 72. Delays of financial transfers from the Metropolitan Municipality made it impossible for Planact to continue paying the local contractors. Vosloorus Steering Committee (VSC), representing the client community, lost trust in its advocacy organization Planact. The ‘breakdown of trust resulted in a breakdown of Planact’s power to plan on behalf of the VSC’. However, this serious conflict was unrelated to the speaking-on-behalf-of property of advocacy planning.

⁵⁴Cohen-Blankshtain et al., ‘When an NGO Takes on Public Participation’, 70.

⁵⁵Swanstrom, ‘Equity Planning’, 115.

⁵⁶Hearne, ‘Creating Utopia’, 141.

⁵⁷Schusterman and Hardoy, ‘Reconstructing Social Capital’, 103–104.

The objections died down once Bimkom incorporated some of the dissatisfied families' requests into the plan. TOD became more acceptable in the Beyond Housing case when the planners reduced density and simultaneously explained to skeptical community members that more housing within walking distance of the metro station would increase the likelihood of retail development. Maybe critics of the speaking-on-behalf-of practice of advocacy planning underestimate the mutual understanding that can emerge from dialogue and creative problem solving between external planners and community members.⁵⁸

The third observation indicating that advocate/client tension is not a serious practical problem, is that the fulfillment of community goals is as high in the above-mentioned four cases experiencing advocate/client tension as in the processes where no disagreement between the collaborating parties is on the record. Among the cases with internal dissonance, only the Bimkom planning in Isawiyah ended with low attainment of goals.

The Bimkom and Beyond Housing cases, which had the most serious advocate/client disagreements, were both reported by scholars external to the advocacy planning process, as the references in the case list of the Appendix show. Could it be that authors directly involved as advocate planners take little interest in revealing internal tensions? If so, this still does not seem to be an important cause of potential under-reporting of problems in the advocate/client relationship. The reason is that internal controversy is seldom recorded even in the cases reported by scholars not involved in the activist planning process. The tension-reporting shares are two out of seven for directly involved authors and three of thirteen among authors external to the advocacy planning process. The numbers do not give reason for suspecting that the authors' position relative to the process biases reporting of conflict and thus complicates the interpretation of goal achievement rates. This is in line with the discussion of internal versus external authorship in the method section.

Success rates in advocacy planning

The reported outcomes of the advocacy planning processes have been compared with the goals of the communities. The twenty cases were divided into four kinds to facilitate detection of differences in background variables between successful advocacy planning and processes with scant accomplishment. Each case is here identified by its number in the case list of the Appendix as well as a keyword for easy recognition.

Type 1: Minority communities

(3) Dahmesh, Arab; (4) Isawiyah, Arab; (5) Sulukule, Roma; (18) British Columbia, Simpcw First Nation; (19) Normandy School District, African American; (20) Wentworth Gardens, African American.

Type 2: Informal communities

(1) Kamza, Albania; (9) Barrio San Jorge, Argentina; (11) Kirtipur, Nepal; (12) Orangi town, Pakistan; (13) San Juan de Miraflores, Peru; (14) Vosloorus, South Africa; (16) Kurasini, Tanzania; (17) Wat Tai, Thailand.

Type 3: Communities assisted by political parties

(10) Haret-Hreik, Lebanon, Hezbollah; (15) S'swetla, South African Communist Party.

Type 4: Mixed or majority communities

(2) Dolphin House, Dublin; (6) Divis Flats, Belfast; (7) Roman Road Bow, London; (8) Gorbals, Glasgow.

⁵⁸Forester, *Planning in the Face of Conflict*.

Three of the five advocacy planning processes with very low goal achievement take place in Type 1 minority communities. The Roma neighborhood of Sulukule was completely destroyed, and the two Arab neighborhoods were left in a limbo, neither demolished nor given permission for necessary construction. The fourth case with seemingly weak result is the Type 2 community of San Juan de Miraflores. The advocacy planners did not succeed to involve the municipality, and the case study does not indicate that the district development plan was implemented. The fifth advocacy process accomplishing little is the Type 3 case that took place in the S'wetla part of Alexandra township, Johannesburg. The Communist Party opposed the attempt of the Alexandra Renewal Project to relocate shack dwellers in order to create room for building a bridge. However, the communists were not strong enough to stand up to the ruling African National Congress party that initiated the Project.

