Abstract

This paper contributes to the debate on co-production in planning theory and practice by examining the political agency of non-profit housing actors – here termed 'alternative co-producers' – in building an egalitarian city. Drawing from theories of co-production, planning politics, democracy and governance, the paper introduces, theorizes and operationalizes the concept of 'co-implementation' as the political moment in which egalitarian cities can be jointly shaped by public authorities, co-producers and the civil society. By egalitarian cities, we mean cities governed by a reinvented democratic arrangement that can better realize policy and planning goals in the direction of "housing for all". To test the political agency of alternative co-producers in their role as plan co-implementers, the paper relies on empirical evidence from HousingNOLA; a 10-year strategy and implementation plan in post-Katrina New Orleans. By critically examining the politics of HousingNOLA during the first three years of its implementation (2015-2018), the paper reveals the political conditions and practices that have favored or hampered co-implementation in New Orleans and that have determined progress in realizing an egalitarian city.

Keywords: planning politics, bottom-linked governance, co-implementation, alternative co-producers, 'neo' democracy

1. Introduction

This paper introduces to the debate on co-production in planning theory and practice the concept of *co-implementation* as key for building egalitarian cities. Our aim is to uncover the role and political agency of non-profit housing actors in democratizing planning processes using insights from theories of co-production, planning politics and democracy as well as empirical evidence from HousingNOLA, a multiyear strategy and implementation plan as well as a multipartner collaborative planning process focusing on how post-Katrina New Orleans can ensure affordable, high quality housing for all residents.

Previous research on the non-profit housing sector has focused on its embeddedness in communities and its development of initiatives that foster and empower the human, social and political capital of its target communities (Bratt, 2006; Gittell and Wilder, 1999; Marshall et al., 2016; Paidakaki et al., 2020; Smith, 2008). In this paper, we study non-profit housing actors as "alternative co-producers"; namely pro-equity and pro-comaterializing non-profit housing policy implementers (e.g. non-profit real estate developers, community development corporations, faith-based community developers, community land trusts, sweat-equity-based home builders) who mobilize discursive and material practices in their aim to claim their right to socio-politically

influence the planning and development of cities (Paidakaki and Moulaert, 2018). More specifically, we examine alternative co-producers in their role as co-implementers, understood as watchdogs of planning and implementation processes with a vision to preserve and produce "housing for all", and scrutinize their political interactions with decision- and policy-makers and the civil society to catalyze socio-spatial transformations. Our aim is to demonstrate the political roles alternative co-producers play in guiding the development of an *egalitarian city* in and through the further democratization of planning and implementation processes. Following Paidakaki et al. (2020), we understand an egalitarian city as a city where all neighborhoods are recognized for their unique housing and social needs as well as for their distinct socio-demographic and physical characteristics. In such a city, housing actors (including alternative co-producers), neighborhood communities and institutional structures (e.g. state agencies, governmental authorities, elected officials, foundations, financial institutions, faith-based organizations) are jointly responsive to specific community needs.

Although their central role is largely understudied in planning theory, alternative co-producers are important political and institutional actors in co-implementation processes. Firstly, a vast majority of alternative co-producers aim to improve the housing conditions of the most deprived and to advance the existing governance culture that frames the modus operandi of affordable housing provision. Secondly, because of their ethics and practice of inclusivity, alternative co-producers are well positioned in multi-level governance arrangements, interacting concurrently with target populations and institutional structures (Paidakaki et al., 2020). This position allows alternative co-producers to seek empowerment from their grassroots bases and set forward policy changes at inter-organizational negotiation tables. This paper seeks answers to the following questions: Which political conditions and actions exist and emerge in the long-term planning and implementation process that hinder or facilitate co-implementation (namely the collective translation of housing goals and objectives into real outcomes)? What political tactics, claims and strategies do alternative co-producers use to ensure co-implementation by counteracting "sheered-off" pro-equity plan implementation trajectories? And how does co-implementation contribute to the development and governance of egalitarian cities?

