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Right-wing populism and urban planning

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the effects of right-wing populism (RWP) on urban planning from the perspective of the concept of the "just city" with its three attendant criteria—democracy, diversity and equity—along with a commitment to combating climate change. First, we discuss the significance and impact of RWP for planning at the level of metro areas, its difference from left-wing populism, and its implications for democratic theory. Next, we provide some brief illustrative examples from the U.S. and Germany of how the rise of RWP affects the attainment of values of equity, democracy and diversity, and examine who is involved. We then consider some explanations put forward for the current upsurge in RWP and examine the extent to which they help to make sense of developments affecting planning at the local level. Finally, we examine the possibilities—and limitations—of engaging with the right-wing populist movement within different paradigms of planning theory.

KEYWORDS

Populism; Just City; equity; participation; urban planning

Introduction

The term *populism* is pervasive in today's political debate. It has manifested itself both nationally and locally in numerous countries, both rich and poor, including Sweden, India, Turkey, and the Philippines, and its upsurge has important implications for local planning and policy making. The term is usually applied to right-wing mobilizations against institutionalized authority, while uprisings on the left generally go by the name social movements. We are concerned that right-wing populism (RWP) presents substantial barriers for public officials intent on making cities more just and resilient and that locally based right-wing movements have taken advantage of increased reliance on public participation to assert their views. We distinguish RWP from its left-wing counterpart by the substance of its demands rather than the form in which its demands are made, and while we characterize RWP as resisting elite decision making, we do not argue that all such resistance is populist, nor do we believe that it is always unjustified.

We rely on the three criteria—democracy, diversity, and equity—established by Susan Fainstein in her book *The Just City* (2010), along with commitment to combating climate change, to evaluate right-wing populism's impact. We do not assume that just-city planning motivates most municipal policy making, but rather we use it as our normative framework here.[1] In fact, creation of homogeneous districts has been the template for much of city planning since the nineteenth century. Commitment to equity and diversity, however, conforms to the code of ethics of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), which states that planners should

> Incorporate equity principles and strategies as the foundation for preparing plans and implementation programs to achieve more socially just decision-making. Implement, for existing plans, regulations, policies and procedures, changes which can help overcome historical impediments to racial and social equity [and] develop metrics and track plan implementation over time to measure and report progress toward achieving more equitable

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> outcomes. Attention and resources should be given to issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion and should reflect the diversity of the community. (American Institute of Planners [AICP], 2021)

Just-city planning descends from the tradition in planning theory that runs from Davidoff's (1965) call for planners to act as advocates for disadvantaged groups to Arnstein's (1969) endorsement of a decisive role for poor communities in formulating policy to Krumholz's promotion of equity planning (Krumholz & Forester, 1990).

In this article we show how the force of RWP makes reliance on democratic participation as the means for obtaining equitable outcomes problematic even while public input is a necessary component of justice planning. Community participants, exercising their democratic rights, may support excluding those who are ethnically different, oppose extension of mass transit, rebel against higher densities, block climate mitigation measures, and keep low-income households out of their neighborhoods, contending that increasing diversity, access, and housing affordability would destroy community character (see Blokland, 2017, ch. 6). What makes this activism populist is its identification of justice planning as elitist, its insistence that it represents the popular will, and its antagonism to change that would increase equity and inclusion.

Opposition to planning initiatives aimed at equity and diversity has long existed and been labeled NIMBYism; calling it local RWP points to its common traits with, and links to, contemporary populist movements at the national scale. Since higher densities, heterogeneity, mass transit, and climate resilience measures are typically prescribed by progressive planners (Reece, 2018), local hostility to these policies shares with national RWP movements opposition to institutional authority that likewise attributes such policies to out-of-touch elites (Müller, 2016): "In contemporary populism a 'new class' has been identified, that of the 'progressives' and the 'politically correct'" (Mudde, 2004). Right-wing populists have accused local officials of plotting to create local "climate change lockdowns" as part of imposing the UN's Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (Ionescu, 2023).

Here we address the ways RWP challenges just-city planning, its differences from left-wing populism, and the conundrum RWP in its present guise presents for planners committed to democratic participation. We first discuss the meaning and implications of RWP for planning at the level of metro areas, its difference from left-wing populism, and its implications for democratic theory. We then briefly examine some illustrative examples from the United States and Germany where its rise has affected the attainment of the values of equity, democracy, and diversity and look at who participates. Next we enumerate explanations that have been given for the current upswing in RWP. Finally we explore the possibilities—and limitations—of addressing the right-wing populist current within the framework of different paradigms in planning theory.

Populism: Definitions and diagnoses

Agreement generally exists that populists consider themselves as "the people" in opposition to corrupt or unresponsive elites (Mudde, 2017, p. 29). RWP is anti-pluralist; it assumes "the people" is a monolithic entity, while generally left-wing populism supports multiracialism and the assertion of non-mainstream identities. In an examination of the relevant literature, Berggren and Neergard (2015, p. 179) have suggested that "most researchers agree . . . that xenophobia, anti-immigration sentiments, nativism, ethno-nationalism are, in different ways, central elements in the ideologies, politics, and practices of right-wing populism." At the same time, many traditional right-wing parties based in religion, opposition to government spending, or support for retaining old systems of deference have faded into irrelevance or succumbed to populism themselves.

RWP has a long history in both the U.S. and Germany—while the term *populist* is receiving a renewed popularity, it has existed for more than a century in various guises (Mudde, 2004, p. 550). In the United States contemporary RWP continues a tradition of suspicion of experts dating back to the New Deal:

> In the management of public affairs and private business, where small politicians and small businessmen used to feel that most matters were within their control, these men have been forced, since the days of F.D.R., to confront better educated and more sophisticated experts, to their continuing frustration. (Hofstadter, 1963, p. 35)

The John Birch Society, prominent during the 1960s, organized chapters "to exert an impact at the local community level—on the schools, libraries, church groups, PTAs . . . ." (Forster & Epstein, 1964, p. 19). Local chapters were led by "businessmen seeking lower taxes and deregulation [who were] able to enlist, through conspiracy theories, the support of those who felt that the America they had grown up in was being undermined or destroyed . . . " (Mann, 2022, p. 37). Richard Nixon referred to the "silent majority," while in 1968 George Wallace led a third-party presidential campaign based on grassroots opposition to desegregation (Elliott, 2003).[2] Right-wing populists supported Ronald Reagan's presidencies, and in 1994 took control of Congress with their aims embodied in the "Contract with America" (1994). It promised to take back the streets (presumably from nonwhite criminals) and move funds from social programs to fund prison construction and additional law enforcement. Its aims were subsequently adopted by the Tea Party and eventually absorbed by Trumpism.

In Germany, of course, in the 1930s and 1940s Naziism embodied the view that real Germans were having their country stolen from them. In the postwar period, however, such sentiments were suppressed, and RWP was marginalized for decades. This assessment is no longer tenable today with the rise of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD). Founded in 2013 as a primarily EU- and Euroskeptic party, it has since established itself in the German party spectrum through promoting anti-Islam and anti-immigration positions. It was the first radical right-wing party to enter the German Bundestag since the Second World War and, unlike other far-right parties before it, also was established at the municipal and regional level throughout the country. Within both Germany and the U.S., right-wing leaders have acquired their highest level of popular support since the 1930s (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018; Schumacher, 2019). At the local level its manifestation in the form of NIMBYism, climate warming denial, and more generally resistance to change has long existed. What characterizes the present period is the strong links between national and local upsurges[3] and use of the term *populism* to describe oppositional social movements; the enduring factors have been denigration of expertise in the name of "the people," rejection of outsiders, and commitment to maintaining the status quo, which locally is defined as neighborhood character and individual automotive transport. Thus, Klein et al. (2022), when describing resistance to planners' efforts to reduce automobile dependence, note:

> [In] a representative sample of 600 adults, . . . [there were] deep partisan divides [over public support for transit]. In exploring the pathways between partisanship and policy preferences, we found that values and beliefs about change are both deeply partisan and closely associated with policy preferences. (p. 163)

The authors (p. 176) found a strong correlation between extreme political conservativism and opposition to changes in the automobile-oriented status quo.