The three other cases in minority communities (Simpchw territories, Normandy and Wentworth Gardens) were successful or ended with at least some goal achievement. The same can be said for six of the Type 2 informal settlement cases, although the modest success of the Wat Tai resistance consists only in delaying eviction for at least thirteen years. The initiatives in Type 4 communities also accomplished something, although the results in the Roman Road Bow neighborhood are still somewhat uncertain at the time of writing. Finally, Hezbollah – working with a Type 3 community – was powerful enough to challenge the Lebanese government and manage the rapid reconstruction of bombed-out neighborhoods in south Beirut.

The achievement of advocacy planners in the case studies may not match the initially high hopes that expertise at the disposal of the poor would (1) counter the arguments and public interest rhetoric of government and private corporation planners, and (2) make the injustice of their development proposals apparent, so that plans would have to change. Robert Goodman may have been right to criticize reliance ‘on the availability of counter-professionals to bring about basic changes in our society’. His verdict that advocacy planning is just ‘allowing the poor to administer their own state of dependency’⁵⁹ nevertheless seems harsh, as it ignores the concrete neighborhood improvements that are after all taking place in many of the cases studied here.

Summing up: Community goals were wholly or mostly achieved in nine of the twenty cases and partly achieved in another six. Hence, the resistance strategy of advocacy planning was not a waste of time and energy in the great majority of reported cases. Most often, community activists and advocate planners managed to improve housing conditions or overall neighborhood quality. Besides, some advocacy planning scholars indicate that capacity-building benefits might accrue to client communities in the long run despite short-term defeat. Losing a fight is one thing, but not being able to fight is another and considerably worse outlook.⁶⁰

Preconceptions of advocacy planning versus case evidence

This section compares planning scholars’ expectations about advocacy planning with the descriptions of actual practice in the four decades of cases from 1980 to 2020.

Both the proponents of advocacy planning and their critics have put forward statements about the way advocacy planning is most likely going to work. The potential for empirical scrutiny of the claims of advocacy planning was recognized at an early stage. Skjei pointed out in 1972 that ‘it has suggested operational strategies and tactics for professionals and meaningful hypotheses for

⁵⁹Goodman, *After the Planners*, 63 and 212, respectively.

⁶⁰Berkley, ‘Progress and Protest’, 55; Blecher, *Advocacy Planning for Urban Development*, 159.

empirical research by academics'.⁶¹ The debate on its ethics and possible political impact that took place in the 1960s and 1970s, as well as more recent sources, have been researched for this article. The aim is not to provide a full set of references dealing with advocacy planning, but simply to identify assumptions and expectations that can be empirically tested, that is, compared with reality as it is depicted in the identified case studies. The purpose is to check the match between presumptions and what has actually been going on. Teachers of planning theory will acquire a foundation for judging whether their advocacy planning lectures are in accordance with textbook representations or with real-world applications.

Some claims about advocacy planning may in principle be possible to compare with practice but still be hard to validate on the basis of available texts. For example, Kirk points to the assumption 'that if only people are given the opportunity to be heard, then their opinions will influence the outcome of government decisions'.⁶² Reece claims that '(a)dvocacy planning has been a means of introducing humanism into the highly technical and bureaucratic structures which characterize local, state, and federal government'.⁶³ Further, Hartman holds that 'the style of advocacy planning ... is that of professional-speaking-to-professional',⁶⁴ and Kraushaar alleges that when a neighborhood fights for and wins any services or amenities through advocacy planning, 'it usually does so at the expense of other similar, but less well-organized, neighborhoods'.⁶⁵ These are among the statements that are not further examined here due to insufficient information in the case descriptions.

