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## ID 1427 | DISSECTING THE URBAN(IZED) BINOCULARS. 'LOOKING AT' URBAN FUTURES

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

In current discourses and practices, 'the future' and 'the urban' are frequently connected: our society's future is expected to be 'urban', and, accordingly, the anticipation of futures for our cities and urban-society-to-come proliferates (e.g. Glaeser, 2011; Gleeson, 2012). In the practices and processes of such 'urban futuring', the discipline of urban planning plays a central role. By its very nature and functionality, urban planning engages with the 'not yet' of the city (a.o. Connell, 2009; Hillier and Healey, 2016). Indeed, today, urban planners together with a diverse range of stakeholders increasingly engage in anticipations for our urban futures: how will our cities and the urban-society-to-come look like?

Thus, it is common in urban planning to look into the future of cities and 'the city' more generally. Typically, an urban planner looks forward in time, to have some kind of impression of what the urban future might bring, and subsequently, hopes to influence and give direction to that future through the decisions and actions of planning in the present (Connell, 2009). Alongside and combined with more standardized procedures and tools, planners today have a variety of foresight methods and techniques at their disposal for their anticipatory action, ranging from forecasting and backcasting to envisioning and scenario-making (e.g. Ratcliffe and Krawczyk, 2011). To a greater or lesser extent, many planning efforts in this way aim to anticipate, to 'foresee', what the future city or city future will be like. As such, they are in various degrees

based on the assumption that one can make plausible anticipations or predictions of that future; that, to a certain extent, it might be possible to 'know' the future, and, by extension, to make more 'strategically prudent' decisions about the future (Borup et al, 2006, p. 296; also Connell, 2009; van Lente, 2012).

Yet, the future as such can never actually be 'known'. It is an abstract concept, and per definition not (yet) existing. Hence, the future is actively constructed in the present (a.o. Adam, 2005; Adam and Groves, 2007; Borup et al, 2006; Inayatullah, 1990). Therefore, it is also contingent upon the diverse and complex processes, practices, and contexts in which it is negotiated, represented, imagined, and thus shaped. The future is always in process, always a future "underway in the present" (Borup et al, 2006, p. 296). When one wants to know more about the future, it is therefore crucial to examine the active construction of futures and the effects thereof, as opposed to trying to 'merely' predict or anticipate the coming state of things. In other words, it is important to look at the future as opposed to, and alongside of, looking into the future (Borup et al, 2006; Brown et al, 2000).

The distinction between these two approaches constitutes an important backbone for this paper. The aim of this paper is to propose an analytical framework for the analysis of urban futures and urban 'futuring'. Reasoning from the looking at the future-looking into the future division, I postulate here that urban planning practice and theory currently relate more to the latter, whereas an analysis of the future within urban planning needs to take a perspective informed by the former. Indeed, as Borup et al (2006) describe, 'looking at' the future is mainly the perspective of the analyst, while 'looking into' the future is principally the perspective of the practitioner (see also Adam, 2005).

Following this, one can diagnose that, in urban planning practice and research, an in-depth reflection and analysis of the roles and workings of the future is largely lacking. A general tendency in urban planning literature is to acknowledge the key role of the future in urban planning practices, processes, and discourses, but to not scrutinize this futures dimension thoroughly. Typically, attention has been given to other dimensions. For one thing, planning studies and urban theory have become increasingly centered on spatiality, thus leaving temporal relations and the dimension of time largely unexamined (e.g. Connell, 2009; Myers, 2001; also Adam, 2005). Also, the communicative turn in planning practice and theory has led much of contemporary planning research to be primarily oriented towards governance aspects and the process dimension, at the expense of more substantive issues (e.g. Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2002; Fischler, 2014; Forester, 1999; Healey, 1996, 2006, 2007; Innes and Booher, 2015; Sager, 2009, 2012). Thus, the futures dimension of urban planning, though fundamental, seems to have become 'snowed under' (e.g. Abbott, 2005; Connell, 2009; Myers and Kitsuse, 2000). Calls and efforts to remedy and intensify planning's future engagement do occasionally arise (e.g. Isserman, 1985; May, 1985; Cole, 2001). However, there still appears to be an overall inclination to either bypass or only implicitly address planning's futures dimension, whereby it is often taken for granted and regarded as self-explanatory.

To be sure, though urban planners thus seem to approach the future rather confidently and uncritically, they are not meant to be portrayed here as wholly agnostic to the unknowability, uncertainty and plurality of the future, as if they shortsightedly proclaim and believe their own prophetic competence. The diversity of existing future-oriented planning and foresight approaches (envisioning, scenarios, etc.) already demonstrates that there is an awareness of, as well as reflexive attitude towards, the fact that the urban future can be addressed in various ways. Furthermore, in recent debates and experiments, both planning theorists and practitioners have more explicitly acknowledged and addressed the indeterminacy of the future and the ways in which planners could or should deal with this (see e.g. Balducci et al, 2011; Bertolini, 2010; Van Wezemael, 2010). However, even in such cases, the ultimate disposition of the planner – whether theorist or practitioner - is still to 'foresee' and act upon that future. In other words, urban planning is essentially very much concerned with strategically looking into the future.

As a consequence, a crucial issue tends to be largely overlooked and blackboxed: how is this done? How is the 'looking into the future' actually being performed? What exactly happens when planners and other relevant actors engage in future-oriented planning activities? How is the urban future, or better, how are urban futures thought about, represented, negotiated, circulated, and actively constructed within the practices and processes of urban planning? Accompanying these questions, one should then also ask: why is this so? (a.o. why these futures, and why do planners and other stakeholders 'future' in this way); and, how does this affect the planning processes and their outcomes? Inherent in these questions is the idea that both the urban futures produced and the ways and techniques of urban futuring can become performative and generative, meaning that they can come to affect and steer action and agency in

intended and unintended ways (a.o. Adam and Groves, 2007; Borup et al, 2006; Groves, 2016; Van Lente, 2012). This performative aspect of 'urban futuring' thus emerges as a vital point of attention when one wants to understand urban planning, and leads a researcher to scrutinize the reciprocal relationship between ideational and material dimensions of urban futures and urban futuring. In an approach based on these views, it is not the 'mere' anticipation of the future that takes centre stage. Rather, the focus is put on the construction, circulation, and performativity of urban futures and ways of urban futuring within the anticipatory processes and practices of urban planning. To put it differently, such an approach looks at the future within practices that look into the future.

This paper is strongly informed by this line of reasoning. It argues that, to better understand the practices, processes, discourses, and outcomes of urban planning, it is paramount to analyze the active construction of urban futures and the performative effects thereof within these processes, practices and discourses. The intention of the paper is twofold: firstly, to explain why the 'futures dimension' is essential in practicing, understanding, and transforming urban planning, and why this is currently a very topical and important issue; and secondly, to propose a theoretical-conceptual framework to analyze this futures dimension within urban planning. In its core, the framework provides a necessary critical and reflexive perspective on urban planning and urban futuring, and encourages a deconstruction of the ways of thinking, doing, and organizing urban futures. To conclude, the paper reflects on some of the challenges and further refinements of the suggested approach, while it also considers its potential to open up the future thinking and praxis for our cities and regions, and to help in imagining and realizing 'futures that would otherwise not be'.

## **2 WHY THE FUTURE?**

In this section, two arguments are central. Firstly, urban planning and the city are characterized as intrinsically tied to the future. Secondly, and relatedly, it is explained why, in current times, this intrinsic future-orientedness of urban planning and the city has become both prominent and contested, and thus needs to be investigated.

### **2.1 URBAN PLANNING AND THE FUTURE**

#### **2.1.1 THE RUPTURE OF CONTINUITY: PLANNING'S ASCENSION**

When considering the relation between the future and (urban) planning, it is important to take into account how the practice of planning originated. As Connell (2009) has pointedly argued and explained, planning's origination is intrinsically bound up with a historical change in the societal experience and construction of 'time' and 'the future'. It was only when the understanding of time allowed for the conceptualization of an 'open future' that planning became relevant.

Building on the work of historians (Koselleck, 2002, 2004), sociologists (Adam, 1990; Luhmann, 1976) and anthropologists (Lowenthal, 1992, 1995; Wallmann, 1992) that have addressed how 'time' and 'the future', as social constructs, have been conceived in the history and present of (Western) society, Connell describes how the concept and practice of planning emerged as a reaction to the 'rupture of continuity' (Lowenthal, 1992; Connell, 2009, p. 85). This rupture indicates the breach between traditional and modern society, and accordingly, between the traditional and modern experience of time. Before the Renaissance and the Enlightenment – roughly before the 16th century – the experience of time was cyclical and continuous. Being based strongly on the natural turnings of the sun, moon, and seasons, time was 'harmonious': past, present, and future were not qualitatively different from each other, but instead, interchangeable points in a repeating temporal cycle. This continuous understanding of time also fitted with the "grand eschatological framework" derived from – mainly Christian – religious scriptures, which described a fixed path from 'Creation to the End', without any differentiation between past, present, or future events. The future was held to be an extension of the past (Connell, 2009, p. 89). As such, the future could not offer anything that was intrinsically new. Therefore, it was knowable.

All of this changed between the 16th and 18th century, when the modern construct of time emerged (Connell, p. 89; Koselleck, 2002, 2004). In contrast to the traditional sense of time, this modern time was

discontinuous. Past and future were disjointed, and disassociated in time by the present. As Koselleck argues: “Finally, the divide between previous experience and coming expectation opened up, and the difference between past and present increased, so that lived time was experienced as a rupture, as a period of transition in which the new and unexpected continually happened” (Koselleck, 2004, p. 246). Conforming to this new experience of time, and to the gradual secularization of society, the religion-inspired eschatological framework was given up and progressively replaced by an increasing belief in the ideology – or ideograph – of progress (van Lente, 1993; also Morgan, 2002, 2015).