The left- and right-wing forms of populism share some attributes. Adherents consider that they represent the will of the people; thus, the various "Occupy" uprisings of the 2010s assumed that they represented all the people except the wealthiest one percent. Both have arisen to combat displacement of existing residents and reject locating land uses perceived as negative such as homeless shelters, recycling facilities, wind farms, and jails within their communities. (Hence, NIMBYism is not always a right-wing phenomenon nor is it always anti-progressive or supportive of excluding people who are different). Each opposes top-down planning by experts when the plans are contrary to their beliefs. RWP, however, aims to suppress difference, limit access to privileged spaces, and oppose redistribution, while left-wing populism aims at protecting the relatively disadvantaged and strengthening "the right to the city" (Lefebvre et al., 1996; Soja, 2010).The literature that endorses the left-wing version generally eschews the term *populism*, instead referring to "urban social movements" when discussing urban resistance to government actions (Castells, 1977; Mayer & Boudreau, 2012), but both types employ similar tactics of deploying mass protest to attain their goals, make use of participatory

opportunities, and consider themselves to represent the general will. In both the right- and left-wing versions, populists consider that their views are being ignored by those in power and regard compromise as unacceptable.

We define RWP at the metropolitan level as the program of any grassroots movement which makes some form of direct appeal to a privileged group that perceives itself as representing virtue, promotes exclusion of "the other," or refuses to accept that climate change is a danger. Right-wing populists defend the rights of homeowners against perceived threats to the value of their holdings and protect white privilege through measures like exclusionary zoning and refusal to permit construction of affordable housing or public transit. They embrace an idea of justice, but only as it applies to themselves, and display resentment toward those who challenge their position. They may advocate for environmental protection when it serves their purposes of exclusion; for example, by opposing construction of affordable housing as allegedly damaging wetlands or contributing to automobile traffic. If these objections are, in fact, well-founded, we would not label them right-wing; often, however, they are simply pretexts for exclusionary aims. Right-wing populists define individual rights as control over privately owned property; they call for parental determination of school curricula (Hermann, 2022)—a position sometimes also held by those on the left (see Fainstein & Fainstein, 1974). They may coalesce around hostility to government actions that impinge on what they consider their rights, while supporting government moves to expel the homeless, censor library books, and carry out tough-on-crime policies. Right-wing populist forces have organized outside of electoral politics, promoting antagonism to "the other" and resistance to densification and mass transit. At the same time, they do seek to penetrate the formal political structure by supporting candidates for office and striving for favorable legislation, sometimes through placing referenda on the ballot. In fact, right-wing populists frequently call for referenda, but, as Müller (2016, p. 102) comments, "such exercises are not about initiating open-ended processes of democratic will-formation among citizens. Populists simply wish to be confirmed in what they have already determined the will of the real people to be."

Sager (2020, p. 81), who examines the relationship between RWP and planning, shows that the core ideas of "authoritarian populism" contradict several planning principles endorsed in liberal democracies, including particularly those advocated by communicative planning theorists, and criticizes planning scholars for not sufficiently attending to the effects of authoritarian populism on planning practice. Along with exclusionism, Sager (2020, p. 84) characterizes RWP as displaying a commitment to a charismatic individual embodying its demands—hence, he uses the term *authoritarian populism*. While we see this often at the national level, within localities their aims, rather than autocratic leadership, typically define right-wing populist endeavors, which are often issue specific; thus, we prefer the term *right-wing populism* over *authoritarian populism*. A *New York Times* article tracing relationships among right-wing groups around the world characterized them as "leaderless but united by racist ideology that has been supercharged by social media" (Bennhold & Schwirtz, 2021).

In fact, if authoritarianism is defined not in terms of attraction to an individual but rather obedience to institutional or expert authority, then both the left- and right-wing versions can be deemed anti-authoritarian. What makes both populist is refusal to accept established authority, either political or bureaucratic, when its dictates are contrary to their views. If, however, we define authoritarianism according to a psychological profile of adherents, then one interpretation of its prevalence is that it appeals to authoritarian personalities (Adorno, 1950). The psychological interpretation is among various attempts to explain what has brought us to the current "populist moment" (Mouffe, 2019, p. 11). These explanations typically follow social scientific fault lines, with some emphasizing material conditions, others stressing cultural and identity considerations, and still others attributing the growing appeal of RWP to the limits, contradictions, and crises of liberal democracies. As will be discussed below, these explanations are not mutually exclusive, since economic, psychological, and cultural factors interact to produce populist sentiments.

National-level RWP is frequently depicted as based in a working class resentful over loss of jobs due to globalization; this interpretation, however, does not hold up when electoral data is examined closely. Although there is a correlation between votes for right-wing populist candidates

and deindustrialized areas, closer examination of voting indicates that RWP is a movement of the relatively privileged. An investigation of support for Trump (Eatwell & Goodwin, 2018, p. 4) for instance, found that

> the tendency to portray Trump as a refuge for poverty-stricken whites . . . is deeply problematic. During the U.S. primaries, the median household income of a Trump voter was $72,000, compared to $61,000 for supporters of Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders and $56,000 for the average person . . . . [A]ttitudes to race, gender and cultural change played a big role, while objective economic circumstances played only a limited role.[4]

According to Mutz (2018, p. E4338), in a report to the National Academy of Sciences, the "left behind thesis," which attributes support for Trump to workers who watched their jobs move abroad is incorrect. Rather, "the 2016 election [of Trump], in contrast, was an effort by members of already dominant groups to assure their continued dominance . . . ." Similarly, Currid-Halkett (2023, p. 91), in an analysis of the most strongly pro-Trump parts of the American Midwest, finds that "Trump voters are [not] angry, poor, and left behind, but rather they are in regions with high homeownership and low unemployment."

In Germany a multivariate study of support for the right-wing AfD showed "no direct connection between AfD support and employment status and income." Nor did it find a relationship between level of education and AfD voting. The report concludes, "it is misguided to see the losers of society behind the AfD. The AfD sympathizers have worries about immigration, particularly refugees, and are mainly concerned that they will somehow culturally undermine Germany" (Schröder, 2018).

At the local level, virtually all examinations of opposition to affordable housing in U.S. cities have found middle-class homeowners to be the prime movers (Fischel, 2001; Tighe, 2020). A large quantitative study of voting participation concluded that "homeowners have special influence in American politics in part because their ownership motivates them to pay attention and participate" (Hall & Yoder, 2022, p. 351). Schively (2007, p. 257), when examining resistance to locally unwanted land uses (LULUs) observes that "research has illustrated that opponents of proposed facilities are typically older, more highly educated, wealthier, more likely to organize and attend meetings, and very certain of their opposition to the proposed facility" (see also, McCabe, 2016).

Although in Germany, with its tradition of rent control and subsidized construction, the location of affordable housing has not been as prominent a local issue as in the U.S., placement of climate mitigation facilities has provoked considerable reaction. A study of local citizens' initiatives [CI's] in Germany for and against the development of wind farms for electricity generation found ten groups in support and 270 opposed (F. Weber et al., 2017). The study did not examine the relationship between socio-economic status and mobilization, but it did find that the geographic locus of opposition was concentrated in the more prosperous west and southwest of the country, in contrast to violence against immigrants, which was centered in the east. The report indicated that

> up to 91% of CIs . . . [surveyed] cite the threat of loss of essential values, whether these are related to the natural/home environment, economic wellbeing or health . . . . it is the repetition—and with it the hegemonic consolidation—of such arguments that lends them social and political force, to the point of swinging a government round . . . (p. 128)

Opposition to wind farms embodied typical right-wing populist complaints of elitist domination: "One CI there goes so far as to condemn state political goals as 'ideological eco-totalitarianism' and 'red-green [Social Democrat and Green Party] eco-terrorism,' and accuses politicians of 'bypassing citizens' concerns and going through the back door" (F. Weber et al., 2017, p. 121).