However, the scholarly planning literature has dealt with several questions about advocacy planning that have generated answers possible to check empirically by scrutinizing the case studies. Eight such questions and some proposed answers are shown below, as is the degree of correspondence between recorded answers and the reality described in reported advocacy planning cases. The questions are selected because they were given much attention in the debate on advocacy planning throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

Q1 Is advocacy planning partisan in practice?

Scholars' expectations: 'Advocacy in planning consists in developing and presenting plans that advance the interests of a particular group or class, rather than that of "the public interest" or the "general good", however defined'.⁶⁶ Advocacy planning becomes the means of professional support for the client's claims about how the community should develop.⁶⁷ It becomes 'pluralistic and partisan – in a word, overtly political'.⁶⁸

Case evidence re Q1: The collected case studies confirm that advocacy planning is partisan in practice as well as in theory. Advocate planners confront an adversary that in sixteen of the twenty cases is a governmental body or a project organization formed by local government. The case of the Engineers Without Frontiers working in Kamza is an exception, as the NGO – the activist planning entity – cooperated with the municipality to work in the informal settlement.

Q2 Does advocacy planning encourage conflict?

⁶¹Skjei, 'Urban Systems Advocacy', 11.

⁶²Kirk, *Urban Planning*, 140.

⁶³Reece, 'In Pursuit of Twenty-first Century', 304.

⁶⁴Hartman, 'The Advocate Planner', 38.

⁶⁵Kraushaar, 'Outside the Whale', 93.

⁶⁶Davidoff and Davidoff, 'Advocacy Planning Polarizes', 34.

⁶⁷Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Pluralism', 333; Fainstein and Fainstein, 'City Planning and Political Values', 347; Mazziotti, 'The Underlying Assumptions', 45.

⁶⁸Peattie, 'Reflections', 81.

Scholars' expectations: Advocacy planning is too confrontational in practice,⁶⁹ and the 'advocate helps to structure direct confrontation'.⁷⁰ It is defensive, purely negative, a vetoing operation.⁷¹ 'Advocacy planning ... risks offering a view of a socially balkanized society in which different groups are perpetually fighting one another'.⁷² Jaakson is a dissenting voice, claiming that the advocate planner's role is not entirely of an adversary nature: '(T)he advocate planner is a mediator between the people he represents and higher levels of government ... The advocate planner is more a diplomat ...'.⁷³

Case evidence re Q2: The allegation that advocacy planning is a particularly confrontational mode of activist planning is not confirmed by the four decades of practical cases. The degree of confrontation is investigated by ranking types of direct action on a three-level scale, as shown below. The composite type 'ordinary direct action' includes protest rallies, demonstrations, marches, mass meetings and sit-ins, among other means. Ordinary direct action is sometimes difficult to distinguish from campaigning – such as distribution of information material, lawn signs, bumper stickers, workshops, letters to newspapers, street banners, flyers and network building.

Activism scale:

Weak, 1 point:	Staying away from the official process, organizing, community meetings, cultural and educational events (no ordinary direct action)
Medium, 2 points:	Public protest and ordinary direct action without confrontation, symbolic physical intervention, campaigning
Strong, 3 points:	Legal proceedings, occupations, disturbance at construction sites, forceful actions in the streets or in the adversary's offices or at meetings

Thirteen cases employed activism only at the lowest level. This includes Divis Flats, which is in a special position, as one group of residents, the Divis Demolition Committee, applied rather extreme direct action.⁷⁴ This may be one reason why Divis Residents' Association, with which the advocacy planners cooperated, chose a strategy with more moderate direct action. The average direct-action score for the twenty cases was 1.65, while the average for forty-two community-driven activist planning cases without external advocacy has been estimated to equal 2.02.⁷⁵ Judging from case descriptions in academic literature, community-based activist planning not led by outsiders seems to be generally more confrontational than advocacy planning in practice.

It is possible that the level of direct action is affected by fear of serious reprisals from developers or authorities. Low levels of provocative direct action would then correspond to a high percentage of cases where members of the community lack title to their house or are vulnerable to harassment for other reasons. This is the situation in the majority of the twenty advocacy planning cases.