Within this modern construct of time, the future became discontinuous and thus more open. It was experienced as a realm of possibility and choice: the future could now be controlled and actively constructed (Connell, 2009). Accordingly, society became more and more future-oriented, and would continue to have this strong and relatively optimistic future focus until deep in the twentieth century.

It was in this context that planning originated. Society as a whole was rather unaccustomed to the new sense of time and the future, and in these conditions, the new concept and practice of planning came up for four interrelated reasons. Firstly, there was no vocabulary or language available to adequately express the new experience of time. No existing concepts or words could articulate what it meant to (be able to) actively construct the future, i.e. what it meant to engage in planning (Connell, 2009, p. 90). There was thus a need for the terminology of planning, even if just for the expression of the modern experience.

Secondly and relatedly, the relative openness of the future meant that decisions about that future could and should be made. The notion of a non-prescribed future, open to choice, possibility, and control, generated a “societal ‘need’ to know what future decisions need to be made today” (Connell, 2009, p. 91). In this context of “required decision making” (Luhmann, 1993), planning answered to this requirement. It acquired the societal function of connecting the present with the future, of importing the future into present decision-making (Connell, 2009, p. 91).

Thirdly, planning was meant to reduce the uncertainty of the opened up future. The modern future was bereft of the traditional and predictable expectations of things to come. This made the experience of the future precarious and somewhat frightening. Likewise, making decisions for the future was difficult and hazardous. Planning, therefore, aimed to ameliorate this by maximizing what is known, and minimizing what is unknown (Connell, 2009, p. 92). Connell (2009) argues that planning, in this way, served to ‘normalize’ the future, making it more stable and secure. Through binding the future to present-based, socially accepted expectations, planning reduced both risk and uncertainty.

Fourthly and lastly, the rise of planning was also related to the need for taking into account the future public interest. Modern society consisted of all kinds of systems and centres of control (e.g. economy, religion, politics, science), but lacked a channel for considering the public interest – especially the future public interest – within the public sphere. In the context of modern societal problems, like the deterioration of cities, the necessity of such a channel became decidedly clear (Connell, 2009; see also Hall, 2002; Luhmann, 1971, 1995). Planning also went to take up this societal function.

Taking together the elements of this socio-historical narrative of the relation between planning, society, and the future, Connell arrives at the following description of planning in modernity:

*“Thus, in addition to planning’s function of binding the future in decision-making, the practice of professional planning fills the additional, specific function of binding the future public interest to present decisions. In this way, the function of professional planners is to normalize the future public interest by making it a visible part of the public domain” (Connell, 2009, p. 93).*

What emanates from this account is that planning in the modern era was, and is, in its essence, linked to the future. Looking at it this way, planning is relevant to society exactly because of its future orientation; and the orientation towards the future is what characterizes planning.

Indeed, a survey of contemporary renderings of planning confirms this. Whether described as an “exercise of deliberate forethought” (Alexander, 1992, p. 13), an “explicit exercise in imagining the future” (Healey, 1996, p. 242), as “persuasive storytelling about the future” (Throgmorton, 1992, p. 17), or as “a forward-looking activity that selects from the past those elements that are useful in analyzing existing conditions from a vantage point of the future – the changes that are thought to be desirable and how they might be

brought about" (Friedmann, 1987, p. 11), it is evident that, to do and to think planning, is to 'do and think the future'.

### 2.1.2 THE RUPTURE OF DISCONTINUITY: PLANNING IN DISTRESS

Yet, although the future is always present within planning in some way, planning's commitment to the future is not constant. It shifts back and forth, as Freestone (2012) has also stated. He describes how the future engagement in planning can be said to follow a cyclical trend, going from more to less explicit and sophisticated and back again. Interestingly, in the past decades, the future engagement and orientation of planning has attracted criticism, as it has been said to be superficial, too present- and short term-focused, negligent, and unimaginative (a.o. Abbott, 2005; Connell, 2009; Freestone, 2012; Myers, 2001).

Such criticism clearly ties up with a broader change in society, which can be termed 'the rupture of discontinuity' (Connell, 2009, p. 93). Precisely the opposite of the rupture of continuity, the rupture of discontinuity has made the construct of time and the future more continuous again. Corresponding to wider developments associated with 'postmodernity', the 'post modern era' can be said to have an experience of time and the future which is connected to epidemic uncertainty and a "semantics of indeterminacy, incommensurability, variance, diversity, and complexity" (Connell, 2009, p. 93). Confidence in knowing the future and in the progress that the future would bring has been lost, and the societal experience and outlook have become increasingly predicated on the present, and on personal instead of collective futures (Lowenthal, 1995). This leads to a "shrinking" of the future, which steadily turns into a simple extension of the present (Nowotny, 1992, cited by Adam, 1990, p. 140; Connell, 2009, pp. 93-94). Other reasons brought forward for this are the acceleration of social change and its associated compression of the dimensions of everyday life, such as space-time compression (Leccardi, 2003; Rosa, 2003). In the face of an unsteady future and a contracted present, the future is almost merged with the present, which "appears to be the sole temporal dimension available for defining choices, an existential horizon that includes and replaces the future and the past" (Leccardi, 2003, p. 35).

These criticisms on the contemporary engagement with the future are widespread, and scattered over various academic fields, including history, sociology, geography, planning, and futures studies. Scholars have come to diagnose the societal future orientation as superficial, short-term and present-focused, and unimaginative (e.g. Abbott, 2005; Adam, 2005; Hayward, 2003; van 't Klooster and van Asselt, 2011; Lowenthal, 1992, 1995, 2006; Ratcliffe and Krawczyk, 2011; Slaughter, 1996). This is also echoed in critical commentaries which postulate a 'crisis of the imagination' (Ghosh, 2016) or a restraining hegemony of a 'capitalist realism'

(Fisher, 2009), which have incapacitated our ability to engage with the long-term and to think of futures which are qualitatively different from the present. This contemporary "temporal myopia" (Bindé, 2000), was already strikingly and provokingly perceived in the 1970's by Polak (1973), who identified a process of "defuturizing" (see also van der Helm, 2005): "We mean by the term defuturizing a retreat from the constructive thinking about the future in order to dig oneself into the trenches of the present. It is a ruthless elimination of future-centred idealism by today-centred realism. We have lost the ability to see any further than the end of our collective nose" (Polak, 1973, p. 195).

Of course, the 'rupture of discontinuity' has affected planning too. Surely, the escalation of uncertainty, the loss of confidence in the future, and the preoccupation with the present must have become reflected within planning, right? Connell (2009) confirms this assumption. The semantics of complexity, diversity, and indeterminacy tied to the postmodern experience of time have also found their way into planning and planning theory. Complexity is proclaimed on all levels (e.g. Byrne, 2003; de Roo and Silva, 2010; Healey, 2007; Balducci et al, 2011), and, in accordance, the future is less and less regarded as knowable or controllable: "Consequently, the 'post' modern semantics of planning emphasize adaptation and mitigation, rather than confidence and control, managing processes and designing livable cities rather than planning for the public interest, difference and diversity rather than commonality and unity" (Connell, 2009, p. 95)

Correspondingly, the focus of planning has been pulled towards the present. In a climate of intricacy and insecurity, articulating and constructing the future in a valuable and socially acceptable way has become a difficult, contested, and almost undesirable matter. Thus, haunted by the perils of disagreement and uncertainty, planning has reacted by largely resorting to the present, be it an 'extended' one (a.o. Myers,

2001; Connell, 2009). Shorter-term decisions are preferred, just as devices and analyses which are either more superficial or very technical, or both. Hence, an explicit, in-depth, sophisticated, and open approach to the future is lacking in much of contemporary planning.

Nevertheless, planning's relevance and function still rest upon its future orientation. To plan is to bring the future into the present, to make decisions in the now about what needs to be done and decided in the not yet. So, while the depth, quality, and emphasis of planning's future engagement may vary across time and space, and between actors, practices, and processes, there is no doubt about the intrinsic future-orientedness of planning: "...the function of planning is only relevant to a future-oriented society, and a future oriented society requires planning to function. Furthermore, although not all practices of professional planners are aimed at the future, the function of planning always is" (Connell, 2009, p. 97). Set against the rupture of discontinuity, its continuous construct of time and the future, and its associated tendencies to presentism, what one can find here is an inherent tension between the functionality and relevance of planning on the one hand, and the postmodern experience and construct of the future on the other hand. What can planning be in a society which can hardly be called 'future-oriented'? And what is to become of society if even planning does not adequately engage with the future?

In line with this problematic, and in reaction to the post modern milieu of uncertainty, complexity, and present-focused planning, one can discern a gradual upsurge in 'real' engagement with the future in planning, both in academia and practice (e.g. Freestone, 2012; Vermeulen, 2015). Scholars have expressed the need to "put the future back in planning" (e.g. Myers, 2001; Cole, 2001; Dalton, 2001). One way to contribute to this, they argue, is to establish a more active and deeper interaction between the fields of planning and futures studies. Another way could be to bring back utopian thinking within urban planning (a.o. Corijn and Vermeulen, nd; Friedmann, 2000; Ganjavie, 2012; Hoch, 2016; Maassen, 2012; Paden, 2001; Pinder, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2015; Sandercock, 2002; Vermeulen, 2009), or to reinvigorate strategic spatial planning (Albrechts, 2004, 2010, 2015). More radically, various authors have claimed it is necessary to thoroughly rethink planning and many of the assumptions and practices on which it is based, and to establish a 'post structuralist' mode of planning (e.g. Balducci et al, 2011; Hillier, 2011). Such efforts seem to have an effect, as Freestone (2012, p. 10) identifies a "current upturn", in which "the future is making a comeback into planning in various practical and innovative ways".