RWP and the urban

Scholars are just beginning to examine how RWP manifests itself in urban settings (Chou et al., 2022). Rossi (2018, p. 1425) comments that studies of urban populism must counter:

> the common wisdom [which] associates today's "populist explosion" with a deepening urban-rural divide, in which small towns and rural regions are seen as reservoirs of populist anger while large cities in the most prosperous areas are portrayed as strongholds of . . . liberal democracy.

Yet, although in Western Europe and the United States RWP has been most pronounced in the countryside and smaller towns, cities and their suburbs remain susceptible to it. Especially suburbia needs analysis, but even core cities manifest right-wing populist sentiments, whether in the form of grassroots activism (e.g., anti-mosque and anti-transit protests) or of electoral mobilizations against immigrants.[5] Filion (2011, p. 464) uses the case of Rob Ford's popularity as mayor of Toronto, where he reversed earlier progressive planning measures, to reflect more broadly on the "vulnerability of planning agendas to right-wing populism" (see also, Silver et al., 2020). Other examples of right-wing success in municipal elections include Pim Fortuyn's 2002 victory in Rotterdam in 2002 (Van Ostaaijen, 2019), the election of Bart De Wever, the populist chairman of the separatist New Flemish Alliance (NVA), as mayor of Antwerp in 2012, and the triumph of Gianni Alemanno, a post-fascist politician, in the 2008 Roman mayoral elections 2008 (Broder, 2020). Existing publications on urban RWP investigate populism's "electoral geographies" and discuss their implications for urban policy (e.g., Uitermark & Duyvendak, 2008; Van Gent et al., 2014). The emergence of the AfD has attracted considerable attention, and its success in urban areas has problematized the use of a rural-urban dichotomy (Bescherer et al., 2018; Förtner et al., 2021; Mullis, 2021).

Populism, democracy, and urban justice

Of the three principles of urban justice presented in *The Just City* (Fainstein, 2010), RWP populism is inherently opposed to diversity; it is ambiguous toward equity, which is redefined as fairness to owners and redress for unjust disadvantage or oppression by groups such as minorities or elites; and it is favorable toward democracy as it defines it. In relation to diversity, generally populists oppose opening their communities to people who are different on some ascriptive characteristic and resist policies favoring multiculturalism. They vigorously defend property rights, regarding any limits on them as infringing on equity. Although aims of left-wing movements may, when they involve action against change, sometimes coincide with those of the right (e.g., leftist opposition to gentrification, rezoning, or new development), left-wing efforts generally support marginalized or economically disadvantaged groups.

The question of how to interpret democracy as a guiding principle of spatial justice is fraught. The right-wing populist slogan "we are the people" assumes that government should be of the people, by the people, and for the people and is based on a concept of democratic legitimacy. "The people," however, consist of those with like-minded views and, usually, shared ethnicity, social status, religion, or some combination of these commonalities. Within American metro areas, resistance to racial integration causes opposition to inclusionary zoning, multi-family construction, subsidized housing, and desegregated schools. The mid-1970s uprising in South Boston against school busing, which involved thousands of participants attacking buses conveying black children to formerly homogeneously white schools, was a prominent early example of urban right-wing grassroots militancy (Lukas, 1985).[6] Homeowners typically rail against property taxation, while landlords inveigh against rent regulation, often in the name of small owners but usually backed by larger interests. Self's (2003) history of the anti-property tax movement in California chronicles a highly successful, grassroots effort to protect homeowners from rising taxes and to enforce racial exclusion. In Europe resentment of immigrants constitutes the main source of urban populist movements, along with opposition to policies imposed in the name of a greater good (e.g., fuel taxes to combat climate change; location of generating facilities). In both the U.S. and Europe, vilification of Islam reflects religious commonality and shows up in opposition to construction of mosques.[7]

Situations where public participation in planning decisions opens the way for opponents of equity and diversity to dominate communication pose a most vexing question for progressive planners (cf.,

Boudreau, 2003). RWP raises the crucial issue of whether progressive planners can continue to champion participation and people reasoning together when participants support intolerance and unequal outcomes.[8] The problem is especially acute in homogeneous political jurisdictions where most community members support exclusionary restrictions. Communicative rationality theory presupposes a situation where differing economic interests and proponents of different viewpoints engage in deliberation to reach an agreement and that it is possible to attain consensus even when participants regard the dispute as a zero-sum game. But, as succinctly stated by Rivero (2017, p. 492):

> The possibility of productive deliberation among contending parties depends on a range of conditions. These include, among others, people's ability to recognize their assumptions as well as their willingness to subject them to examination, their capacity to overcome cognitive biases that lead us to interpret evidence to correspond with our beliefs and to discount evidence that does not, a common epistemological ground, and a shared faith in the impartiality of public institutions that mediate our interaction (e.g., planning). *These requirements, which have always come across as farfetched, now seem to border on fantastical*, as, consequently, does the possibility of a meeting of the minds among political opponents. (Italics added)

In a period where antagonists refuse to interact with each other but stick to those who share their opinions, little space exists for deliberation. As summarized by Huddy (2013, p. 763) in a review of the psychology literature on group commitment: "Strong partisans and ideologues are typically the most passionate about their political group and seem far from the rational decision-makers envisioned by democratic theorists" (see also, Taber & Young, 2013, on confirmation bias). While this has always been the case, the populist attack on expertise is occurring in a political climate where fake news, misinformation and outright falsehoods have become especially influential thanks to social media. Thus, Fischer (2021, p. 74), long a proponent of democratic deliberation, admits: "We have to concede that nobody at this point knows how to bring these duplicitous practices of post-truth to a halt."

To understand why this is such a perplexing issue for planners who wish to derive their legitimacy from democratic participation, one needs to go back to the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, when radical democracy represented the principal demand made by urban social movements opposed to state-sponsored redevelopment and top-down bureaucratic decision making. Within the United States resistance to urban renewal and school segregation along with calls for reworking social welfare programs (Piven & Cloward, 1977) precipitated the call for community control (Altshuler, 1970)—in other words, a demand that community members rather than professionals determine the policies that affected them. In New York parents of children of color demanded community school boards (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1974); in San Francisco evictions from single-room-occupancy hotels resulted in passionate resistance and similar demands for community power (Hartman, 2002). European social movements likewise reacted against bureaucratic authority (Clarke & Mayer, 1986; Donzelot, 1979). Madrid's Citizens Movement (Castells, 1983) demanded self-government for local districts. In Amsterdam opposition to demolition within the city's core mobilized squatters' movements and occasioned calls for decentralized democratic governance (Uitermark, 2004).[9] Demonstrators shouted the slogan "no justice, no peace" in cities around the world.

Sherry Arnstein's much-cited article extolling participation contended that community power over decision making "is the means by which they [i.e., poor people] can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society" (1969, p. 216). Supporters of urban social movements assumed their aims were redistributive and that community control would produce just outcomes. Although the term *populism* was not generally applied to these left-wing movements, they shared with right-wing populists a rejection of elite authority, in their case of governmental decision makers who represented the interests of business and real-estate groups rather than the progressive officials whom the right excoriates.

Governments in the U.S. and Europe responded to unrest with programs offering opportunities for grassroots participation.[10] Fifty years after Arnstein, citizen engagement in plan making has become part of the orthodoxy of city planning. Its supporters believe that if the outcomes of participatory processes reproduce inequality and discrimination against low-status groups, then the processes must be flawed rather than that such outcomes represent the popular will (Lauria &

Slotterback, 2021). Restricting participatory rights to the otherwise excluded segments of society, who would then force a redistribution of public benefits, however, is neither practicable nor in conformity with democratic principles of broad inclusion. Although positing the ideal of equal participation in policymaking as a goal is justifiable theoretically (see Purcell, 2013), the notion that democracy itself will provide the means to reach that ideal does not sufficiently confront the realities of extremism, existing power hierarchies, and the difficulty of prescribing the appropriate geographic boundary to define the participatory unit. Dismissing results that do not enhance diversity and equity as the product of faulty communication or imperfect processes fails to acknowledge the sentiments of publics that adhere to illiberal viewpoints or simply oppose changes to the status quo.