To answer these questions, we mainly rely on theories of co-production, planning politics, democracy and governance. Insights from co-production (Albrechts, 2013; Bovaird, 2007; Joshi and Moore, 2004; Mitlin, 2008; Ostrom, 1996; Watson, 2014) and planning politics (Albrechts, 2020; De Blust and Van den Broeck, 2019; Gualini, 2001; Healey, 1999; Moulaert, 2005; Servillo and Van den Broeck, 2012; Van den Broeck, 2008, 2010, 2011; Van den Broeck and Verachtert, 2016; Wildavsky, 1973) cast light on the agential features of planners and the power dynamics of the wider political context in planning processes. Democracy theoreticians (Galli, 2011; Swyngedouw, 2009; Swyngedouw and Wilson, 2014) elaborate on the political conditions that hinder or foster democratic urban processes, while theories of socially innovative governance (Moulaert, 2020; Moulaert et al., 2019) analyze how new initiatives create the basis for socio-political transformation by activating and further democratizing bottom-linked governance arrangements. This paper introduces to the debate the concept of *co-implementation* as key for strengthening the political agency and expanding the meaning and usefulness of co-production in planning theory and practice.

Empirical evidence for this study is drawn from the experiences of the HousingNOLA planning process. In 2014, HousingNOLA was initially managed by the Greater New Orleans Housing Alliance (GNOHA), a housing alliance of mainly alternative co-producers that emerged in 2007 as a small and loose coalition in the aftermath of the 2005 Katrina disaster, and which – over the years – has evolved into a highly professional, institutionalized and influential actor in the city of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana. Since 2015, the HousingNOLA plan has been led by the HousingNOLA *partnership*, a multi-partner alliance with a considerable presence of GNOHA's members.

To develop a broader and deeper understanding of alternative co-producers as catalytic players in democratizing planning and implementation processes and forming egalitarian cities, we examine the political actions and tactics of GNOHA and HousingNOLA partners in their co-implementation of the HousingNOLA plan. We also study the institutional responses to their political actions and the way in which this interaction has unfolded within multi-level governance tiers and against the backdrop of a dynamic political climate. Short-term ethnographic research for this study was first conducted during the making of the HousingNOLA plan (2014-2015) and focused on GNOHA's political agency. This research entailed participant observation and note taking in strategic meetings (three of GNOHA's and four of HousingNOLA's) as well as in-depth interviews with GNOHA's president, program manager and program coordinator. Following this initial ethnographic study, research was conducted focusing on the specific political features of GNOHA's and HousingNOLA's actions during the early years of co-implementation covering a time span of three years (between 2015 and 2018). Communication[i] between GNOHA, the HousingNOLA partnership and their allies in the form of weekly email updates over these years was analyzed and key documents related to the progress of the plan's co-implementation were assessed (10 Year Strategy and Implementation Plan; HousingNOLA Report Cards 2016, 2017, 2018). The research was complemented with an in-depth interview with the chair of GNOHA, who later became the Executive Director of the HousingNOLA's partnership.

Our paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents a brief overview of the most relevant theoretical insights of co-production in planning processes and highlights their merits and critical voids. Sections 3 and 4 bring theories of planning politics, democracy and governance in dialogue in order to introduce the concept of co-implementation and its transformative potential in leading to the development of egalitarian cities. Section 5 presents the political climate during the first three years of HousingNOLA plan's co-implementation in New Orleans, and the political actions of GNOHA and HousingNOLA partners and institutional responses therein. Section 6 highlights the political conditions and practices that favored or hampered co-implementation. Finally, Section 7 concludes by assessing the feasibility of building egalitarian cities, taking into account the political fermentations that unfold during planning and co-implementation processes.

2. Co-production: scientific discourse and critical voids in planning literature

This paper aims for a conceptual/theoretical contribution in the scholarship of planning co-production by focusing on the role of 'alternative co-producers' in processes of 'co-implementation' aimed at a more 'egalitarian city'. Co-implementation, thus, is embedded in the scientific discourse of co-production and aims to shed bolder light on the politics and governance of participatory plan realization (or not) during implementation; a planning dimension that remains underinvestigated.