In any case, planning's relation to the future is a defining issue for contemporary planning debates and practices. Planning is inherently future-oriented, but presently faces various challenges, tensions, and criticisms in relation to its future engagement. Its capacity and willingness to deal with the uncertain future has been questioned and/or proven to be inadequate. This predicament is destabilizing planning as a field and has spawned an ongoing search for new ways of doing and thinking and organizing, most of all ways of dealing with the future. Hence, futures and futuring are topical concerns in the planning field, but as of yet rather unresolved and not sufficiently examined. Therefore, it is critical to thoroughly and explicitly study this futures dimension of planning.

## 2.2 THE CITY AND THE FUTURE

In the previous section, it has been explained that planning has an intrinsic relation to the future. When it comes to urban planning specifically, this inherent future-orientedness takes on an extra dimension. The 'urban' within 'urban planning' simultaneously specifies and expands the future engagement of planning: it specifically focuses on that which is related to the 'urban' and the city, and exactly because of that, it also extends the futures dimension, since its object - the city - in itself is a fertile ground for future imaginations and expectations.

The city is and always has been one of the most widely, diversely, and fervently imagined objects in human history. As the place where people, money, culture, technology, science, employment, education, resources, and much more agglomerate, cities arguably constitute the crucial category of human settlement (e.g. Weber, 1922; Glaeser, 2012). They are seen as the sites where the problems of human existence coalesce, but at the same time, the sites where most of the solutions to these problems are likely to be developed. Accordingly, cities are generally regarded as centres of innovation and creativity, and by extension, as the ground where social change and the future are fundamentally given shape (a.o. Bandarin and van Oers, 2012; Glaeser, 2012; Gleeson, 2012; Hall, 2002; Hodson and Marvin, 2009, 2010; United Nations, 1992, 2017). Today, in a context of ever increasing urbanization, this prominence of cities

and city-regions for the urban and societal future is professed even more vigorously (see e.g. Gleeson, 2012, on 'new urbanology' and recent urban triumphalism, and Brenner and Schmid, 2014, on the 'urban age thesis').

Similar to the discipline of planning, 'the city' itself from a conceptual, imaginary, and discursive viewpoint has typically had a clear link with the future. In addition to being crucial sites of contemporary life where the future is rather literally materially shaped and constructed through decisions and actions of planning and urban development practice, cities, future cities, and city futures have long been the conceptual, theoretical, imaginary, metaphorical, and discursive locus in which and through which social change is both apprehended and anticipated (a.o. Clarke, 1992; Duarte et al, 2015; Hall, 2002; Harvey, 2000; Neuman and Hull, 2009; Wunenburger, 2003). This was already the case in, for example, Plato's philosophical utopian thinking about the ideal city state in the Republic, in Thomas More's philosophical-literary Utopia, and, very clearly in our current lifetime, in the genre of science fiction (Clarke, 1992), where the urban these days is more frequently depicted as dystopic than utopic. As Clarke states: "for [at least] the past five centuries (...) the make-believe city has been the benchmark of all imaginary societies" (1992, p. 702). In such imaginaries, the future is almost always central: what will or could happen; what do we want to happen; what do we not like to see happening; what is possible, plausible, and/or preferable.

An aspect which plays a significant role in this imaginary and discursive connection between the city and the future is technology. Especially since the advent of modernity, cities and technologies have been inextricably interlinked (a.o. Duarte et al, 2015). Technology, in various forms and in various ways, has enabled and facilitated human life in urban settlements, and has thus given shape to urbanity as we know it (Tarr, 2008; also Castells, 1989; Hodson and Marvin, 2009). From such a perspective, the city itself could even be thought of as a technology (see e.g. Evans and Marvin, 2006; Hulsbergen et al, 2005, p. 171).

Such linkages and associations between the city and technology reinforce the futures dimension in the understanding of cities. After all, future expectations, whether promissory or unsettling, constitute a fundamental part of the development, perception, and 'being' of technologies (a.o. Borup et al, 2006; van Lente, 1993). When thinking about technology, the consideration of future possibilities, dangers, and implications is less than one step away. These future imaginations and expectations about technologies can, and do, get transferred to the imaginations, expectations, and discourses about cities. In particular, such dynamics can be discerned in relation to the technology-driven and technology-brimming cities of today. The contemporary epitome of these tendencies can be found in the 'smart city' discourse and imaginary (Kitchin, 2014, 2016; Merricks-White, 2016; Vanolo, 2014; also Caletrio, 2014): the idea of the city steeped in and animated by a multiplicity of advanced 'smart' technologies and applications, which as such is either conceived and propagated as a magnificent promise for the betterment of human life and society, or, increasingly, as a profoundly risky and undesirable type of future urbanity.

Overall, then, the city is an object of versatile imaginations, associated with a wide range of expectations for the future; expectations and future imaginations which are not only about 'the city' in general, or about specific cities (e.g. London), but which often also say something about societal futures at large. Such future imaginations and expectations vary in their normativity. Seemingly more descriptive and more specific predictions and projections exist besides and intermingle with 'grand narratives' and imaginaries of progress and hope (utopia) and of decline, apocalypse, and fear (dystopia) (a.o. Baeten, 2002). Hence, the city, as an imaginary and discursive field, contains an intrinsic hope and an intrinsic 'doom'; and, focusing less on normative dimensions, the imaginary and discursive field of the city and the urban is strongly futures-oriented.

In various ways and to various extents, the future imaginations for cities can then also affect and become embedded within the materiality and practices of the city. Most notably, urban planning - the discipline specifically engaged with shaping (the future of) cities - unmistakably draws upon as well as contributes to the discursive and imaginary renderings of future cities and city futures (e.g. Hall, 2002; Collie, 2011). This may be seen as a reciprocal, interactive dynamic: the practices, processes, and products of urban planning (including the academic sphere) are influenced by the future imaginations and expectations that circulate about the city as well as urban planning itself, and, conversely, these imaginations and expectations are of course also affected and shaped through and within those practices, processes, and products of urban planning. This supposed dialectical interplay, together with the intrinsic future character

of both urban planning and the city, make it particularly interesting and critical to research the future(s) in urban planning.

### 3 PROPOSING THE FRAMEWORK

In the previous section, it has been explained why there are plenty of reasons to explicitly and comprehensively investigate the roles and workings of the future within urban planning. More practically, the field currently struggles with the uncertainty of the future and associated challenges to planning's relevance and functioning. More conceptually and profoundly, urban planning is inherently tied to the future both in its 'urban' and in its 'planning' dimension, and virtually owes its existence and purpose to exactly that futures dimension. Extending the latter idea, the futures dimension could not only be seen as crucial to practicing and understanding planning, but, importantly, it could also be regarded as the fundamental sphere in which and from which planning should be transformed. Following this, it would precisely be the future engagement of urban planning – its futuring and its futures - which should be examined rigorously, to enable transformations that would help urban planning to become more effective, competent, and relevant for current times.

In that light, it is all the more interesting and surprising that efforts to do this have thus far been minimal. As described before, in existing research on urban planning, the futures dimension tends to be bypassed and/or regarded as self-explanatory. Neither the few exceptions (e.g. Balducci et al, 2011; Myers and Kitsuse, 2000) nor the recent "comeback" (Freestone, 2012) of the future in planning research and practice sufficiently make up for this shortcoming.

Therefore, this paper suggests to research the futures dimension in urban planning specifically, systematically, and extensively. The futures dimension in urban planning should be exposed and focalized, so that it is given the analytical rigor and attention it deserves. Only then can the analysis capture the particularity of the futures dimension, of the specific aspects, mechanisms, and dynamics at work when the (urban) future is being dealt with. Such an analysis needs to draw upon those fields and approaches which explicitly engage with the future and with anticipation, such as the sociology of the future (a.o. Adam, 2005). Remarkably, despite the relation between urban planning and the future, the insights and perspectives from these fields have largely been absent in urban planning research (and practice). To be fair, the field of urban planning has quite regularly been linked up with the field of futures studies, both in theory and practice (see e.g. Cole, 2001; Khakee, 1988; Ratcliffe and Krawczyk, 2011). However, the connection made here has mainly had an instrumentalist bias, whereby insights, methods, tools, and techniques derived from the futures field have been applied in planning, with the overarching aim to provide planners with various forms and degrees of "anticipatory competence" (Borup et al, 2006, p. 296), i.e. an (improved) capacity to anticipate the future and act and decide upon that future (see also e.g. Ahlqvist and Rhiisart, 2015; Son, 2015). Though useful and valuable, such an approach is still dominated by a disposition of 'looking into' the future, as opposed to one of analytically and reflexively 'looking at' the future, as outlined in the introduction.

In contrast to this, the suggestion here is to analyze urban planning by building upon those approaches which 'look at' the future; those approaches which take a critical and reflexive stance towards futures and ways of futuring and their natures, roles, dynamics, and effects within the present. More specifically, I propose a theoretical-conceptual framework which integrates three of such approaches: the 'critical-post structural' approach to futures by Inayatullah (1990), the sociology of expectations (a.o. Borup et al, 2006; van Lente, 2012), and the sociology of the future as outlined by Adam and Groves (Adam, 2005; Adam and Groves, 2007; Groves, 2016). Together, these are held to provide a framework which enables a thorough and valuable analysis of urban futures and urban futuring within urban planning.