The weaknesses of democracy are well known, and democratic theory has never resolved them (see Brennan, 2016). They include majoritarianism (and what Tocqueville identified as the triumph of mediocrity); power based on wealth and/or control of the means of production; the persistence of deference structures; the ruthlessness of power-seeking individuals; corruption among office holders; and cultural mores that subordinate groups like women, LBGTQ, and racial/ethnic others. The institutional and partisan character of contemporary political systems and the reach of electronic media have exacerbated discontent: right-wing parties play on sentiments of hostility to others or to policy elites as well as on widespread distrust of existing political institutions (Joy & Vogel, 2021). The decline of the unifying sources of information that existed when everyone watched the same television stations allows people to hear only messages that accord with their views. Now social media have provided new means for mobilizing, and their "echo chambers" have created fertile spaces for deception and disinformation (Waisbord, 2019). In relation to metropolitan areas, geographic definitions of the participatory unit mean that either it is too large for meaningful participation or too small to encompass a broad range of interests or to make significant decisions (Dahl, 1967). Since Aristotle warned against demagoguery and early 20th century theorists worried about the mob (LeBon, 1895/1995; Ortega y Gasset, 1932/1985), the threat of mobilized, reactionary publics has always hung over the promise that democracy would bring greater equality and tolerance.

Recent RWP manifestations in urban America and Germany

In this section, we present some examples that show how RWP manifests itself locally in urban contexts in the U.S. and Germany. Our purpose in selecting these two countries is to show that RWP presents itself in similar ways with similar targets despite strikingly different institutional, historical, and political contexts.[11] Although both countries have federal systems, they differ in that Germany has a multi-party parliamentary system while the U.S. has a two-party, presidential system. These differences extend to the local level where elections in Germany are contested by many parties; in the U.S. local election rules are varied, with nonpartisan, two-party, and multi-party competitions, although usually one party dominates. In both countries, a national right-wing party reflects, and is reflected in, local mobilizations. In regard to planning, Germany's localities operate in the framework of national and regional rules; in the U.S. planning is primarily at local levels, although localities are constrained to varying degrees by state governments. Germany, even under conservative rule, has had active government support for land-use planning, social housing, and social welfare programs. The U.S., except for brief periods, has weak government provision of housing and welfare and less restrictive land-use planning. Germany's history of right-wing activity is rooted in a monarchical and fascist past that to varying degrees still exerts influence today. The United States was born in a colonial revolution, has a history of slavery and racial discrimination, and has witnessed periodic right-wing upsurges, but it has never had an avowedly fascist party. At present Germany has, in addition to several smaller parties, one prominent extreme right-wing party, the AfD; the U.S. Republican Party, while also to the right, contains a wider range of ideology and may mute its ideology within local contexts. Yet, with all these differences, local, right-wing opposition to just-city planning takes on similar forms and objectives in both countries.

The examples presented here are meant to be illustrative, not paradigmatic, but they exemplify the rhetoric of local right-wing populism and are typical in their objectives. What makes us call these oppositions to planning proposals populist is their assertion that the popular will rather than expert guidance should prevail. We do not regard their aims and tactics as new. On the contrary, in both countries and especially the United States, public support for anti-planning agendas associated with RWP have long been evident. Their heightened prominence is partly attributable to social media that reinforce their causes and also to their links to national organizations from which local groups obtain organizational, financial, and legal support.

Examples from the United States

NIMBYism as an expression of exclusionary politics

The commonest form of populist exclusionism at the local level has been termed NIMBYism. Defined as opposition to inserting unwanted land uses in a neighborhood, a debate exists concerning how to evaluate such a response (Goetz, 2021; Imbroscio, 2021; Lake, 1993, 1996). Although most scholars regard movements to exclude such uses as affordable housing or infrastructure serving poor people as invidious, Lake (1993, p. 89) views land use conflicts as "displaced class conflict" and contends that they are a rational response to the conditions of land development under capitalism. Citing Lake's argument, Imbroscio (2021, p. 234) maintains that "some potential exclusion is clearly the necessary, if lamentable, price we must pay for democratically empowering grassroots control over inhabitants' own neighborhoods and local communities." Goetz's (2021, p. 279) counterargument is that seeing NIMBYism as a legitimate expression of community democracy disregards that "sometimes in fact the political mobilization[s] around local land-use issues are indefensible expressions of racism and White supremacy." In fact, NIMBYism may be in support of greater equity—for example, when small business owners or local residents oppose a megadevelopment that threatens to displace them or regard condo conversions as a stimulus to gentrification (Hamnett, 2003, ch. 7). In other cases, however, as Goetz emphasizes, it both empowers local democracy and counters diversity, revealing the tension between these two just-city values. For the purposes of our discussion, we can accept these different interpretations of the roots of NIMBYism and still consider mobilizations against changes in the land use of an area as manifestations of RWP when they block efforts to address social and racial injustices. While populism claims to return control to "the people," NIMBYism, when it is a defense of neighborhoods from outsiders who threaten racial or upper-class homogeneity, is an expression of exclusionary sentiments (see West, 1993, p. 30).

The case of Branford, Connecticut, provides a typical example of right-wing populist resistance to subsidized housing and dense development.[12] Branford is a town in Connecticut that, while racially mostly homogeneously white, is diverse in land use and income.[13] Fierce opposition arose against efforts to replace an existing public housing project (Parkside) that was restricted to seniors and the disabled. When the town's housing authority learned that the complex was in danger of collapse, it applied for federal financing for new construction; federal rules, however, required that it no longer be age restricted. At a series of public hearings, disparaging comments made by opponents were as follows:

> "The problem is that you shouldn't be mixed in with low income . . . people. That brings a different element to the town," was one comment . . . . Another was: "The minute it [Parkside] takes state and federal money, it's open to anybody, anybody." One resident observed: "Retirees, disabled, old people—I have no objection to renovate the whole place and make it nice for them. But don't get too much of that riffraff in." (Chambers, 2018)

Antagonism to the agreement led to a successful movement to remove the head of the housing authority, although a court order has allowed the project to proceed.[14]

Another Branford controversy involved transit-oriented development. After improvements to the town's train station, the municipality employed a planning consultant who convened several public meetings that endorsed a scheme for development of vacant land near the station. Applications by

developers to build apartment houses, however, prompted a neighborhood resident to mobilize others living in the vicinity, and suddenly signs opposing new construction sprouted throughout the area (Figure 1). Negative reaction to the plan came from residents who had not participated in the public meetings and who called for a halt to "overdevelopment." According to a local on-line newsletter:

> Neighbors . . . say they are concerned about further changes to their quality of life . . . Dugan [the protest leader] said that a few months back she had no idea she would be spearheading an effort to raise awareness among her neighbors and seek their input on a zoning issue; much less trying to rally that support during a pandemic. (Johnson, 2020)

Thus, despite the use of a seemingly successful deliberative planning model, many community members refused to accept its initial premise that transport-oriented development is desirable.

The Branford story resembles many others chronicled in the literature. The resistance to new high-density construction especially characterizes locations that, unlike Branford, have seen rapid employment growth and extreme pressure on the existing housing stock, resulting in price inflation (Glaeser & Ward, 2009; Gray, 2022). For instance, Dougherty (2020, p. 81) recounts how in California "the good intention of stopping sprawl soon became cover for stopping everything." A study of opposition to new construction in Cambridge, Massachusetts, regards it as focused on community preservation and applies the term *neighborhood defenders* to those desiring to maintain the status quo (Einstein et al., 2020, p. 35). In Branford, in California cities, and in Cambridge, Massachusetts, despite the liberal orientations displayed in their voting behavior within statewide and national elections, the perceived danger of higher densities gave rise to grassroots movements and rebellion against what was condemned as top-down elite imposition of undesired forms of development (Einstein et al., 2020, pp. 10–13).