The notion of *co-production* is epistemologically rooted in the works of Latour (1990) and Jasanoff (1996) who argued that knowledge cannot be excluded from the social context within which it is constructed. Their work questioned the explicit division between two apparently distinct rationalities: the scientific (expert) and the societal (lay people); positing that scientific knowledge and society are not only interdependent (Latour, 1988), but even 'co-produced, each underwriting the other's existence' (Jasannoff, 2004, p. 17). In the context of these constructivist approaches, the political dimension of science, and thus of knowledge formulation, was often addressed (Jasanoff, 1996, 2004). The 'co-production' discourse and practice stressed the critical shift of power from a group of experts (scientists, politicians, decision-makers) to a wider network that actively embodies citizens, local communities and a wide range of societal groups (Latour, 1987, 1990).

The empowerment of communities in the production of knowledge was extensively elaborated upon in debates concerning the delivery of resources and services. In the work of institutional economist Elinor Ostrom, co-production emerged as what was believed to be a politically neutral concept referring to the added value of resource contribution in the joint state-citizens production and delivery of public goods and services (Bovaird, 2007; Joshi and Moore, 2004; Ostrom, 1996). Co-production was conceptualized as an improved service delivery mechanism and as a reactive tool to weaker, conventional forms of state delivery (Mitlin, 2008). In a similar fashion, Bovaird (2007) praised co-production as a process that also creates openings for citizens with diverse and conflictual interests and values to influence policy. As such, he recognized power redistribution as an inevitable outcome of co-production activities, which can only be productive if conflict is effectively treated within governance arrangements (Taylor, 2003; Mayo and Moore, 2002; Birchall and Simmons, 2004 as cited in Bovaird, 2007; Watson, 2014). Building on the work of Ostrom, Joshi and Moore (2004) introduced the term 'institutionalized co-production' to underscore the need for an uninterrupted provision of goods and services and the importance of formalizing the co-production services. Adding yet a new element in the scientific discourse on co-production, Mitlin (2008) celebrates the political emancipation of citizens and grassroots movements as co-producers. She writes about 'co-production led by grassroots movements': namely, the organized urban poor struggling to consolidate and strengthen their political position for access to resources and services for the satisfaction of their human needs. Mitlin still embeds her scrutiny of co-production within the conventional framework of joint service delivery but treats co-production as a proactive grassroots tool that not only contributes to the betterment of the nature, objectives and functions of the state apparatus but also to the invigoration of citizenship.

Similar political applications of co-production have recently found fertile ground in Planning Studies. Albrechts and Watson have embraced the added value of the political nature of co-production in reframing and practicing spatial planning. Albrechts (2013:56) refers to Moulaert (2000) when arguing that through co-production, 'strategic planning no longer obsessively looks inwards to targets and procedures, but increasingly looks outwards to local neighborhoods to create supportive socio-spatial places, seeking out local energy where it exists to help deliver and broaden policies, actions or projects and seeing citizens for what they can do, not just what they need'. Based on this, he makes a plea for a radical form of strategic planning in which social innovation of citizens and co-production plays a key role. Watson (2014), in a similar manner, argues that co-production in urban planning further radicalizes the traditional forms of progressive planning

practices, such as participatory planning or collaborative and communicative planning (see more in Lane, 2005).