#### 3.1 THE CRITICAL-POST STRUCTURAL APPROACH TO FUTURES

To begin with, the 'critical-post structural' approach outlined by Inayatullah (1990) offers a useful base to reason from. Informed by a Foucauldian perspective on discourse, the critical-post structural approach to futures encourages and allows the researcher to investigate how the present and the future have come to be authoritatively created (Inayatullah, 1990, p. 136). The approach as such employs a constructivist perspective, which is also apparent in its theoretical underpinnings: time and the future are seen as

historical social constructs, and are thus not a way of describing but of creating the outside world ('reality'); and language is a crucial dimension in which and through which time, the future, and the world are constructed and constituted. The future emerges here as mainly constructed by language within discursive spaces and practices.

The critical-post structural futures approach puts discourses and epistemes centre stage, i.e. ways of knowing and ways of organizing knowledge. It reasons that the way we construct, understand, and know 'reality', 'time', and 'the future' now is not a description of reality 'out there', but rather that it is the result of the victory of one discourse over another (Inayatullah, 1990, p. 132). Time and the future are discursive and contingent. The ways in which – at a certain time and place – the future is constructed, understood, known, and organized could always have been otherwise. To research this future from a critical futures perspective, then, means to inquire into how the future is epistemologically constructed.

An episteme, for Inayatullah (1990, p. 116), denotes the "way we order the real and our knowing of it". Epistemes consist of all kinds of epistemological assumptions of the real (a.o. ideological-cultural assumptions, assumptions of language, assumptions in relation to the problem of meaning, etc.). Part of and implicated within such broader epistemes of the real are epistemological assumptions concerning time and the future. This is significant when one considers planning: every planning effort involves epistemological and philosophical assumptions, beliefs, and expectations concerning reality and how it is, can, or should be known; and, more specifically, regarding time and the future and how they can and should be known, performed, and dealt with. As Inayatullah states: "Every planning effort to plan the future is submerged in an overarching politics of the real" (1990, p. 116).

Clearly, such assumptions and ways of thinking are pivotal for practicing and understanding planning, since they influence how planning is done and organized. Yet, this is not a unidirectional phenomenon, since the ways of doing and organizing at the same time influence the ways of thinking. One can conceptualize this as a reciprocal dynamic between ideational and material dimensions: the epistemological assumptions and ways of thinking mutually interact with all kinds of expressions, discourses, and practices which continuously materialize, actualize, and also (re)shape the assumptions. When this conceptualization is transferred to the analysis of urban planning and its futuring, it means that epistemes, their epistemological assumptions of the real, and accompanying ways of doing and organizing affect how time and the future are understood, constructed, and performed, and, by extension, how planning is conceived and carried out.

Therefore, epistemes and their assumptions and actualizations should be examined, but the problem is that they are usually not (Inayatullah, 1990, p. 116). According to Inayatullah, epistemes are often not scrutinized and therefore left naturalized in planning efforts and debates: "Planning theories (...) thus often emerge as mentalities, frozen ahistorical categories of thought, ontological givens" (1990, p. 116). The consequence of this is that normalized and naturalized ways of knowing and doing can come to function and appear as self-evident 'systems of truth', instead of contingent and actively created realities based on a variety of assumptions and practices that could have been different. Under these circumstances, the fact that other ways of knowing, doing, and organizing are possible becomes obscured.

Thus, applying this critical futures perspective to the analysis of urban planning and its futuring, it becomes vital to investigate the epistemological construction of the future in urban planning. Through both genealogy<sup>1</sup> and deconstruction, one illustrates and deconstructs how actors 'know' and 'perform' the future through language and various institutionalized practices. Normalized ways of understanding and performing the future are thereby put to question. Furthermore, by doing this, it is also uncovered how current ways of knowing, doing, and organizing the future embody power relations, how they "reinscribe the power politics of the present" (Inayatullah, 1990, p. 134). Ultimately, such an analysis can help to open up the discourses and epistemes of the future in urban planning, by showing that alternative discourses, and alternative

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<sup>1</sup> The concept and method of genealogy is rather complex and interpreted and used in various ways (a.o. Crowley, n.d.; Kearns and Hooper, 2002; Tamboukou, 2003), but it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss that. Here, a general description in the context of this paper suffices: a genealogy of the future looks back into the history of the future in the now, and 'genealogically historicizes the present' of the future, by tracing and examining important influences on the current ways of thinking, doing, and organizing the future. The attempt is to understand how and why established ways of constructing 'time' and 'the future' have become the dominant ways of creating the world (Inayatullah, 1990).

constructions of 'time', 'the future', and 'reality' are possible. Deconstruction can thus enable and facilitate reconstruction.

### 3.2 THE SOCIOLOGY OF EXPECTATIONS

The critical futures approach rightly emphasizes that the futures and ways of futuring within the present should be problematized and deconstructed. Yet, it does not specify so clearly how this should be done, and which aspects or dynamics should be analyzed. The sociology of expectations can help in this respect. This perspective shares with the critical futures approach the overall ambition to deconstruct and 'dereify' the actively constructed future within the present, by, among other things, "developing on a detailed examination of the forms of action and agency through which the future is both performed [as a temporal representation] and colonized [as a spatial and temporal locus]" (Brown and Michael, 2003, p. 5). In contrast to the rather general outlook described by Inayatullah, however, the sociology of expectations takes a very specific point of departure for its analysis of the future: expectations.

Expectations, in this framework, are defined as "statements about the future – uttered or inscribed in texts or materials – that circulate" (van Lente, 2012, p. 772). As this definition makes clear, expectations here are practically analogous to the notion of futures. What also follows from the description, is that expectations, or futures, exist and travel in a variety of forms, types and ways. Originally developed within the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS), the sociology of expectations studies "the production and circulation of expectations in science and technology" (van Lente, 2012, p. 769). In doing this, the approach can provide insights into the nature and structure of expectations (i.e. futures); into the dynamics of expectations (how do they circulate, how do they come up and fade away, how do they interact with other expectations and future statements, images, etc.); into the force of expectations (they can legitimate, provide guidance, and coordinate actors and agency); and into the relation between expectations, strategy-making, and steering capacity (van Lente, 2012).

An essential theoretical starting point in the sociology of expectations is that expectations are performative. Expectations, as statements about the future, are not simply descriptions or ideas, but actually do

something. They create a new or adjusted reality. As such they are fundamentally generative: "...they guide activities, provide structure and legitimation, attract interest, and foster investment. They give definition to roles, clarify duties, offer some shared shape of what to expect and how to prepare for opportunities and risks (...)" (Borup et al, 2006, p. 286). Furthermore, expectations can bridge boundaries, dimensions and layers, and coordinate and broker relationships between actors. By engendering all of these effects, expectations and the futures within them are enacted, performed, and made real in the present. They thus shape scientific and technological as well as social and political change. Unsurprisingly, the futures articulated in and through expectations are therefore also highly contested.

Although originally meant to study developments in science and technology, the sociology of expectations can be equally valuable to investigate the particularities and workings of futures in other spheres of society. In particular, as van Lente (2012) has argued, the approach has value for the analysis of foresight exercises, regardless of their specific type or whether these take place in business, government, engineering, research, or planning contexts. After all, foresight exercises per definition deal with the future, and thus with expectations in their various forms, interactions, and effects.

It is useful here to distinguish between 'formal' assessments of the future on the one hand, and 'informal' assessments of the future on the other. Deliberate foresight exercises can be regarded as "formal articulations of possible futures" (van Lente, 2012, p. 769), which take place within and relate to a broader, informal environment of visions, promises, expectations, and future articulations and ideas. This informal "sea of expectations" (van Lente, 2012, p. 777) influences foresight exercises, and to a certain extent and in various ways can even guide and structure them.

As might be clear now, the sociology of expectations provides a very useful perspective for the analysis of urban planning, and its futures and futuring in particular. As argued above, urban planning and the city more generally are inextricably tied to the future. In other words, urban planning takes place in an environment where a great wealth and diversity of expectations, future images, and future imaginations about cities and the city are produced, negotiated, constructed, embedded, and circulated. The arena of

urban planning, therefore, constitutes the sphere in which the futures of the city are constructed and shaped.

Taking the perspective of the sociology of expectations thus enables one to conceptualize urban planning in this way, and by extension, to analyze it from this viewpoint. The theoretical underpinnings of the framework are crucial in such an investigation. Firstly, the performativity of futures is postulated. Futures are taken to have a fundamentally generative, performative, constitutive role within urban planning. Secondly, it is exactly this role which is further explored. A study of urban planning along these lines focuses on the following elements: what kind of futures are constructed and circulated?; how are all kinds of futures – both consciously and unconsciously – constructed and circulated, and why?; how do they intermingle and interact in various ways and forms, and through various actors and channels, and why?; and which effects does this have on the practices, processes, discourses, and outcomes of urban planning? Thirdly, it is kept in mind that the more formal articulations and assessments of the future within urban planning are situated within a broader field of more informal expectations, which can influence the contents and processes of futuring (van Lente, 2012).

When one extends the theoretical ideas of the sociology of expectations, and connects them with the definitions of urban planning which practically all emphasize its future-orientedness, a challenging theoretical-conceptual position emerges, related to the nature of planning and the role of expectations therein. When urban planning is intrinsically tied to the future, and when futures are taken as performative and generative, could it not be posed that futures are the building blocks and drivers of urban planning? Are not these future expectations what planning builds upon, is driven by, and exists for? Hence, are not future expectations then the 'raison d'être' of urban planning? It seems that, without such expectations, there would be no planning. Futures are thus situated at the base of what planning is and is meant to be (see also section 2). Following such reasoning, to examine futures and their performativity within urban planning means to research into the core of urban planning, both in its theoretical-conceptual and in its more practical and material dimensions.