Figure 1. Sign opposing higher densities around Branford railroad station (Susan Fainstein).

These examples point to the difficulty in discerning whether NIMBYism represents a right- or left-wing form of populism or simply justifiable opposition to out-of-scale or environmentally damaging projects. Opponents in Cambridge claimed that they were defending affordability against pressures from large-scale developers to reconstitute their neighborhoods as locations for high-income households and big corporations. Similarly, opponents in New York to the upzoning of SoHo, already among the most expensive neighborhoods in the city, argued that the city's plan for permitting higher densities, which ostensibly would allow for construction of affordable housing, would instead produce gentrification (Zukin, 2023).

The alliance of Manhattan neighborhood groups opposing the SoHo plan represented a marriage of convenience between representatives of low-income areas like the Bowery and Chinatown, wealthy preservationists in SoHo, and neighborhood associations drawing from gentrifying areas that still housed pockets of poor people. The alliance produced an alternative plan that called for building affordable housing but without the market-rate units that the city's plan envisioned as cross-subsidizing the cheaper ones. Sylvia Li, a senior planner for the city, called the community's plan "magical thinking that is not rooted in reality . . . . We think that is not a plan that is motivated by a genuine concern for displacement or . . . desire to introduce more housing affordability" (L. Anderson, 2021). In response, the dozen groups involved wrote a letter to elected officials "to condemn the reprehensible comments by the Senior Planner from the Department of City Planning at the Community Board #2 July 8 public hearing on the city's proposed 'SoHo/NoHo' up-zoning plan." The signatories demanded that Li's statements be "denounced and repudiated" and that "appropriate action" be taken against her, along with the Manhattan director of city planning and the department's counsel (Coalition for Fairness in Soho and Noho, 2021).

Characteristic of populist uprisings of both left and right is the view that planners represent an elite, not the people, and that they are the cats' paws of larger interests. Even when the plans are developed in the context of endless public meetings, opponents regard solicitation of public input as a sham. The Manhattan coalition was united in opposing change in their neighborhoods, but the low-income groups were primarily committed to stopping gentrification (left-wing populism), while the wealthier participants were mostly concerned with preserving the low-rise physical character of the area. It is notable that in both this and the Branford case, opponents did not simply press their point of view but demanded the repudiation of the public officials whose decisions they disliked.

NIMBYism, when it takes the form of preventing the in-movement of people considered undesirable because of race or poverty, can be labeled as right-wing; opposition to gentrification can be classified as left-wing; concern over the destruction of traditional architecture presents an ambiguous case. In all these instances, however, adherents call into question the legitimacy of experts, which is the hallmark of populism.

National-local linkages in opposition to planning and modernism

Supra-local networks have been instrumental in attacks on local planning. The Tea Party, a loosely connected, ideologically driven group of Republican Party activists, were "storming planning meetings of all kinds and opposing various local and regional government plans that had anything to do with density, smart growth, sustainability or urbanism" (Flint, 2011; Trapenberg Frick, 2013); they called the UN's Agenda 21, aimed at promoting sustainability, a totalitarian plot (Berrey, 2020; Mencimer, 2011). The movement formed in 2009, with its name referring back to the Boston Tea Party of 1773 that was a harbinger of the American Revolution; its participants regarded its anti-government stance as standing for true democracy. Its opposition to actions of local planning authorities embodied an anti-elitist, anti-government, anti-intellectual, and at times conspiratorial rhetoric that appeared in localities throughout the country (Skocpol & Williamson, 2016). According to Skocpol and Williamson (2016, p. 200), "many local Tea Parties include both social conservatives . . . and libertarians."

Other national right-wing organizations have also turned their attention to local politics. Thus, the *New York Times* reported in 2021:

> Members of the Proud Boys, the far-right nationalist group, have increasingly appeared in recent months at town council gatherings, school board presentations and health department question-and-answer sessions across the country. Their presence at the events is part of a strategy shift by the militia organization toward a larger goal: to bring their brand of menacing politics to the local level . . . . Other far-right groups that were active during Mr. Trump's presidency, such as the Oath Keepers and the Three Percenters, have followed the same pattern . . .. (Frenkel, 2021)

Local right-wing populists have attacked and threatened school boards and administrators, accusing them of acting contrary to parental views. They have supported school prayer, resisted vaccination mandates, and strongly opposed the use of critical race theory [CRT].[15] They have been backed by higher-level politicians, who have endorsed their concerns:

> Florida Governor Ron DeSantis pledged that he wouldn't let state law enforcement agencies work with the FBI on school board threats . . . Nebraska's Governor . . . described it [CRT] as an "attack on parental input . . . ." "These parents [Republican Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley said] are trying to protect their children. They're worried about divisive and harmful curricula based on critical race theory." (Ford, 2022)

After the Tea Party became absorbed by Trumpism, former president Trump, as part of his 2020 reelection campaign, raised the specter of forced suburban integration and its threat to white homeowners, indicating his support for local exclusionary measures:

> [Trump mounted] an appeal to white suburban voters by trying to stir up racist fears about affordable housing and the people who live there. Mr. Trump said on Twitter that "people living their Suburban Lifestyle Dream" would "no longer be bothered or financially hurt by having low-income housing built in your neighborhood." (Karni et al., 2020)

Right-wing think tanks and organizations have framed and promoted local narratives opposing interference with private property rights and condemning environmental initiatives. Americans for Prosperity, a libertarian political advocacy group founded by billionaire brothers David and Charles Koch, along with Fox Media, Rupert Murdoch's news juggernaut, and other non-local actors have all provided support for local groups opposing inclusionary zoning or public provision of transport (Trapenberg Frick, 2016, p. 100). This alliance has continued within the present manifestations of RWP. As well as publicizing local claims of unjust treatment, outside backers provide expertise and financing for court cases. For instance, the Pacific Legal Foundation, which calls itself "the oldest and most successful public interest legal organization that fights for limited government, property rights & individual rights," has intervened in numerous local disputes by filing *amicus curiae* briefs[16] when litigants oppose planning decisions. Its web page declares that "the right to own and use your property is the guardian of every other right" (https://pacificlegal.org/property-rights/).

In many American metropolitan areas, controversy has erupted over the future of local and regional transportation policy, and populist forces have played a crucial role in blocking efforts to expand public transit. They often received outside support, as the following excerpt from a press release issued by Americans for Prosperity against a mass-transit project in Nashville illustrates:

> The free market can fix the traffic problem itself. We don't need the government stepping in to "fix" a problem we're already taking care of by ourselves. Ride sharing services, food delivery services and the ability to order just about anything you need to your door are all ways we're moving towards efficiency. And *those are all ideas from ordinary people, not bureaucrats and city planners* at high costs to the taxpayers. (Americans for Prosperity, 2018; ital. added)

Voters rejected the transport policy ideas of Nashville planners in a referendum by "the spectacular margin of 36% 'for' to 64% 'against'" (Transit Center, 2019). Like many American examples, this points to public rejection, using the instruments of democracy, of strategies widely accepted among professional planners as necessary for climate resilience and giving low-income residents better access to employment.[17] The case shows how the views of conservatives, who wish to retain the character and racially exclusionary composition of their community, coincide with those of libertarians opposed to government interventions.

Examples from Germany

According to a recent study (Zick et al., 2019), the German public's confidence in democracy and its institutions has declined, and more than one third of the population sympathizes with right-wing populist appeals, i.e., anti-democratic and anti-pluralist claims. The study shows that although a large part of the population professes antagonism to openly right-wing extremist attitudes, it nevertheless is receptive to law-and-order authoritarianism and hostile to immigrants, refugees, and Muslims. Recent controversies over the construction of new mosques illustrate the operation of RWP in German cities.