This shift in focus has furthered the scientific discussion on co-production and its potential to frame and shape more strategically and democratically planned cities. Several knowledge gaps remain in the planning and co-production scholarship, nonetheless, that urgently need to be addressed, particularly in regards to the proactive role and the heterogeneity of politicized co-producers involved not only in policy implementation and publicly-subsidized social service delivery but in the whole planning production and implementation process. First, the discourse on co-production mainly focuses on power distribution between states and citizens. There is little inquiry into power relations and imbalances among heterogeneous co-producers and the interlinked governance arrangements that guarantee 'co-production equity', that is to say an equal treatment of all agents involved in the development and implementation of spatial plans. Second, in planning studies, 'citizens' or 'communities' are largely treated as homogeneous groups, whereas in reality a wide range of actors concurrently co- and hetero-develop a city[ii]. Especially in planning practice, co-producers are not only non-profit/non-governmental or grassroots organizations, groups of urban poor or social movements, but also for-profit or even pro-speculation organizations. This heterogeneity is insufficiently discussed in co-production literature. A third aspect that has received little attention is the mediating role of co-producers in the provision of goods and services – specifically in housing and spatial plans – and their unique professional position that allows them to concurrently interact with public authorities/elected officials, local communities and other co-producers to trigger smaller or larger socio-political transformations. Finally, even less attention has been given to the involvement and political activism of co-producers in the materialization of commonly agreed-upon plans.

Given the scope of this paper, we aim to advance the co-production discourse in planning theory and practice by mainly addressing the fourth literature lacuna. That is the all-encompassing aspect of alternative co-producers' political agency in plan implementation processes, which interrelates to their mediating role and claims for equal treatment in the co-production of goods and services. We specifically give a more prominent place to the concept of *co-implementation*: namely, the political moment in which alternative co-producers in their role as planners activate their specific knowledge (e.g. on housing production, land and real estate market and policies, local needs and socio-spatial complexities) and political agency (e.g. advocacy, lobbying, campaigns) in order to challenge implementation processes that deviate from their original pro-equity socio-spatial vision and, in turn, socio-spatially shape and improve the democratic governance of egalitarian cities.

For this purpose, we bring theories of planning politics into dialogue with theories of democracy and governance, in order to account for the political activism of co-producers involved in planning and development processes. To make our analysis more concrete, we embed the notion of co-production within housing systems and examine the politics of co-implementation through the actions of alternative co-producers involved in planning processes. Inspired by the concept of *social resilience cells* (Paidakaki and Moulaert, 2017, 2018; Paidakaki and Parra, 2018), we define co-producers in housing systems as housing policy implementers who organize themselves discursively and actively to influence the development profile of a city. Co-producers are divided into two large categories: the hegemonic and the alternative. Hegemonic co-producers are for-profit regional and/or national housing builders who develop large-scale settlements for mixed-

income households at strategic locations and who interact with institutional structures to promote their speculative land and housing profits. Under neoliberal governance arrangements, hegemonic co-producers are generally privileged urban actors (Paidakaki et al., 2020). Alternative co-producers are non-profit housing providers who build small-scale housing for mainly low-and-middle income clients in areas with specific societal challenges (underinvestment, gentrification). They aim to advance the conditions of the poorest and most disadvantaged, transform neoliberal institutional structures to pro-poor/anti-speculation public institutions and rearticulate power asymmetries in the housing/real estate sector; in doing so, they may come into conflict or seek consensus with institutional structures (see more in Paidakaki et al., 2020). In our paper, we focus on the growing prominence and influence of alternative co-producers as urban planning stakeholders in ensuring a more universal satisfaction of housing needs across neighborhoods through co-implementation.