One interesting facet that might be brought to light by such a dereification of the future within urban planning is to what extent, how, and why urban planning efforts draw from – and are thus bounded by – existing repertoires of expectations and futures. This is an insight that follows from the idea that formal foresight exercises happen within a wider informal environment, where a variety of expectations circulates (van Lente, 2012). The futures created within urban planning exercises are very likely to be constructed from an existing set of future articulations and assessments. So, whereas such processes are usually meant to engage with the future openly and to possibly engender alternative futures and ideas, they run the risk of contributing to path-dependency and lock-in (van Lente, 2012, p. 777). Planning efforts, just like foresight exercises, draw from “existing repertoires of expectations”, and, therefore, “will not generate many ‘new’ expectations, although ‘new combinations’ between elements of the repertoires are possible”, and thus, “they may reproduce images and arguments that are already circulating” (van Lente, 2012, p. 778). This could also be expressed as a “predisciplining of the imagination” (Borup et al, 2006, p. 293), by which former expectations and futures become the basis for new planning endeavors.

Interestingly, this may have effects on power relations (van Lente, 2012; also Nahuis and van Lente, 2008). The available and circulating repertoires of expectations are more often than not based on the expectations and future imaginations that are held or accepted by established actors and networks. Hence, though urban planning and futuring exercises might involve new stakeholders (a.o. Ache, 2011, 2013; Vermeulen, 2015), the dynamics of expectations might ultimately limit the degree to which these stakeholders actually contribute to a proper re-imagination of the future. Moreover, if one takes futures as being performative in the present, this would consequently mean that, on the whole, power relations and networks largely do not change, neither in the present nor in the future.

In line with this, it is also important to consider the influence of existing and circulating collective imaginaries when analyzing the dynamics and performative effects of futures within urban planning. Future expectations and imaginations of the city and urbanity within urban planning are undoubtedly related to broader, collectively shared imaginaries (Cabanés et al, 2014; Konrad, 2006). Collective imaginaries might even frame and partially structure expectations and expectation dynamics (Borup et al, 2006; Cabanés et al, 2014). One such imaginary is particularly interesting here, given the intrinsic relationship between the city and technology and the abundance of ‘smart city’ images nowadays (see a.o. Kitchin, 2016; Vanolo, 2014; Tarr, 2008): the socio-technical imaginary, defined by Jasanoff (Jasanoff and Kim, 2015, p. 6) as

“collectively held, institutionally stabilized, and publicly performed visions of desirable futures, animated by shared understandings of social life and social order, attainable through, and supportive of, advances in science and technology”. When researching futures and futuring in urban planning, one should thus be on the lookout for these imaginaries and their potential influence.

While the above might seem to indicate that the dynamics and performative effects of expectations play out primarily on the imaginary-ideational level, this is not the case. The sociology of expectations precisely indicates that it is important to consider how expectations can become ‘inscribed’ in texts, bodies, actions, objects, materials, and machines; how they can become materially embedded within and embodied by structures, systems, routines, and more (Borup et al, 2006, p. 292). This means that potential path-dependencies and performativities are not only be found in the domain of the imagination, but also in the realm of the socio-material. That is exactly the performative power of futures: they reciprocally affect both the ideational and the material in an ongoing dynamic.

So, taking the above together, the sociology of expectations provides a specific contribution to the outlined task to deconstruct urban futures and urban futuring in urban planning. In particular, it directs attention to the dynamics and performativity of the futures that are constructed and circulated within urban planning. Futures, both uttered and inscribed, can affect action and agency in intended and unintended ways, and are at the same time also affected by, for example, existing and circulating repertoires and collective imaginaries. Thus, futures influence futures as well as futuring in a continuous interaction between diverse ideational, representational, material, and practical elements. Only when this is taken into account and analyzed can one properly deconstruct the ways of thinking, doing, and organizing the future within urban planning.

### 3.3 THE SOCIOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

The sociology of expectations thus gives body analytically-conceptually to the overarching view of the critical futures approach. By conceptualizing and concentrating on how the futures within urban planning interact, circulate, and become performative, the expectations-perspective gives a more concrete form and focus to the aim of deconstructing ‘futuring’ in urban planning. However, a deconstruction along these lines would be incomplete and too one-sided. Futuring, or anticipation, cannot be fully understood and opened up by only examining future ideas, imaginations, and representations and their subsequent performative effects on practice and materiality. One also needs to consider the reverse relation: materiality and practice obviously influence representations of the future (and future representation-making) too, explicitly but also tacitly

(Groves, 2016). Anticipation is a combination of both representational and material elements, and both the material and representational are constitutive of anticipation. So, alongside the more explicit, represented, performative future, attention also needs to be paid to the more implicit, unconscious, and material dimensions of futuring. This material side to anticipation extends beyond the performativity of actual futures, and also has to do with the various future dispositions and potentialities that are ‘scripted’ into environments, technologies, practices and bodies. Accordingly, a thorough analysis of anticipation (futuring) does not confine itself to already ‘operative’ futures alone, but examines the reciprocal interplay between futures and the materiality and practices of futuring: it studies “futures-in-the-making” (Adam and Groves, 2007; Groves, 2016, p. 3). An analysis of urban futuring, or urban anticipation, therefore, should not only draw on a sociology of expectations, i.e. futures, but on a broader ‘sociology of the future’ as outlined by Adam and Groves (Adam, 2005; Adam and Groves, 2007; Groves, 2016).

As Groves (2016) states, much of the research into futures and anticipation has followed the sociology of expectations in focusing on the roles and performative effects of images and representations of the future. Such approaches usually go together with a tendency to focus on language and more conscious aspects of anticipation, and thus, with an overall inclination to ‘humanise’ anticipation too much (Groves, 2016, p. 2). Anticipation, however, has a dual character, and is just as much shaped by material dimensions as by ‘human’ dimensions. Therefore, it is important to take into account the “more than human” (Groves, 2016, p. 2) and the non-representational, material aspects when examining anticipatory action (i.e. futuring).

The influence of ‘more than human’ and material dimensions on anticipation operates on multiple domains and in various ways. Crucial point is that specific interpretations of the future and modes of futuring are

'afforded by' and inscribed into material environments in an often implicit and unconscious manner. One can roughly distinguish four interrelated spheres in and through which this occurs.

Firstly, there are 'future horizons' (Adam and Groves, 2007; Groves, 2016) or 'styles of anticipation' (Anderson, 2010). In short, these concepts designate the sets of practices and knowledges through which the future – in a specific place and time – is approached and anticipated. Within future horizons or anticipation styles, various types of social action, knowledge practices, and normative frameworks implicitly align into working compositions that generate and predispose a certain way of dealing with time and the future. Examples would be religious hermeneutics or empirical methods and ways of theory-building within science (Groves, 2016, p. 4). Such overarching attitudes are made up of several intersecting and mutually constitutive elements – practical, material, epistemological, ideational, normative –, which, together, enable time and the relationships between past, present, and future to be made sense of in specific ways. To a certain extent, the ways of knowing and acting that combine into 'styles of anticipation' can become rather routinized, and can thereby lead to the development of tropes and relatively entrenched temporal orderings. Analytically, the development of more concrete imaginaries and representations of the future can thus not be separated from this wider setting of anticipation styles, which are diversely sedimented into the materialities and practices of social life.

Yet, the styles of anticipation themselves do not come out of nowhere either, since they are inherently bound up with the material environments in which they are situated. The ways of knowing and acting the future are partly "stitched into" their surroundings. Most notably, this is apparent on a socio-technical and socio-natural level (Groves, 2016, p. 4). Socio-technically, one can discern a 'technological unconscious' in anticipation, by which scripts that are imprinted within infrastructures and technologies lead the future to be perceived and performed in specific ways. Socio-naturally, an 'environmental unconscious' can be postulated, where biophysical systems and conditions constrain and enable practices and ways of futuring. Technologies and environments are not simply tools and resources with which anticipation is carried out, but they are constitutive of anticipation (Groves, 2016, p. 4); of both the ways of futuring and the futures produced and circulated. They thus form the second and third domain where one can discern the influence of the more than human, material dimension on anticipation.

Fourthly and lastly, in between the more 'human' and more 'environmental' dimensions, anticipation is also influenced by various forms of emotion and affect. As Groves asserts, people are "invested subjects (...)" whose engagement with socio-technical-natural environments is affective and emotional" (Groves, 2016, p. 4). They experience feelings such as fear or hope, and feel attached to or dissociated from certain places, practices, and ideas, including those that relate to the future and futuring. Hence, such affective aspects need to be taken into account as more 'environmental' (non-representational) factors implicated within anticipation.

When both the material and representational dimensions of anticipation are brought together, it becomes possible to conceive of anticipatory assemblages (Groves, 2016): heterogeneous compositions in which material, practical, representational, ideational, epistemological, and normative elements all work together to continuously constitute and enable each other as well as specific forms, contents, and ways of anticipation. Such assemblages are continuously produced, reproduced, and potentially reshaped through an interplay of the various forces and elements.

Importantly, anticipatory assemblages can become (temporarily) stable in their combinations, and thus, by extension, in their approach to the future. Through all kinds of connectivities, scripts, performativities, and co-constitutions, anticipatory assemblages can thus contain an implicit or embedded way of engaging with the future and its construction. When this is the case, and when the assemblages take on a rather self-sustaining, reproductive dynamic, anticipation can become patterned (Groves, 2016). Like a kind of template, anticipatory assemblages may order anticipatory action in such a way that a specific take on time and the future is dispositioned. Simultaneously, other ways of knowing, performing, and organizing the future are then not dispositioned; anticipatory assemblages can thus work to shut off other possibilities, futures, and ways of futuring.