Fears and exclusion of "the other"

The history of the mosque in Cologne, completed in 2017 after years of controversy, is an early example of how "organised and campaign-oriented right-wing populism" (Häusler, 2008, p. 12) instrumentalized the issue of mosque construction (Figure 2).[18] Opposition to the proposed mosque appeared mainly under the guise of a local citizens' initiative called ProKöln, which consisted mainly of former functionaries within right-wing extremist parties. It capitalized on community concerns over the planned mosque by agitating against the alleged threat of Europe's "Islamization" and characterizing the mosque's defenders as unresponsive elites. ProKöln stylized itself as a "nonpartisan" alternative to the "corrupt" politics of the so-called *Altparteien* ("old parties"), which overwhelmingly supported the building of the mosque, and cast the controversy as a battle of "us versus them" (Killguss et al., 2008, p. 55). "Us" meant the "native" population, while Muslims, along with "elites" speaking out in favor the mosque (or not opposing it), were the main targets.

Although ultimately unsuccessful in blocking the mosque in Cologne, agitation against it emerged as a model for right-wing public "self-dramatization" elsewhere (Häusler, 2008, p. 11). Similar mobilizations in the years that followed instigated battles over construction of refugee accommodation centers in the wake of the "refugee crisis" of 2015–2016.

The AfD absorbed these local associations, leading to the eventual disbandment of ProKöln and its imitator "Pro" groups that had arisen in other German cities. Now, in many German cities, national and local players engage in a division of labor, whereby the AfD covers the realm of electoral and parliamentary politics while local right-wing activists work outside it but are allied with it. For instance, in the eastern German city of Cottbus, the AfD works closely with "Zukunft Heimat," ("Future Homeland"), a right-wing extremist organization (Fröschner & Warnecke, 2019). Its very

Figure 2. Protest march against the construction of Cologne's new mosque in 2007 (Moritz Guth, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0).

name illustrates a central strategic motif of the organization. The polysemic and multi-layered character of the word *Heimat*—which roughly translates into "home" or "homeland," although no exact English equivalent exists—establishes a link to right-wing extremist thought and politics, in which *Heimat* is regularly used to champion nationalist, xenophobic, or racist ideals.

In addition to identifying the supposed threat to German culture, society, and security posed by migrants, refugees, and Muslims, the AfD and its local allies use general dissatisfactions as ammunition in their declared struggle against allegedly corrupt "elites" and minorities (Bescherer et al., 2018, p. 5). As in the American cases, justice is not defined as redressing disadvantage but rather as protecting the preexisting local character. Thus, in early 2020 a national debate occurred about the decision of a district in the city of Hamburg to end zoning for single-family homes. Policymakers in Hamburg Nord, the district in question, had decided that future development plans should require higher densities to protect the environment and to respond to Hamburg's housing shortage. The AfD and other conservative parties targeted the Green Party as the originator of this policy and accused it of being anti-property and anti-freedom, while the city's planning officials received intimidating threats on social media (Schulte, 2021).

Another example, which shows clear parallels to some of the American cases discussed earlier, is the recent controversy surrounding the Citybahn, a light rail system intended to connect the cities of Wiesbaden and Mainz. Aimed at solving the region's severe traffic problems and supported by most experts and politicians in the region, a majority of Wiesbaden's electorate rejected the railroad in a referendum in December 2020, after which it was abandoned. Opponents of the project, mainly organized in two citizens' groups, used textbook populist tactics to mobilize against it, obscure the issues at stake, and undermine support. Their campaign, which they ran forcefully on social media, called the *Stadtplaner* (urban planners) *Stauplaner* ("traffic jam planners") and the Citybahn the *Filzbahn* ("sleaze train")—a brainchild of corrupt elites and loony environmentalists. They branded the project's progenitors as enemies of the people and beneath unflattering pictures of them on posters asked "Who benefits from the Citybahn?" or declared "The city belongs to the citizens, not . . . ." Activists portrayed planning and decision-making procedures as rigged; and they spread a barrage of misinformation, including the fabricated insinuation that construction of the light rail would be linked to an age limit on car drivers (Reckmann, 2020). These tactics succeeded in defeating the Citybahn plan, making it a robust example of "post-truth politics" (Fischer, 2020; Perl et al., 2018), in which falsehoods prevail over facts and emotion displaces appeals to reason. The arguments of experts in favor of the project—pointing out that the light rail would reduce carbon emissions, provide low-cost transport for commuters, and help to solve the region's traffic problem—were drowned in a barrage of misinformation and, as in Nashville, the claim that defeating the plan produced a just outcome was rationalized in terms of a democratic procedure—the referendum.

Disputes over architecture, heritage, and aesthetics

Another area in which RWP-politics intersects with urban planning, which has caused considerable controversy in Germany, relates to issues of architecture and heritage and in particular how reconstruction of World War II damaged sites should be done. In this context, there have been repeated attacks on the "modern" structures which had replaced earlier buildings, as well as campaigns to bring back "traditional" architectural styles and rebuild historic buildings and townscapes. The recent restoration of the old cities in Dresden and Frankfurt along with the reconstruction of Berlin's City Palace and Potsdam's Garnisonkirche[19] represent the success of these campaigns. While it would be a stretch to attribute them solely to reactionary political fervor, they are nevertheless closely linked to it. Influential private individuals and organizations from conservative-reactionary milieus played a decisive role in many of these projects, both openly and behind the scenes. For all of them, in typical right-wing populist fashion, the supposed will of the people was routinely used as legitimation, while critics were labeled as members of an aloof elite opposing the "common people" who supposedly preferred traditional architectural styles and cityscapes.

As should quickly become clear in view of Germany's history, the issue here is not just a case of aesthetic populism. Rather, many authors have pointed out that "anti-modernist" and historicist agendas are often closely linked to wider reactionary political and cultural goals (Trüby, 2017). In this context, innocuous terms such as *authenticity, beauty* or *repair of the city* serve to propagate various kinds of nationalist, revisionist histories that glorify Germany before the Third Reich and downplay the horrors that followed. They are being deployed to promote a new German "will to self-assertion" (*Selbstbehauptungswillen*), that, as an AfD politician put it (Höcke, 2017), would end the cult of guilt allegedly keeping the country from rising to former glory and rein in the cosmopolitanism associated with contemporary modern architecture. The effort involves two elements: a populist identity politics based on a particular ethnocultural/nationalist notion of history, identity, and culture; and hostility to an aloof elite unconcerned with German culture and identity on one side and "the people" who value and defend the true Germany, on the other.

The sources of their discontent

Various theories have been used to explain the attraction of RWP. They can generally be classified as psychological, cultural, political-economic, and demographic. Since the different causes are interactive, no single approach is fully explanatory. In an influential article written over fifty years ago, Allport (1962, p. 120) argues that broad social forces allow one to predict general levels of tolerance in a society, but "at the same time the intervening factor of personality is ever the proximal cause of all human conduct" (see also, Dovidio et al., 2005). Psychological theories became prominent after World War II as scholars tried to understand the rise of fascism in seemingly advanced Western European societies, attributing acceptance of fascist doctrine to the presence of authoritarian personalities (Adorno et al., 1964; Fromm, 1941; H. Marcuse, 1966). The key psychoanalytic concept for thinkers in this vein is repression resulting from the pressures of capitalism on social mores and the impact of mass society, leading individuals to attach themselves uncritically to a belief system (see Schindler, 2020). Studies offering explanations for refusal to entertain other points of view trace it to people's finding community among the like-minded, where changes in opinions would lead to loss of feelings of belonging to a dominant group (Antonio, 2019).

Theories describing the link between individual personality and the political expression of discontent point to the role of nostalgia as underlying the drive to achieve rootedness in an "imagined community" (B. Anderson, 1983). Although Anderson used the term *imagined community* to characterize nationalism, it can equally well describe sentimental attachment to locality and the rejection of changes in either population or architecture.[20] Recent commentaries have identified nostalgia as the link between generalized discontent and populist appeal (Kenny, 2017, p. 258). The increased potency of fundamentalist religion has also underpinned emotional support for anti-liberal sentiments (Marzouki et al., 2016).