3. Co-production and the politics of planning

In planning theory and practice, the missing dimension of co-production is the political agency of different actors involved in implementation processes. Flinders et al. (2016) have recently attempted to stir up a debate on the politics of co-production, claiming that the shift of power associated with the co-construction of knowledge and policies is followed by a shift of governance roles and governance boundaries; although the normative regime that regulates these boundaries can put the egalitarian potential of co-production at stake. This normative regime, shaped within a wider political climate, legitimizes co-producers' competences and powers in the whole process of policymaking and implementation. Likewise in planning processes, different episodes are led by distinct constellations of actors (decision and policy makers, co-producers, advocates, community groups), characterized by their unique agendas, goals, strategies and time perspectives, and coordinated under specific power relations (Albrechts, 2020). This negotiative process, within which various actors interact expressing different 'driving forces', is accentuated during various episodes in planning and implementation processes (Healey, 1997, 2003). According to Wildavsky (1973), during implementation, plans are adapted to socio-political changes that often follow the development and legitimization process, creating space for various coproducers to invigorate their political agency and materialize their claims. Van den Broeck (2010, 2011; Van den Broeck and Servillo, 2012; Van den Broeck and De Blust, 2019) furthers this by arguing that planning actors enter various episodes of dialectical actor-institutional dynamics beyond (stages of) plan-making and implementation. Hence, implementation manifests itself as a politically loaded process that is driven by various actors – including co-producers – with (a)symmetric power relations that are determined by a dynamically changing and multi-tier political climate and by the subsequent distribution of governance roles within urban systems. As stressed by Albrechts (2020), there is a renewed call in recent planning literature (Grooms and Boamah, 2018; Karki, 2017) for planners to play an active role in politics in order to steer the real implementation of their plans and the realization of their visions. As a consequence, planning theorists and practitioners need to know more about the actions and the political capacity of planners and co-producers when they interact with elected officials affecting the plan implementation process, and about how this interaction can have a serious impact on political decisions.

'Co-implementation' can be coined as a new concept that explains in depth the political interrelations that affect (the levels of) materialization of planning actions. So far, only few policy

studies refer to the notion of co-implementation, approaching it as a collaborative practice that complements a series of other cooperative actions (co-design, co-create, co-delivering, and co-assessing) (Brand and Peters, 2019; Elliott and Salamon, 2002; Hill and Hupe, 2002; Hood, 2007; Peters and Van Nispen, 1998). The theorization of co-implementation – especially its political dimensions – is, however, entirely absent in the scientific literature and discourse. Here it is argued that co-implementation is not a mere phase within planning processes, but it is the dimension stressing the political agency of co-production. Co-implementation is understood as a political instrument – operating both as a process and a goal – for societal and spatial transformation. As such, it serves as a bridge between planning studies approaching co-production 'as a process' that strengthens democratic principles for the empowerment of planners and co-producers, and those that highlight it as a 'goal' to collectively achieve determined planning objectives (Moser, 1983). Deeper knowledge and empirical evidence are needed on the dynamic governance fermentations and political tactics of co-producers that cause continuities and/or discontinuities in planning and implementation on the ground. In the following sections, we further unpack and analyze the transformative potential of co-implementation by enriching the concept with insights from theories of democracy and governance.

4. Theorizing co-implementation: insights from democracy and governance theories

Centering 'the political' is a necessary condition for tackling questions of planning and implementation, 'co-production equity' and the creation of egalitarian cities, especially in Europe and the USA where post-political governance arrangements in cities are largely in place (Swyngedouw, 2009). Post-politics refer to urban development processes governed by closed-shop commissions informed by consensus around the inevitability of neoliberal capitalism (Cox and Mair, 1989; Harding, 1995; Jonas and Wilson, 1999; Kantor, Savitch and Haddock Vicari, 1997; Lauria and Whelan, 1995; Molotch, 1976, 1993; Stone, 1989 as cited in Paidakaki et al., 2020). As a result, post-political arrangements tend to privilege hegemonic co-producers who plan and develop cities for medium-to-high income populations in areas with revenue-generating capacities (Paidakaki et al. 2020). How can this post-political governance and its highly uneven socio-spatial consequences be rectified? How can we move away from such arrangements and towards ones where pluralism of co-producers and developmental propositions become the starting point of politics (debate, disagreement, dissensus) guiding the planning and development of cities? (Diken and Laustsen, 2004 as cited in Swyngedouw, 2009; Swyngedouw and Wilson, 2014).