The Davidoffs list other strategies than direct action that are often used in advocacy processes: 'Community organization; political leverage over elected officials; foundation grantmanship; media skills and other forms of community outreach'.⁷⁶ Still, Piven argues that advocacy planning is a disservice to marginalized groups, because it diverts them from street protests and other direct actions.⁷⁷ Several other planning scholars agree with Piven.⁷⁸ The low level of direct action in

⁶⁹Starr, 'Advocates and Adversaries'.

⁷⁰Wisner, 'Advocacy and Geography', 26.

⁷¹Peattie, 'Politics, Planning, and Categories', 87.

⁷²Cenzatti, 'Marxism and Planning Theory', 440.

⁷³Jaakson, 'Decentralized Administration', 19.

⁷⁴Page, 'Appropriating Architecture', 108.

⁷⁵A list of the forty-two cases can be obtained from the author, please email tore.sager@ntnu.no. The list contains case name, year, location and main reference for each case.

⁷⁶Davidoff and Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Urban Planning', 119.

most of the cases studied here strengthens the hypothesis that advocate planners' initiatives can render community residents more passive. Causing less activism may well be regarded as a disservice, but – as shown in the previous section – it does not imply low achievement of community goals.

Q3 Do advocate planners assist marginalized client communities?

Scholars' expectations: Low-income, marginalized communities and excluded interests are defended.⁷⁹ Fainstein and Fainstein make it part of their definition that advocacy planning is 'planning for the poor by planners who are accountable solely to their clients'.⁸⁰ Parker and Street assert that '(a)dvocacy approaches include addressing the immediate needs of those who are excluded and who may suffer spatial and environmental injustices'.⁸¹

Case evidence re Q3: The reported instances of advocacy planning between 1980 and 2020 clearly confirm that the client communities of the advocate planners are disenfranchised, working class or poor. This is as expected by scholarly authors, and no collected case contradicts their belief.

Q4 Is there an emphasis on values and goals rather than means?

Scholars' expectations: 'The advocacy planning process places a major emphasis on citizen control of the planning process so that the citizens' value inputs will enter into the outcome of urban decision-making'.⁸² Values are explicitly stated, and the focus is on community goals.⁸³ The client group determines the goals of the plan.⁸⁴

Case evidence re Q4: Some critics assumed that advocate planners would have to spend much time creating agreement in the community on a consistent set of goals and articulating the community's preferences in a way that decision-makers could understand and respect. This assumption is rejected by the great majority of case studies. Just four case descriptions strongly indicate that much attention was given to goal discussion and preference elicitation. In general, it does not seem to be a serious problem in advocacy planning that ends steal attention from means.

Q5 Do advocate planners concentrate on process at the expense of plans?

Scholars' expectations: Paul Davidoff is among those asserting that advocate planners will not only offer planning input but be proponents of specific substantive solutions.⁸⁵ Blecher agrees that advocacy planning has 'a major focus on providing concrete plans and programs'.⁸⁶ Others disagree and claim that advocate planners fail to offer positive alternatives.⁸⁷ These critics profess that advocacy planning puts emphasis on process, while little attention is given to the substance of the plan.⁸⁸

Case evidence re Q5: The skepticism against advocacy planning as a creative mode well-suited for producing alternative plans, emerged in the late 1960s and was still expressed by merited planning scholars twenty-five years later.⁸⁹ It is therefore noteworthy that the reported cases do not

⁷⁷Piven, 'Whom Does the Advocate Planner Serve?'

⁷⁸Arnstein, 'But Which Advocate Planner?'; Funnyé, 'The Advocate Planner as Urban Hustler'; Hartman, 'The Advocate Planner'; Kravitz, 'Mandarinism'.

⁷⁹Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Pluralism', 334; Fainstein and Fainstein, 'City Planning and Political Values: An Updated View', 270; Keyes and Teitcher, 'Limitations of Advocacy', 225; Kirk, *Urban Planning*, 140; Lane, 'Public Participation', 293; Peattie, 'Politics, Planning, and Categories', 88.

⁸⁰Fainstein and Fainstein, 'City Planning', 345.