Cultural theories may rely on the concept of caste, which can be defined by tradition, race, or ethnicity (Dollard, 1949; Wilkerson, 2020a). When a caste structure defines in-groups and out-groups, any action that breaks the taboos associated with caste distinctions becomes anathematized. Social hierarchies relying on caste operate to the economic advantage of those in the superior caste, but economic gain is more a consequence than the cause of caste distinctions. Explanations that attribute social exclusion to caste derive from psychological ones. Thus, Wilkerson (2020b) identifies narcissism as the basis for refusal to associate on equal terms with those identified as inferior. Some scholars relate cultural theories to political-economic ones by attributing hatred of the other to a displacement of frustration with economic inequality (Doob, 1949, p. 446).

Many analyses of right-wing voting behavior point to unhappiness with the loss of steady employment and of opportunities for upward mobility as the root cause for disgust with liberal elites, although as noted earlier the main base of right-wing voting is among the relatively affluent. Globalization, economic restructuring, neoliberalism, financial crises, and austerity have worsened economic insecurity and heightened resentment of elites, reinforcing defensive reactions to perceived

threat, even among the prosperous (Rivero et al., 2020). Massive international migration has prompted anger over loss of cultural domination. Lake's explanation of NIMBYism, discussed above, relates it to capitalism and class structure. Whereas caste denotes status hierarchy, class derives from the relations of production. Within this framework, opposition to redistribution and exclusion of the other become rational means by which those with property assets protect their wealth. Since the exchange value of a physical space is not inherent in it but rather results from scarcity obtained by restricting access to it (Harvey, 1974), neighborhoods are expensive because of who the neighbors are, and heterogeneity would diminish their value.

Conclusion: Implications for planning theory and democracy

In the immediate postwar period in the U.S., planning conformed to the interests of the well-off. It endorsed single-use districts with single-family detached housing predominating. Transportation planning concentrated on increasing automobile traffic flows. Urban renewal practices reinforced the segregation of poor people and aimed to drive them out of desirable locations. Conservationist measures were mainly directed toward historic preservation and retaining open space. School curricula conformed to traditional approaches, and efforts to dismantle school segregation were vestigial. Consequently urban policymakers, shielded from public pressure by reforms instituted during the progressive period early in the century, only incited significant dissent from low-income core city residents who were negatively affected, while middle-class homeowners and property developers were mostly quiescent. In Germany and other European countries, planning focused on reconstruction, devoting substantial resources to social housing. Initially postwar planning provoked little opposition although later urban renewal programs did give rise to urban social movements. Then, Jane Jacobs's call for diversity, New Urbanists' models of mixed-use, walkable cities, environmentalists' pressure for reduced automobile usage, and requirements for inclusionary zoning precipitated right-wing resistance. Right-wing populist resistance to planning arose in a period when participatory processes had become available, and national right-wing organizations seized opportunities to be involved with local protests.

Recent manifestations of RWP vary, but all of them have in common that they pose formidable challenges to just-city planning and the theories that guide it. Right-wing populists have had considerable success in capitalizing on existing anxieties, grievances, and resentments as well as engineering new ones and winning "the people" over to their interpretation of the issues at stake. As Sager (2020) has shown, progressive planning theorists have fixated on an old foe—neoliberalism—and paid insufficient attention to the implications of RWP for urban policy and planning practice. Or, they have thought that applying communicative practices would weaken such mobilizations.

A first necessary step in dealing with RWP would be to focus on it as an object of critique in its own right and not as simply a by-product of neoliberal hegemony and growing inequality. Mainly concerned with the current populist moment in the United States, Rivero et al. (2020, p. 1) have done some groundwork in this regard. Along with the lurch to post-truth politics and illiberalism, recent triumphs of RWP serve as a reminder of the flaws and fragility of democratic planning within a conflictual and polarized ideological landscape.

Rivero et al. (2020, p. 11) ask what role "urban practitioners (politicians, planners, advocates and organisers) might play in countering the corrosive effects of populism." Their answer is that "progressive urban politics" should respond to this challenge by reconfiguring cities as "sites of political encounter and experimentation [enabling] both a re-examination of prevailing modes of public engagement and the emergence of solidarities and infrastructures through which populism might be challenged." Novel forms of public outreach, communication, and involvement alone, however, are unlikely to take the wind out of the sails of RWP. In the Branford example, the plan for increased density resulted from a deliberative process, but its opponents refused to accept its legitimacy. The public housing project never received public support, and its ultimate fate was decided in court. In the case of Cottbus, the "elites," i.e., local politicians, responded to the mobilizations of groups like

Zukunft Heimat with a series of citizen dialogs that they hoped would narrow the rifts between public officials and citizens, debunk some of the arguments of dissatisfied residents, and ultimately reduce the discontent and polarization that pervaded public discourse. Instead, research suggests that their efforts primarily served to "legitimise and confirm" right-wing extremist discourses and enabled their actors to position their racist and conspiracy-theory-laden diagnoses and grievances as relevant and acceptable in public discourse (Radvan & Raab, 2020, p. 34).

If our objective is not to merely defend and preserve existing (urban) social relations from the threat of RWP but to transform them, returning to the principles of advocacy planning offers one strategy. As framed by Davidoff (2016), advocacy planning meant planners should act on behalf of relatively powerless social groupings. In doing so, "the planner should do more than explicate the values underlying his [sic] prescriptions for courses of action; he should affirm them; he should be an advocate for what he deems proper" (Davidoff, 2016, p. 428). In other words, planners who wish to overcome the right-wing surge must advocate for their program rather than standing back as neutral arbiters.

Within planning theory, communicative rationality marginalized advocacy as a dominant concept. According to this theory, planners attain legitimacy through moderating discussion, and plans are achieved democratically; thus, planners can avoid being dismissed as dictatorial experts who promote programs against the desires of their constituents. As in the advocacy model, communicative rationality rejects earlier bases for supporting planning—expertise and application of the rational model no longer give planners legitimacy. Rationality instead arises out of intersubjective communication; in both the advocacy and communicative approaches, planners' expertise is simply a resource for citizens to employ as needed. Martin Rein once pointed out that the sources of legitimacy for planners—" expertise, bureaucratic position, consumer preferences [i.e., community input], and professional values"—cannot be simultaneously invoked (Rein, 1969, p. 233). His analysis remains true today.

Planning needs to respond to the concerns of people who have been told there is no alternative to neoliberalism and the "post-political consensus" on which it is based (Swyngedouw, 2009). Mouffe (2018, p. 69) calls for the "construction of 'another people' . . . [mobilizing] common affects towards a defence of equality and social justice." Such a grouping will never include everyone; on the contrary, the notion of a "people" as a discursive political construction requires the "designation of an adversary" and the drawing of a "political frontier separating the 'we' from the 'they'" (Mouffe, 2019, p. 63). She therefore wants to see a "left populism." Indeed, as described earlier, left populist movements have periodically insisted on the rights of minorities, demanded economic redistribution, and promoted climate mitigation. They have not, however, managed to be as sustained as forces on the right, and they are often not present in the exclusive suburbs and urban districts that have responded negatively to planners' calls for justice and resilience.

Even though the term *advocacy planning* has faded from usage, the sentiment of using planning as a vehicle for redressing disadvantage remains. Proponents of communicative rationality theory also accept this objective. But advocacy describes a strategy that presses for redistributive policies rather than simply remaining hopeful that mediation will accomplish this aim. The extent to which planners can be advocates for justice, however, depends on their location. If working within government, they need to persuade elected officials of the advantages of their vision and work toward achieving legitimacy for their approaches within the public. They can behave as "guerrillas in the bureaucracy" (Needleman & Needleman, 1974), influencing the priorities of official agencies. If acting on behalf of community organizations, they must become effective lobbyists as well as educators of their organization's membership. If they are private consultants, they can focus on broadening the outlook of their employers, for example, by persuading private developers of the advantages of building affordable housing. Some private consultants specialize in organizing public participation. If that is their job, they need to do more than arranging meetings and outreach; rather, they must also advocate for spatial justice.