Post-political arrangements temporarily foster exclusive co-implementation processes led by hegemonic co-producers and their allies. However, such arrangements can be overthrown and replaced by 'neo-political' governance structures that offer an institutional setting not only for powerful pro-growth urban coalitions to shape and reshape the trajectories of urban planning and development processes but for alternative co-producers and their allies as well. Political struggles of alternative co-producers are or can be instrumental in leading urban processes and the construction of new and emancipatory urbanities (Moulaert et al., 2007; Paidakaki and Moulaert, 2018b; Swyngedouw, 2009). Alternative co-producers claim their right to equity in co-implementation basing their political actions on the unconditional premise for justice and emancipation. Emancipated and equally-treated co-producers do not only express demands to the elites to rectify injustices and inequalities (Swyngedouw, 2009), but at the same time solidify the unconditionality of equality and liberty in the governance of cities and their planning processes. A

real politicization occurs when alternative co-producers, underprivileged in neoliberal and post-political arrangements, (re)democratize planning and implementation processes, improve the overall governance of cities and affect development trajectories in the direction of egalitarian cites. Alternative co-producers are, hence, essential in the production of properly democratic cities. Furthermore, democratic politics are always socially and spatially disruptive and transformative. What exactly does this disruption and transformation translate into?

Democracy in post-political governance structures is not political anymore but consensual and bureaucratic (Galli, 2011). By limiting itself to a neutralized institutional setting – namely focused on the regulation of relations between individuals, groups and interests using law for certain purposes (e.g. growth, economic prosperity, social cohesion) – democracy loses its internal and vital social dialectic. As a result, the post-political nature of democracy does not unfold all its aspects and possibilities (Galli, 2011). A 'neo-political' democracy would be one that is formed through the reactivation of political dialectics through conflict and effective institutional structures; it would be the result of an attempt to deconstruct and liberate differentiation of the political field (Galli, 2011). This 'new' democracy can only be enacted through the performance of real politics between decision makers and social and economic actors – including alternative co-producers – and the interactive formation of bottom-linked governance through co-construction (analysis, co-learning, negotiation) and confrontation (protest and conflict) (Galli, 2011; Moulaert et al., 2019). In socially innovative governance scholarship, bottom-linked governance is understood as 'new forms of democratic governance collaboratively built between socially innovative initiatives and activists, their scalarly dynamic networks and state institutions and agencies' (Moulaert et al., 2019:64). It is considered to be an essential element in the process of necessary socio-political transformation from a post-political democracy to a neo-political one, where leadership is shared and not meant to serve mostly growth interests and where, multi-vocality and diversity are respected and dealt with and immunity to inequality reinforcing power games is built up (Moulaert, 2020; Moulaert et al., 2019).

Drawing from theories of post-politics, democracy and governance we understand co-implementation as a *collective, equity-based, politically active and socially transformative planning process that holds the potential to maintain pro-equity plan implementation trajectories as well as mold and further democratize bottom-linked governance arrangements that lead to the development of egalitarian cities*. Spatial planning, especially housing planning and its proper design and co-implementation, is (or can be) a powerful tool for alternative co-producers to envision and implement more equitable cities. By activating their agency during planning and implementation processes, these co-producers can constantly challenge dysfunctionalities in the governance of housing systems (i.e. hierarchical or paternalistic modes of governance favoring managerial efficiency and exclusive arenas of decision and policy making) and shape (re)development plans that nurture a wider range of housing options and take into consideration the different needs and assets of neighborhoods.

The next section reports on our research on HousingNOLA in post-Katrina New Orleans. We focus on the first years of the plan's co-implementation (2015-2018) in order to identify and analyze the social-political conditions and actions that have favored or hampered the HousingNOLA plan implementation and determine the impact this has had on facilitating a 'smooth' transition towards an egalitarian city.