⁸¹Parker and Street, 'Neo-advocacy', 448.

⁸²Blecher, *Advocacy Planning for Urban Development*, 12.

⁸³Allmendinger, *Planning Theory*, 152; Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Pluralism', 333; Kaplan, 'Advocacy and the Urban Poor', 97.

⁸⁴Fainstein and Fainstein, 'City Planning', 346.

⁸⁵Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Pluralism', 333; Mazziotti, 'The Underlying Assumptions', 45.

⁸⁶Blecher, *Advocacy Planning for Urban Development*, 158.

⁸⁷Peattie, 'Communities and Interests', 151.

⁸⁸Keyes and Teitcher, 'Limitations of Advocacy', 225; Marris, 'Advocacy Planning', 144; Piven, 'Whom Does', 34.

provide any empirical basis for such discredit. In nineteen of the twenty identified cases, it is evident that an alternative to the government's planning proposal was prepared and most often completed. The only process that seems to be weak on plan-making was run by the South African Communist Party in S'wetla.

In some NGO-assisted advocacy processes, it is likely that the community side of the conflict had at its disposal considerably more planning resources than the municipal agency. This is not a situation found only in the Global South. For example, according to Swanstrom, 'not a single one of the twenty-four governments in NSD [Normandy School District] has a full-time planner on staff', while Beyond Housing was a well-funded, high-capacity, regional nonprofit.⁹⁰

Q6 Are advocacy planning processes participatory or are they representative, that is, based on the outside experts' interaction with a few contact persons?

Scholars' expectations: Kennedy maintains that advocacy planning is primarily representative (purely talking-on-behalf-of) rather than participatory.⁹¹ Kravitz elaborates, holding that 'the many variations on the basic advocacy model attempt to provide effective representation through some combination of community or interest organization, technical assistance, and advocacy appropriate to the planning context'.⁹² Peattie joins in, anticipating that 'it is the organizations that appear to "represent" ... "communities" which are likely to be the natural clients for the advocate planner'.⁹³ Breitbart worries that community people are excluded from the technical procedures of plan-making, such as data collection, map drawing and bureaucratic manipulation.⁹⁴

Case evidence re Q6: The hypothesis of a process based on representation is rejected in more than half of the twenty cases. This means that the advocacy planning in these communities is participatory. The advocate planners will still speak on behalf of the client community in negotiations with officials, but due to the broad involvement (not necessarily through established residents' associations), many residents in the neighborhood will be familiar with the message that the community wants to convey to the decision-makers via the advocate planners. This puts the community in a better position to check that the advocates act in the community's best interest.

Processes based on representation usually leaves more room for the advocates' prior understanding and their own observations of the community's problems, which might be seen as an advantage by the outside experts. On the other hand, the legitimacy of speaking on behalf of the community rests on the quality of citizen involvement and the transparency of the process. No matter which middle way is chosen by the outsiders, the advocate planner acts as an intermediary and interacts with the government on a community mandate.

Q7 Are advocacy planning efforts designed for capacity building and lasting empowerment or for approval of the client community's proposals in one particular planning process?

Scholars' expectations: Hartman believes that '(t)he critical point of any advocacy work is the building of political organization',⁹⁵ and others agree that advocate planners might be engaged in organizing to strengthen the client's negotiation power.⁹⁶ The Davidoffs declare that '(t)he long-range goal of advocacy should be to reduce the dependence of the citizen-client on the skills of a professional advocate'.⁹⁷

⁸⁹Marris, 'Advocacy Planning'; Peattie, 'Communities and Interests'.

⁹⁰Swanstrom, 'Equity Planning', 111.

⁹¹Kennedy, 'Transformative Planning', 4.

⁹²Kravitz, 'Mandarinism', 264.

⁹³Peattie, 'Reflections', 82.

⁹⁴Breitbart, 'Advocacy in Planning', 64; Breitbart and Peet, 'A Critique of Advocacy Planning', 102.

⁹⁵Hartman, 'The Advocate Planner', 37.

⁹⁶Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Pluralism', 333.

⁹⁷Davidoff and Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Urban Planning', 119.