Thus, the assemblages of anticipation operate and "hang together in specific ways at different times and in different places" (Groves, 2016, p. 4). Inspired by Foucault (1991) and Deleuze (2006), Groves (2016, pp. 4-5) conceives of the particular constellations of anticipatory assemblages as 'diagrams': specific sets of heterogeneous elements, which interconnect and perform in and through particular patternings, and

thereby predispose the ways in which the future is drawn into the present. Through such “diagrams of anticipation” (p. 5), the future is understood and acted on in specific ways, and not in others. A concrete example of how such a diagrammatization of the future might work is provided by Groves in relation to energy infrastructure planning and energy security in the UK:

*“In policy responses to this problem, the future is brought into the present chiefly through the socio-technical apparatus of demand forecasting, a combination of knowledge practices, techniques, and particular socio-technical apparatuses (such as modelling software, demand measurement technologies, and so on). (...) this assemblage produces a disembodied view, a ‘present’ future in which is represented a snapshot of the future as the necessary product of a set of known mechanisms. This then allows the future to be cast in a concrete, congealed form, such as a demand scenario” (Groves, 2016, p. 5).*

If anticipation – its futuring and its futures – is conceptualized along the lines of assemblages and diagrams, another significant facet emerges: the political dimension. After all, the notion that the ways of knowing, doing, and organizing the future are patterned implies that this might come to the benefit of some actors, while it can disadvantage others. Indeed, the specific patternings of anticipatory assemblages and diagrams also pattern the capability of actors to affect and act on their futures. Following Groves, the “socio-material organization of anticipation” should not be seen as a neutral process (2016, p. 2). The distribution of anticipatory capacity within and through particular anticipatory assemblages is uneven and unequal. One consequence of this is that the future tends to be selectively framed and translated in unfolding anticipatory processes, so that some aspects are turned into objects of public concern for the present as well as the future, and others are not. Evidently, this is a vital aspect of political struggle, in which anticipatory elements and assemblages can converge and connect but can also come into conflict and become contested. Seen in this fashion, it becomes necessary to consider the political implications of anticipation and anticipatory assemblages, and vice versa, to acknowledge and scrutinize the styles and configurations of anticipation when wanting to understand political conflict (Groves, 2016).

In line with the political aspect, a final feature that needs to be pointed out here is that of power. When specific anticipatory assemblages and diagrams are dominant, it means that particular distributions of futuring capabilities are generated and preserved, and that certain representations and interpretations of the future are produced and sustained. Anticipatory capabilities and interpretations of the future are likely to be connected here in a link of relative ‘necessity’ (Groves, 2016, p. 6); particular constructs of the future need specific actions, decisions, discourses, and actor and power relationships to be in place, and the other way around. A contemporary phenomenon which might be interpreted this way is the proliferation of ‘risk’ related representations and interpretations of the future. These ‘risk futures’ and discourses explicitly and implicitly establish a link between the idea of dangerous or undesirable prospects on the one hand, and the ‘necessity’ to counteract or manage such risky futures through certain acts, beliefs, and systems of mitigation, adaptation, and governance on the other hand (a.o. Adam et al, 2000; Anderson, 2010; Beck, 1992; Groves, 2010; Levitas, 2000). By implying the need for particular actions, decisions, discourses, and actor relationships and roles, and not others, such future dynamics can confer power onto some actors, while disempowering others.

Moreover, in a similar vein, specific modes of futuring and specific types of futures can tie in with the construction and distribution of expertise (Groves, 2016; also e.g. Anderson, 2010; Barry, 2001; Inayatullah, 1990; Seefried, 2013). To a certain extent, the contents and ways of anticipation that emanate from dominant anticipatory assemblages and diagrams of anticipation ‘rely’ on certain knowledge practices, socio-technical infrastructures, and networks. In other words, prevailing anticipatory assemblages go together with certain legitimized, standardized, and authoritative ways and techniques of futuring through which specific futures are made legible. Some actors (and non-human ‘actants’) can perform the needed practices and deliver the required knowledges, technologies, methods, etcetera, and others cannot. Thus, ‘futuring expertise’ is constructed and granted to some actors, organizations, and actants, and not to others. When certain ways of futuring are constructed as the ‘standard’, ‘legitimate’, and ‘authenticated’ way of doing things, in line with dominant anticipatory assemblages, then expertise also becomes bestowed upon those actors and elements that can ‘future’ in this way.

Expertise, in this fashion, can help to underpin, reinforce, and perpetuate certain ways of thinking, doing, and organizing the future. When anticipatory assemblages and diagrams effectively and continuously

operate to establish particular futures and ways of futuring, and when such modes of futuring also get to concentrate themselves around specific forms of power and expertise, the assemblages and diagrams can become even more effective and obdurate than they already were (Groves, 2016). The 'expert' styles of futuring thereby not only constitute but also strengthen and reproduce the anticipatory assemblages of which they are part. Of course, this has additional implications for power and further 'reproduction' capabilities, strategies and effects (of assemblages, ways of futuring, and power relations, in the present and towards the future), both on conscious and unconscious dimensions.

The picture that arises is one in which heterogeneous anticipatory assemblages have the potential to become strongly generative and performative, especially when they develop into 'diagrams of anticipation' and become intertwined with forms of power and expertise. This is not a problem in itself, but it can become problematic when certain actors and actants are deprived of any anticipatory capability, and when only certain futures can be imagined and produced. In such conditions, it becomes important to reflexively and critically deconstruct and open up the assemblages and their futures and ways of futuring. If one translates this to the field of urban planning, and the current struggles with its limited and inadequate future engagement, it is exactly a deconstruction of urban planning's anticipatory assemblages and diagrams which appears to be necessary. Only then can planning practitioners and theorists truly break out of their entrenched and increasingly questioned and criticized ways of knowing, doing, and organizing the future, to engage with the future more openly, more competently, and more effectively.

### 3.4 INTEGRATING THE THREE APPROACHES

Based on the sections above, it becomes clear that an analysis of urban futures and urban futuring within urban planning as formulated in this paper needs to draw on the three outlined approaches and weave them together in an overall analytical framework. In such a framework, the various conceptual elements of the approaches need to be taken into consideration: from the critical post-structural futures approach, especially the focus on epistemes, discourses, language, and discursive spaces and practices; from the sociology of expectations, the attention to futures (expectations) and their dynamics and performativity, and in relation to that, the presence and potential influences of broader 'seas' and repertoires of expectations and collectively shared imaginaries; and lastly, from the sociology of the future, the scrutiny of 'more than human', more material dimensions of anticipation and the conceptualizations of heterogeneous anticipatory assemblages and diagrams of anticipation.

The framework that emerges from drawing together these elements is clearly constructivist in its perspective. It regards urban futures as actively constructed in the present, and suggests to deconstruct and dereify urban futures and urban futuring by critically examining the (normalized) discourses, forms of action, and socio-material assemblages through which the future is understood, constructed, and performed. To this end, attention is directed to the epistemological, discursive, and rhetorical construction of futures, as well as the performativity of those futures. Moreover, attention is also paid to those dimensions and aspects of urban futuring that are 'beyond human', and more material, unconscious, and implicit, such as scripts inscribed into technologies.

Thus, the ultimate proposition is to dissect 'urban futures-in-the-making' on all its dimensions: the conscious and the unconscious, the material and immaterial, the discursive and non-discursive, the 'in-the-making' and the performative. Much like Groves' (2016) notion of anticipatory assemblages and diagrams, all these dimensions and elements are regarded as mutually constitutive and co-evolutionary, making up dynamic and mobile ensembles of 'becoming', in which they interrelate, connect, and interact with each other and can potentially crystallize into relatively performative and generative compositions or systems of urban futuring. Following this, a theoretical-conceptual perspective develops which invites a conceptualization and dissection of 'dispositifs' and/or 'assemblages' and 'diagrams' of urban anticipation (after Foucault, a.o. 1980, 2007, 2008; and Deleuze, a.o. 1992, 2006, see Groves, 2016; also Anderson, 2010; Braun, 2014; Hillier, 2011; Legg, 2011; Pløger, 2008, 2010).

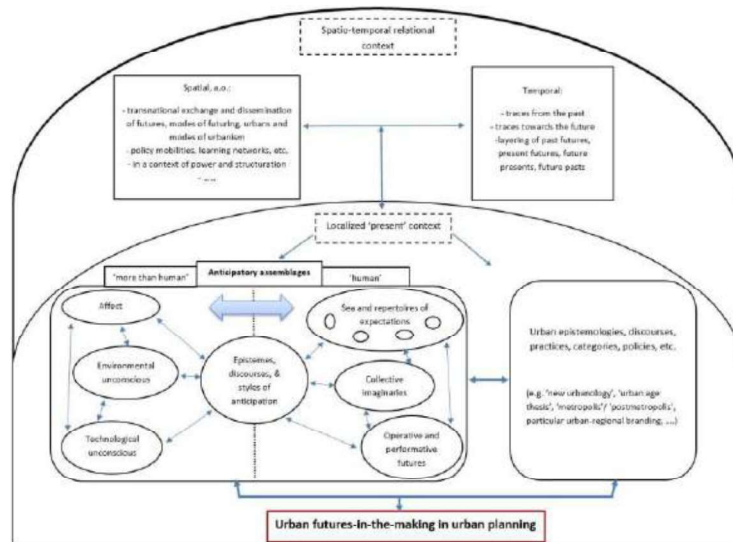


Figure 1. Visualizing the analysis of urban futures-in-the-making in urban planning.  
 Source: Author.