The obvious dilemma presented by this approach is that it provokes backlash from vocal interests that see nothing in it for them. We can attribute much of the present rise of RWP to the perception that elites, defined by educational credentials and bureaucratic position, are giving priority to the

needs of disadvantaged minorities. This is precisely how the contradiction between democracy and the values of equity, diversity, and climate mitigation arises. Acquiescence to right-wing populist pressures, however, inevitably means defeat, although silences on some matters (e.g., architectural style, building heights) might be strategic (Harper, 2017).

Planning theorists need to acknowledge the inconsistencies involved in the planning project. On the one hand, planners have developed certain substantive objectives—diverse communities, transit-oriented development, mixed-use projects, increased density–which they tend to state authoritatively. Although they support an ideal of public consultation, they often start out with these objectives as basic premises. Consultation then becomes about how to achieve these goals rather than questioning them. In our example of Branford's effort to plan for transit-oriented development, planners were open to public input, but they started out with a commitment to achieving development around the railroad station.

In *The Just City*, Fainstein (2010, Chap. 6) lists a set of planning policies that further the values of democracy, equity, and diversity, at the same time recognizing that maximizing all three principles simultaneously is unlikely. The policies she proposes include, inter alia, affordable housing, protection from involuntary relocation, very low transit fares, inclusionary zoning, ample public space, and consultation with affected communities. Public participation in profits from development (Fainstein, 2001), community land trusts (DeFilippis et al., 2018), and public land ownership (Fainstein, 2012) are additional progressive measures. Planners may not be able to organize a political movement, but they can support political movements through their command of information (M. Weber, 1946); can partake in the "we" of radical democratic citizens that Mouffe (2019, p. 68) envisages as a response to the danger of RWP; and can contribute to the formulation and legitimation of policies for equity and diversity.[21] Their status does not give them sufficient power to enact their goals on their own. If a mobilized group within a defined political jurisdiction demands single-use and exclusionary zoning, investment in automobile transport, and protection of homeowners' property values while opposing housing subsidies, racial integration, and decarbonization, planners confront a fraught contradiction among their values, as democratic decision-making clashes with the principles of inclusion and equity. Planning theory cannot reconcile the contradictions.

In a discussion of the differences between democracy and RWP, Müller (2016, p. 77) contends that democracy "assumes fallible, contestable judgments by changing majorities; . . . [while RWP] imagines a homogeneous entity outside all institutions." Public officials at all levels of government, if they are committed to principles of equity and inclusion, must confront the challenge brought by mobilized groups, consisting of traditionalists, religious evangelicals, and libertarians in varying degrees, that oppose these aims and claim to speak for "the people." No simple prescription can block this challenge, but it remains important to recognize its existence and not to dodge its consequences by simply referring to deliberation.

Notes

1. While just-city planning is only one strand of progressive planning, which itself is only one tendency within the discipline, it has become a rubric for many. For example, Toni Griffin, a professor of practice in planning in the Harvard Design School, has produced a series of exhibitions, podcasts, lectures, and design studios aimed at creating a just city. She has also collaborated on a book of essays on achieving justice through planning (Griffin et al., 2015). Our concern coincides with the declaration made by James Throgmorton, planning professor and practitioner, when explaining his interest in political office: "I . . . wanted to . . . help lead it [Iowa City] toward becoming a more 'Just City.'" (Throgmorton, 2021, p. 3). See Reece (2018) for a review of the literature connecting planning traditions with the search for a just city.
2. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Wallace could more accurately be termed a populist who seized on the issues that appealed to the majority of his white constituents" (https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-C-Wallace).
3. An article describing resistance to placing a mental health clinic in a predominantly white Connecticut town's high school noted: "Killingly's school board, swept up in the culture wars of the Trump era, has repeatedly cast itself as a bulwark against liberalism and government intrusion" (Barry, 2022).

4. A *New York Times* (2020) exit poll of the 2020 general election showed that of voters with family income exceeding $100,000 per year, 54% voted for Trump, while those receiving less voted 56% in favor of Biden. An examination of the January 6, 2021, capitol rioters by University of Chicago political scientists Pape and Ruby (2021) found of those arrested: "40% are business owners or hold white-collar jobs. Unlike the stereotypical extremist, many of the alleged participants in the Capitol riot have a lot to lose. They work as CEOs, shop owners, doctors, lawyers, IT specialists, and accountants. Strikingly, court documents indicate that only 9% are unemployed."
5. National politicians running on explicitly right-wing populist platforms rarely dominate among city voters, but they have increased their vote share in many North American and Western European cities. Many right-wing national populist leaders in other regions have strongholds in urban areas. In Brazil, for example, Bolsonaro has performed well in some of the country's largest cities, while Recep Tayyip Erdogan raised his profile as mayor of Istanbul. Beebeejaun (2022, p. 12) comments: "Far Right political parties have increased their power across Europe and are bolstered by nostalgic narratives of the white nation-state. Support for these groups is invariably concentrated in predominantly white areas of cities."
6. Louise Day Hicks, a previously little-known member of the Boston school committee, led the mobilization against busing, claiming that she represented the parents of her neighborhood and gaining widespread allegiance among white South Bostonians (Zezima, 2003). In cities throughout the south, demonstrations against school integration were common and often violent.
7. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) identified anti-mosque incidents across the United States: "Existing and proposed mosque sites across the country have been targeted for vandalism and other criminal acts, and there have been efforts to block or deny necessary zoning permits for the construction and expansion of other facilities" (American Civil Liberties Union, 2022).
8. Gutmann and Thompson (1996, p. 349) insist that deliberative democracy requires "that each citizen has sufficient social and economic standing to meet his or her fellows on terms of equal respect."
9. In the 21st century, according to Mayer et al. (2016), left-wing "urban uprisings" have taken a different form from their predecessors. These actions have targeted police brutality, governmental corruption, stolen elections, and austerity programs.
10. See Pløger (2021) on the failures of institutionalized citizen participation.
11. We could present similar examples from many countries.
12. This case draws on the experience of one of the authors.
13. A town of about 30,000 residents, it is within a metropolitan county centered on New Haven. It has extensive open space, manufacturing facilities, small and big-box retail, a few farms, and a variety of housing types ranging from mobile home communities, low-rise public housing, and multi-family residences to frame houses dating from the colonial period and mansions selling in the millions of dollars.
14. A recent set of comments addressed to the neighborhood Facebook group discussed a proposal to eliminate single-family zoning. When someone asked: "Why is that such a problem today?" they received a response: "It's not unless you read between the lines . . . government housing is what it means" (Indian Neck Neighborhood, January 11, 2023).
15. See Frenkel (2022); Mecler and Natanson (2021). The right-wing Heritage Foundation has produced numerous publications condemning the teaching of CRT and supporting the rights of parents to supervise the curriculum (https://www.heritage.org/crt). Ironically their demands echo the earlier left-wing call for community control of education. Likewise, the American Enterprise Institute has expressed its disgust with CRT (Hermann, 2022). This combination of organizations indicates the merging of concerns between social conservatives and libertarians.
16. The term meaning "friend of the court" refers to non-litigants who submit briefs to reinforce the pleadings of those directly involved in the case.
17. Gibson (2018) tells a similar story about the blocking of a streetcar in Arlington, Virginia.
18. A similar controversy arose over the construction of an Islamic cultural center in downtown Manhattan (O'Connor, 2015).
19. A symbol of Prussian militarism and pilgrimage site of ultra-nationalist, anti-democratic, and anti-liberal groups during the Weimar Republic, the Garrison Church became notorious as the site where in 1933 Adolf Hitler was introduced as chancellor by President Paul von Hindenburg. It suffered major damage during the Second World War and was demolished by the German Democratic Republic in 1968.
20. Vidich and Bensman (1958), in their study of a town in upstate New York, found that residents pictured themselves in an idyllic community drawn from depictions in the media rather than having a realistic view of the place in which they lived.
21. J. Smith (2017, p. 365) suggests that academic workers [including planning professors] can . . . use our privilege in reflexive and strategic ways to support . . . transformative [human-rights-oriented urban] social movements.

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