Blecher considers it a unique characteristic of advocacy planning ‘that the unsophisticated client participates at all levels of the planning process’, and so a capacity-building transfer of skills has to take place.⁹⁸ Advocacy planners will rebuild urban communities by transforming residents through time-consuming community education and participation.⁹⁹ The opposite view was also voiced, claiming that advocacy planning occurred at the expense of organizing.¹⁰⁰ There is ‘a lack of organisation, capacity-building effort and infrastructure to create self-sustaining activist communities’ by advocacy planning.¹⁰¹ Rather than long-range planning, ‘advocacy planning was geared toward short-range problem-oriented planning and assistance in the development and implementation stages’.¹⁰²

Case evidence re Q7: Advocacy planning can have a narrow focus, persuading the government to adjust one particular plan to satisfy community wishes. Alternatively, the advocates can have a broader empowerment ambition and aim to enable the community to take care of its own interests in various kinds of future interaction with external developers and authorities. Organizing, consciousness-raising, capacity building and education are then keywords. Scholars have been divided in their views on which strategy advocate planners should, or would be likely to, follow. The split seems to be present also among activists practicing advocacy planning since the 1980s. About half of the twenty cases report use of the narrow strategy, while the other half employ the broader empowerment strategy.

The conditions for resistance differ widely among the client communities, and there are several reasons why the empowerment strategy is dropped in a good part of them. For example, the project of the Engineers Without Frontiers in Kamza was meant to go on for a short time only, and there was no room for a sustainable empowerment strategy within its budget or timespan. In Sulukule, demolition was imminent and would break up the Roma community if implemented. The immediate urgency left little opportunity for effective empowerment. In still other cases, the advocacy planning entity may have lacked competence in community empowerment.

Q8 Do advocate planners concentrate on technical assistance?

Scholars’ expectations: Kaplan insists that advocacy by professional planners is a synonym for technical assistance.¹⁰³ Others concur that advocacy planning is often reduced to a technocratic practice,¹⁰⁴ and that building operational competence will be critical.¹⁰⁵ Vasu holds a different view: ‘Rather than attempting to reduce planning considerations to questions of expertise by contending they are technical, the advocate planner accepts the strong normative content in all planning questions’.¹⁰⁶

Case evidence re Q8: Several scholars commenting on advocacy planning agree that this mode is often little more than a technocratic exercise. The technical knowhow is usually offered to further the implementation of a particular project. As about half of the studied processes were designed for broader community empowerment, it makes sense to expect a split between processes intended to generate social capital and processes built around the use of goal-oriented technologies. This would be similar to the bisection between cases with an empowerment goal and cases with a narrower project focus. Such a split is close to what was found in this study. Technical and legal planning expertise was at the core of the advocate planners’ work in twelve cases. But the assumption of

⁹⁸Blecher, *Advocacy Planning for Urban Development*, 160.

⁹⁹Hatch, ‘Some Thoughts’, 103.

¹⁰⁰Kennedy, ‘Transformative Community Planning’, 95.

¹⁰¹Parker and Street, ‘Neo-advocacy’, 448.

¹⁰²Blecher, *Advocacy Planning for Urban Development*, 13. Breitbart, ‘Advocacy in Planning’, 64 agrees.

¹⁰³Kaplan, ‘Advocacy and the Urban Poor’, 100 and Kaplan, ‘Advocacy and Urban Planning’, 68, 77.

¹⁰⁴Kennedy, ‘Transformative Planning’, 4; Ross, ‘Impact of Social Movements’, 435.

¹⁰⁵Hatch, ‘Some Thoughts’, 109.

¹⁰⁶Vasu, *Politics and Planning*, 52.

technocratic advocacy planning processes was rejected in seven of the other cases. This indicates that advocacy gives room for a wider range of resistance-building approaches on the part of the external experts, than the skeptics anticipated. Organizing, network building, cultural appearances and social capital formation are types of activity that take place in a significant part of advocacy planning processes.