As figure 1 indicates, such an analysis of urban-futures-in-the-making within urban planning understands and examines any particular urban futuring exercise as constructed and influenced by heterogeneous assemblages, in which epistemologies, imaginaries, seas and repertoires of expectations, active and performative futures, and various material dimensions and aspects (practical, technological, biophysical, affective) all play a reciprocally constitutive role. Specific anticipatory and futuring efforts of urban planning are thereby situated within a broader environment, both in abstract-conceptual terms and in empirical spatio-temporal terms.

Concerning the empirical side, it is important to acknowledge that particular anticipatory exercises in urban planning, like a visioning process, are not isolated as one-time, bounded exercises – bounded both in time and space. Neither spatially nor temporally, specific futuring efforts are secluded from broader environments and developments. On the contrary, they are essentially relational, time-wise and space-wise. Regarding time, a futuring exercise does not simply take place in a defined ‘time-space’ in the (extended) present –with a clear beginning and ending -, but is inextricably tied to past and future events. For example, part of the futuring in a visioning process has already been done long before such a process starts, since the contents, directions, and shape of the futuring exercise have all been influenced by how the future has been constructed, understood, and performed before. This is why it is important to perform ‘genealogies of the future’ (Groves, 2016; Inayatullah, 1990) when analyzing contemporary urban futures and futuring: a genealogical historicization of the future engagement in the now is necessary to trace past influences on the current ways of thinking, doing, and organizing the future. Thus, analytically, one should not take the ‘beginning’ of an anticipatory exercise at face value, since the seeds for its futures and futuring have been partly planted in former times.

In a similar vein, futuring exercises are never really ‘finished’ either. In the very act of anticipation and futuring, traces towards the future are formed, strengthened, or disrupted in various ways and to various degrees. Most clearly, of course, there are the decisions, actions, and created futures resulting from many anticipatory exercises, which somehow concretely affect the present and thereby the unfolding future on both the ideational and material level. This relates closely to the very purpose of many futuring and strategy-making attempts in urban planning: to somehow give direction to the future through planning action. More abstractly and implicitly, however, the anticipatory action taking place within particular efforts of futuring can also help to create, reproduce, or break open anticipatory assemblages, dispositifs, and diagrams. In this way, futuring exercises and their futures can get bound up or come into conflict with existing and ongoing patternings of anticipation. They thereby become partly immanent and imminent to forthcoming developments, i.e. to the future, as well as to forthcoming anticipation, i.e. to the future of the future. This concerns a clear case of the future ‘in the making’, the future underway in the present, the future in process, the “immaterial future real” of latency and immanence (Adam, 2005, p. 11), and has to do with ‘future presents’ (Adam, 2005; Adam and Groves, 2007), which denote futures that are “already

set on the way” (Adam and Groves, 2007, p. 33). So, just as every futuring endeavor in urban planning is linked to future traces in the past, it is also always implicated in (future) traces towards the future (see also e.g. Hillier, 2011).

Alongside this temporal relationality of urban anticipation, one can also identify a spatial relationality. An urban futuring exercise is in all its dimensions (discursive, non-discursive, material, immaterial, etc.) never only unfolding in a specific, bounded institutional or local context or setting for a specific amount of time. On the contrary, it is related to and intertwined with all kinds of futures and futures epistemologies, discourses, repertoires, practices which are constructed and circulating intra- and inter-regionally, -nationally, and –globally; between cities and regions, nations, governments, institutions, people, learning networks, including summits, conferences, and so on (e.g. via the field of ‘futures studies’ or national and international futurist associations). At the same time, because of their ‘urban’ focus, these exercises are also related to and intertwined with all kinds of ‘urbans’, ‘urbanisms’, ‘urban categories and concepts’ and ‘urban epistemologies, discourses, repertoires, and practices’, which are also constructed and circulating between cities, regions, countries, institutions, cooperation networks, etcetera (e.g. via the field of urban planning, the OECD, the UN New Urban Agenda, the C40 network, etc.<sup>1</sup>).

Certain institutions and actors, and urbanism and urban discourses and practices; how ‘western’ approaches to the future have become ‘normalized’, and have also found their way into urban policy, practice, and discourse, which influences the way that the urban planning profession and field has developed and has been engaging with the future/futures (see e.g. Ahlqvist and Rhisiart, 2015; Inayatullah, 1990; Kuosa, 2011; Mitchell, 2014; Seefried, 2013; Slaughter, 1993, pp. 843-845; 1998, 2008; Son, 2015; Stevenson, 2008; Veenman and Leroy, 2016; Williams, 2016); think here of e.g. the ‘ideograph’ of progress, and its link to cities and urbanism, for example still detectable in the ‘new urbanology’ (Gleeson, 2012); think of e.g. ‘discourses of risk and utopia’ (Levitas, 2000; also e.g. Beck, 1992), and their links to ‘urban resilience’ here, and looking at the ‘urban’ from a perspective of vulnerability; and more.

Every particular, localized, empirically distinguishable case of urban futuring – e.g. a visioning exercise for London 2050 – therefore takes place in an broader environment which is very diverse, relational, and expansive in both its temporal and spatial dimensions. Wherever and whenever produced and performed, urban futures and urban futuring are thus fundamentally relational. This relationality does not only include the heterogeneity of elements that make up anticipatory assemblages, but also involves the variety of spaces and times with which urban futures and futuring are entangled. Hence, the relational dimension should always be taken into account if one aims to understand and transform the futures and ways of futuring within urban planning.

Of course, any specific, empirical case will also always stand on its own, in the sense that it has its own contingencies and particularities. A particular, localized effort of urban futuring will always be ‘unique in its relationality’: the ways in which ‘future’ and ‘urban’ practices, discourses, epistemologies, etcetera, that are constructed and circulated across times and spaces combine, translate, and interact with ‘local’, currently existing specificities, such as ‘environmental’ factors of the place in question, the specific actors and their anticipatory capabilities and frames, place-specific histories and histories of the future, and so on, will always be unique for that specific urban futuring exercise only. Analytically, an integrative balance therefore needs to be struck between studying the wide-ranging spatio-temporal relationality and localized particularity of urban futures and urban futuring.

Nonetheless, bearing in mind the spatio-temporal relationality of urban futures and urban futuring helps to account for the larger contexts in which urban anticipatory action takes place, and to be critical and reflexive about these. It is one thing to dissect urban anticipation by analyzing how all kinds of epistemes, repertoires, assemblages, imaginaries and other elements perform, align, and/or collide in specific futuring efforts, but it is another thing to also somehow try to find out and explain how these efforts are potentially expressive of and influenced by broader historical-geographical conditions of power and dominant forces of structuration (a.o. Brenner et al, 2011). It is rather safe to assume that the various socio-material

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<sup>1</sup> Think here e.g. of the article by Theodore and Peck (2011, p. 1) on the framing, development, and ‘coordination’ of a “transnational mode of neoliberal urbanism”, and similarly, McCann, 2013, on policy mobilities, policy boosterism and ‘Vancouverism’, and “global-urban policymaking”; think here of e.g. the historical development of futures studies and ‘futures expertise’, and the interrelations between specific epistemological approaches towards the future,

elements that assemble in particular efforts and places of urban anticipation do not just arbitrarily come together, but that their convergence and functioning ties in with larger societal contexts, 'structures', and relations of power, domination, and control. Hence, one should not turn a blind eye to these societal conditions if the goal is to properly understand and deconstruct why, when, and how specific anticipatory assemblages, futures, and ways of futuring are at work, and others are not. What this means is that an analysis of urban futures and futuring as proposed here should not remain stuck in mostly descriptive, presumably neutral accounts of all kinds of assemblages and relationalities at play in urban futuring, but that it should critically and reflexively engage with the (geo)political-economic contexts, formations, and forces against which urban futuring takes place. For current times, this would surely entail a critical view towards the dominance and impact of neo-liberal capitalism, which, in its various forms, guises, expressions, and 'structurations' arguably has had and still has a strong influence on everything related to urbanization, including the way the urban future is – and can be – addressed (a.o. Brenner et al, 2011; Fisher, 2009; Harvey, 1989, 2000, 2001; Lefebvre, 2009; Theodore and Peck, 2011).

Yet, while such notions of structuration should not be overlooked, it is simultaneously interesting to note which transformative implications the fundamentally relational understanding of urban futures and urban futuring might have. Before, it has been described that the various elements in an anticipatory assemblage can get to connect and perform in such a way that they become generative, performative, self-sustaining, and thereby potentially hegemonic, and restrictive in the futures and ways of futuring that they produce, predispose and allow for. However, the relationality inherent in such a view simultaneously points towards the contingency, fluidity, and variability of urban futures and urban futuring. By definition, the notions of relationality and assemblages imply continuous processuality and interdependency. Transferred to urban futures and futuring, such an interpretation counteracts blackboxing, and helps to see that the ways of knowing, doing, and organizing the future are not fixed but flexible. This means that, by extension, urban futures and futuring are mobile and changeable. In principle, the diagrammatization of anticipatory assemblages and patternings of anticipation are always temporary, and can be disrupted, reconfigured, and transformed through both inherent "lines of flight" (after Deleuze) and external impulses (see a.o. Deleuze, 1992; Groves, 2016; also Braun, 2014; Brenner et al, 2011, pp. 235-236; Hillier, 2011; Legg, 2011).