The eight questions above are closely related to features of advocacy planning that, taken together, capture the essence of its main ideas:¹⁰⁷ Some communities are unable to stand up to pernicious external interventions on their own. Such weak communities need outside expert assistance. The outsiders engage as partisans, not working from a public interest perspective, and need to make their values and goals clear. This makes the process potentially confrontational, as the activists must defend community interests against that of other stakeholders as well as public planners conceiving their mandate as attending to the common good. An inclusive, fair and transparent process is thus crucial to find a path forward that is based on agonism instead of antagonism. However, even with laudable democratic procedures the problems of a poor and marginalized community do not vanish with the positive result of one single planning process, so broader empowerment of the community is required. For this purpose, residents must be mobilized through participatory activities, and the advocates' services must be organizational and capacity-building, not only technical.

Conclusion

Peattie succinctly thought of advocacy planning as 'the forwarding of the purposes of groups at the margins of representation in the processes of social management'.¹⁰⁸ This idea gained tremendous appeal in justice-minded planning circles. In Vasu's national mail survey over the period 1974–1975, twenty per cent of the 775 participating US planners selected advocacy as their role preference.¹⁰⁹ 'Davidoff's paper ... is a superb example of those instances where a word becomes a symbol, a banner for an emerging movement, the rallying-cry of a new generation'.¹¹⁰ The lasting significance of the 'word' *advocacy planning* is not only due to continued and increasing social-economic inequity and its destructive impact on societies.¹¹¹ For teaching purposes in academia, it is just as important that the advocacy model is a source of inspiration for campus-based outreach and service-learning in poor neighborhoods,¹¹² and that it is easy to grasp and stands out from other frequently taught modes of planning, such as disjointed incrementalism and communicative planning. Moreover, the position of advocacy planning is sustained by its relevance for new justice-related themes that have made their way into planning theory, like environmental justice and equal right to the city. The partisan stance of advocacy planning is also readily compatible with the anti-consensus ideas of agonism and critique of post-politics.

Despite this theoretical correspondence and the potential applicability to topical social justice issues, nearly all scholarly reported advocacy planning cases between 1980 and 2020 center round traditional problems of housing, displacement and neighborhoods sliding into disinvestment, crime and middle class out-migration. Advocacy planning does not seem to be tested out

¹⁰⁷Davidoff, 'Advocacy and Pluralism'.

¹⁰⁸Peattie, 'Politics, Planning, and Categories', 92.

¹⁰⁹Vasu, *Politics and Planning*, 85.

¹¹⁰Faludi, *A Reader*, 236.

¹¹¹Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*; Wilkinson and Pickett, *The Spirit Level*.

¹¹²Hardin et al., *From the Studio to the Streets*, 2–3.

in scholarly reported cases dealing with urban greening, local climate policies and protection of natural environments. For the close-to-home problems to which it *has* been applied, advocacy planning has a good track record. The present study demonstrates that this mode of activist planning can bring victory to the client community when combatting unwanted interventions. Proof of accomplishment is provided by a large majority of the examined cases, despite the fear expressed by several planning scholars that activism-weakening external assistance would be a disservice to marginalized communities.

An important aim of this research is to check whether scholars' expectations concerning advocacy planning did in fact materialize. The empirical results show that some of its central characteristics have in practice been as would be anticipated from theory. However, several contrarities have also come to light. Advocacy planning processes are generally less confrontational than predicted by planning academics. Stronger emphasis is in practice put on forming instruments and drawing up spatial plans than skeptics could foresee. Moreover, a larger share of the studied processes encompassed elements that are less technical, more participatory and potentially more empowering than critical scholars thought likely. All in all, the empirical evidence confirms that advocacy planning is consistently partisan on the side of poor communities and can point at least to partial accomplishment of the client's objectives in most cases. Balancing the continued academic interest against the limited number of well-described cases, Vasu's conclusion from 1979 still seems reasonable more than four decades later: '(T)he impact of advocacy has been more significant than its detractors would care to concede, yet far less profound than its proponents once envisioned'¹¹³.

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¹¹³Vasu, *Politics and Planning*, 50.