Admittedly, this transformative potential might be limited and difficult to actualize. Entrenched ways of understanding, acting, and organizing the future are not so easily overcome, particularly not when they link up with varieties of power, expertise, and political-economic structuration. Capitalism, to take an overarching as well as deeply rooted example, is renowned for its extraordinary resilience and its capacities to reappropriate shocks, innovations, and resistance (e.g. Fisher, 2009; Peck, 2010; Schumpeter, 1947; Wilson, 2014; Zizek, 2009): nothing truly new ever seems to be under the capitalist sun, which continues to burn unceasingly and widely, and, no matter how stormy the weather, always conquers the horizon again. Yet, despite this apparent obduracy, or, in fact, exactly because of it, it is surely critical to pursue transformation; especially if one considers the current predicament that urban planning and society find themselves in with their future engagement, and if one recognizes the promise that an improved future engagement holds for both urban planning and society. To this end, one needs to look at urban planning and its futures and futuring critically and reflexively, and, in the first place, aim to deconstruct the current ways of knowing, performing, and organizing the urban future. That is exactly what the framework proposed here makes possible.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

This paper consisted of two main sections. In section 2, I explained why it is interesting and important to examine the 'futures dimension' in urban planning. Urban planning and the city were described to be intrinsically future-oriented, and the future engagement of urban planning was identified to be a prominent and contested but as of yet underexamined and unresolved issue in contemporary debates and practices. In light of this, it was postulated that an increased comprehension of urban futures and urban futuring was necessary, not only to be able to understand urban planning better, but also to enable transformations and improvements in urban planning practice and theory. In section 3, I brought forward a theoretical-conceptual framework to analyze urban futures and urban futuring within urban planning. This framework makes it possible to expose, focalize, and investigate the crucial roles and workings that the futures dimension has in urban planning, by drawing upon those approaches which explicitly engage with the future and anticipation. It integrates the critical post-structural futures approach, the sociology of

expectations, and the sociology of the future, and is based on the ambition to deconstruct the ways of knowing, doing, and organizing the future in urban planning.

Here, I want to reflect on some of the challenges and refinements of the suggested approach. To begin with, this paper mostly focuses on deconstructing the future and futuring in urban planning, but, in 'urban futures and futuring', the urban side should not be forgotten. 'The urban' and 'the future' are deeply intertwined in a study that follows the approach described in this paper. Thus, a deconstruction of urban futures and futuring does not only disentangle discourses, epistemologies, assemblages, and so on related to the future, but, at the same time, it should also 'denaturalize', for example, urban epistemologies, discourses, practices, conceptual assumptions and frameworks, and the naturalization and dissemination of specific urban concepts, practices, policies, theses, etcetera. Importantly, it needs to be taken into account here that futures-related discourses, epistemologies, practices, and assemblages and so on can entwine with urban-related frameworks, concepts, epistemologies, and assemblages, and that these can influence and mutually constitute each other. This is for example clear in Gleeson's description of the contemporary 'new urbanology' and Brenner and Schmid's depiction of the 'urban age thesis': both accounts show how various 'narrow' or very particular conceptions of 'the urban' can also imply and have embedded within them certain 'narrow' or very particular conceptions of futures and future possibilities (Brenner and Schmid, 2014; Gleeson, 2012). So, a deconstruction of urban futures and futuring should always be about both how the future is understood, imagined, and performed, as well as how the urban is understood, performed, and imagined, and, crucially, about how these two dimensions interconnect.

Secondly, an analysis based on the framework proposed in this paper should be cautious in its application of 'assemblage' thinking. As Brenner et al (2011) have rightly argued, an assemblage-inspired approach may overstate and exaggerate the relationality within concepts like assemblage to the point of relativism and "naïve objectivism" (Brenner et al, 2011, p. 233; also Sayer, 1992, p. 45). When almost all attention is directed to descriptively tracing and mapping the materialities and connectivities of assemblages and their elements, one risks to overlook how these particular relations and compositions are situated within historical-geographical conditions of power and structuration. Such an effort would present a decontextualized picture in which assemblages seem to be assembled and disrupted almost automatically and anonymously, as if they are detached from, for instance, political-economic forces and power dynamics (see also Bender, 2010, p. 305). Accordingly, it is not enough to only expose that elements connect to each other, but also necessary to analyze how and why they form (or disturb) functioning assemblages, and who (or what) is doing the connecting and 'structuring' to whom (Brenner et al, 2011, p. 236).

At the same time, however, it would also be too simple and inaccurate to explain the emergence and functionings of certain assemblages by broad-brushly referring to political-economic 'systems' or overarching forces like capitalism. It is exactly here that the assemblage-approach can help to specifically identify how various forms of 'power' and 'structuration' concretely and continuously perform through and within 'assemblages' of heterogeneous elements and actors, which generate particular ways of doing, knowing, and organizing, and not others. Hence, assemblage-thinking can add to and simultaneously needs to integrate perspectives that deal with the more political-economic dimensions of social life (a.o. Brenner et al, 2011).

Thus, regarding the framework brought forward in this paper, the assemblage-approach should not be pushed too far when analyzing urban futures and futuring in urban planning. It should be applied in such a way that it is conceptually, empirically, and methodologically useful, while acknowledging and incorporating political-economic aspects (Brenner et al, 2011): it should help to diagnose how and why all kinds of elements and actors connect into particular assemblages that perform in such a way that they predispose futures and ways of futuring that are, most likely, in line with hegemonic arrangements of power and structuration. Simultaneously, by deconstructing urban futures and futuring in this way, the perspective should also help to identify openings: ways out of the dominant anticipatory assemblages themselves, and by extension, ways to counter and reshape the broader systems and relations of power and control.

Thirdly, another challenging aspect of this paper's theoretical-conceptual cadre is the relation between past, present, and future. These temporal categories and their relationships and dynamics are never fully accessible or re-traceable. When analyzing urban futures-in-the-making, one should consider a whole set of layers of past futures, present futures, future presents, and future pasts that interpenetrate each other

(Adam, 2005). However, these various futures and their processes of emergence and functioning are not so easily susceptible to empirical research. This is a key reason why it is so difficult to sociologically and analytically engage with the social future and processes and effects of futuring. For example, this difficulty also permeates efforts to undertake 'genealogies of the future': it is never possible to truly 'reconstruct' the history of the future, and the traces that are found and formulated in such genealogies will always be partially subject to selection and interpretation by the researcher (see e.g. Kearins and Hooper, 2002; Tamboukou, 2003). So, although the theoretical-conceptual framework provides several concepts and insights to expose and analyze the interplay of futures and temporalities, this will always remain a topic of concern that should be acknowledged and reflexively and truthfully addressed.

Fourthly and lastly, it should also be noted that analysts of futures and futuring are themselves part of the world of futuring that they attempt to investigate (a.o. Adam, 2005; Borup et al, 2006; Brown et al, 2005). Researchers cannot freely detach themselves from the various futures, temporalities, and ways of futuring that they experience and enact and that are variously embedded within them and their own practices, knowledges, bodies, and minds. This means that it would be misleading and almost hypocritical to claim a neutral, non-normative stance in futures-related investigations. Analysts of the future are always also future makers, implicated in the 'futures of our making' (Adam, 2005, p. 14). They consequently also need to consider their responsibilities, accountabilities, and moral and ethical obligations, ambitions, and impacts (Adam, 2005; Adam and Groves, 2007). A study of urban futures and futuring within urban planning along the lines suggested in this paper, therefore, should also be committed to the 'ethics of the future' (Bindé, 2000). Moreover, this ethical concern does of course not only involve the researcher's own positionality (his or her futures, futuring, actions, decisions, knowledges, research designs, and so on), but actually constitutes a significant additional factor to take into account when studying his or her actual cases of urban futuring: how do the studied urban futures and ways of urban futuring relate to future ethics or ethics of the future, and how can ethical resources towards the future be increased (Adam, 2005; Adam and Groves, 2007, 2011; Bindé, 2000; Groves, 2009)?

Clearly, multiple challenges accompany the exploration of the futures dimension within urban planning that is proposed in this paper. However, I contend here that, on the whole, the advocated approach is very valuable, and deserves to be pursued. Its value, moreover, does not only lie in the increased understanding it will bring about urban futures and futuring in urban planning. A research project along these lines also has clear practical value.

An increased understanding of the natures, roles, dynamics, and effects of futures and futuring in urban planning will provide insights that will also create to possibility to change and improve the practices, processes, and products of urban planning. Already at its base, for example, an increased awareness of the 'sea' of expectations in which urban futuring occur is valuable, since it strengthens the reflexivity of the relevant actors involved, allowing them to take this into account when imagining and acting upon city futures and future cities. Based on a better insight into how and why these processes work, it will become possible to open up the field of futures and futuring for urban planning, thus eventually allowing for more imaginative, creative, and therefore potentially more effective planning practices, processes, and products.

This link towards the more 'practical' value of the approach can also be described in conceptual terms. When futures and futuring are conceptualized as being at the heart of urban planning, and, more importantly, as being crucially performative, constitutive, and generative of urban planning, then it follows that it is also in this futures dimension where transformation can be brought about. In other words, the future becomes an important site of transformative action. It therefore makes sense to target the future engagement within urban planning when changes or improvements are sought. This is another reason why the proposed theoretical-conceptual approach offers a meaningful, innovative, and crucially significant perspective for the analysis of urban futures and futuring within urban planning. To come back to the beginning of this paper: by looking at the future, opportunities for improving the practices of looking into the future open up. By extension, the capacity to construct and realize better and more desirable futures rises on the not-so-distant horizon.

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