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Appendix: Overview of reported cases

Scholarly articles and book chapters on advocacy planning are scattered around broad fields of research. Only ten of the twenty collected cases would have been found, had the search been limited to the fifty most cited journals in the thematic groups 'geography, planning and development' and 'urban studies' according to Scimago Journal Rankings for 2019.

The list below divides the planning cases into three regions of the world: Europe, Global South and North America. Which countries belong to each region is determined by the Wikimedia list of countries by regional classification. Each case in the list below is identified by the name of the activist organization or – in case number eight – by the name of the place. Dates in the list note the starting year of the case activism. Most of the cases are described and analyzed in more than one academic publication. The references selected for the list below are the most informative with regard to the activists' planning and oppositional activities.

List of collected cases of advocacy planning 1980–2020

No.	Case	Place	Year	Reference
Europe				
1	Engineers Without Frontiers in Bari (EWF-Bari) assisting the Municipality of Kamza	Tirana, Albania	2006	Monno and Cosma, 2009
2	Rialto Rights InAction Group assisting the Dolphin House estate	Dublin, Ireland	2009	Hearne and Kenna, 2014
3	Arab Center for Alternative Planning (ACAP) assisting the unrecognized Palestinian village of Dahmesh	Lod, Israel	2007	Milner and Yacobi, 2018
4	Bimkom – Planners for Planning Rights assisting the Palestinian neighborhood Isawiyah	East Jerusalem, Israeli annexed territory	2004	Cohen-Blankshtain et al., 2013
5	Sulukule Platform (SP) / Sinir Tanimayan Otonom Plancilar (STOP) assisting inhabitants of Sulukule	Istanbul, Turkey	2005	Kocabas and Gibson, 2011
6	Planning Aid Unit of Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) assisting the Divis Residents' Association	Belfast, Northern Ireland, UK	1983	Hardy, 1991
7	Public Works assisting the Roman Road Bow Neighborhood (RRBN)	London, UK	2014	Catenaccio and Khonsari, 2017
8	The Orchard / artist Amanda Currie contributing to the regeneration of the Gorbals neighborhood	Glasgow, Scotland, UK	2001	Morris, 2011
Global South				
9	International Institute for Environment and Development – América Latina (IIED-AL) assisting Barrio San Jorge	Buenos Aires, Argentina	1988	Schusterman and Hardoy, 1997
10	Hezbollah assisting residents of Haret-Hreik	Beirut, Lebanon	2006	Fawaz, 2014

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No.	Case	Place	Year	Reference
11	Lumanti assisting squatter communities relocated to Kirtipur by the Vishnumati Link Road project	Kathmandu, Nepal	2002	Sengupta and Sharma, 2009
12	Orangi Pilot Project – Research and Training Institute (OPP-RTI) assisting residents of Orangi town	Karachi, Pakistan	1980	Hasan, 2006
13	Institute for Local Democracy (IPADEL) assisting the residents of San Juan de Miraflores	Lima, Peru	1987	Dawson, 1992
14	Planact–Johannesburg assisting Vosloorus Steering Committee (VSC)	Vosloorus, South Africa	2000	Winkler, 2009
15	South African Communist Party (SACP) assisting residents of the S'wetla neighborhood in Alexandra	Johannesburg, South Africa	2006	Sinwell, 2012
16	Center for Community Initiatives (CCI) assisting residents of Kurasini settlement	Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania	2007	Hooper and Ortolano, 2012
17	Four Regions Slum Network (FRSN) assisting the Wat Tai community	Bangkok, Thailand	2004	Shelby, 2017
North America				
18	Center for Indigenous Environmental Resources (CIER) assisting Simpcw First Nation	British Columbia, Canada	2007	Hardess and Fortier, 2013
19	Beyond Housing assisting the Normandy School District (NSD)	St. Louis, Missouri, USA	2010	Swanstrom, 2018
20	Chicago Area Project (CAP) advocate planner assisting Wentworth Gardens (WG) activist women organized in South Armor Square Neighborhood Coalition	Chicago, Illinois, USA	1987	Feldman and Stall, 2004