5. The politics of Housing NOLA plan co-implementation

The lack of an official policy on housing in New Orleans during the late post-Katrina years triggered a planning process aimed at producing a housing plan for the city. The HousingNOLA plan emerged as an idea in 2014, when the Foundation for Louisiana, in dialogue with GNOHA – a highly professional, institutionalized and influential urban alliance of predominantly alternative co-producers since the later years of the post-Katrina recovery – discovered the evident lack of an official housing policy in the city. As a result, the Foundation mandated GNOHA through their program entitled the 'Together Initiative' to facilitate and later incubate a 10-year multipartner collaborative planning process. Since 2015, HousingNOLA has grown into a collaborative partnership led by GNOHA leadership and with members from a wide range of industry sectors (incl. non-profit and for-profit housing developers, public administration, academia, banks, foundations, neighborhood associations, civil right movements, green energy advocates) with the aim to co-implement a community-led housing plan focusing on how New Orleans could ensure affordable, high quality housing for all residents over the course of ten years (2015-2025). The rationale behind this collaborative process was to redirect earlier market-led recovery planning processes that had led to a fragmented and spontaneous rebuilding outcome (Paidakaki and Moulaert, 2018), and facilitate a planning process that treats all neighborhoods in an equity-based way and harvests insights from a wider network of actors (residents, community leaders, public and private organizations).

> "The questions we have to address in the HousingNOLA process are: What are our numbers? What are our needs? How many units of affordable housing do we have, and how many do we need? People are afraid of that conversation I think, because if anyone wants to talk about it then we're obligated to do it..." (Andreanecia Morris, 2015, personal communication).

The HousingNOLA process is divided into two main phases: the joint development of a housing plan (2014-2015) and the implementation of this plan (2015-2025). During the first phase, a wide range of organizations and institutions interacted with each other and shared insights (non-profit and for-profit developers, public officials, financial institutions, philanthropic bodies, academics). These met in various forums (in the Leadership Board, working groups, community tables) with the aim of producing a housing plan[iii]. In 2015, exactly ten years after Katrina, HousingNOLA released its *10 Year Strategy and Implementation Plan*. With yearly updates until 2025, the *10 Year Strategy and Implementation Plan* has since become GNOHA's most crucial advocacy instrument.

The following sections study GNOHA and HousingNOLA partnership in their role as plan co-implementers by shedding light on their political practices, strategies and tactics towards other key co-implementers (or facilitators of implementation), such as city and State elected officials and public authorities, State legislators and political candidates to put pressure in order to ensure a smooth co-implementation of the housing plan. Particular focus is given to the political climate and institutional settings (nature and evolution) in which the implementation of the plan unfolded in the early years of the co-implementation process. How were GNOHA and HousingNOLA partners politically activated to ensure that the plan would not become a dormant document trapped under a pile of government papers, but instead that its objectives would be implemented? What was the nature of the political climate and institutional settings in which the plan unfolded? To

what extent did GNOHA's and the HousingNOLA partners' political activity and institutional responses favor or hamper co-implementation? This empirical section seeks answers to these questions.

5.1 Towards inclusionary zoning

Political climate

In the first year of the HousingNOLA plan, co-implementation was charged with enthusiasm in the city's elected officials. Already in December 2015, Council member Brossett introduced *Affordable Housing Impact Legislation*, the first action item under the HousingNOLA implementation plan. The legislation required all draft ordinances, zoning or land use applications to include an Affordable Housing Impact Statement; namely an instrument to assess the potential impact of housing construction on municipalities' affordable housing stock (City Planning Commission, 2016). In June 2016, Mayor Landrieu pledged to add (build or preserve) another 2,500 units of affordable housing over the next five years, increasing the commitment of the city and state agencies to 7,500. He committed to work with the HousingNOLA partnership and the City Council to create more inclusive zoning laws – laws allowing developers to build denser residential developments in exchange of a portion housing units for lower income people – and leveraging city-owned properties for affordable development, among other strategies (Office of the Mayor, 2015). As an annex to HousingNOLA, the mayor's office issued a 23-page report *Housing for a Resilient New Orleans* that provided more details on the mayor's housing strategy. The Landrieu administration planned to spend $17.3 million in 2016 on affordable housing and to dedicate $10 million annually for subsequent years. This would leave about $7 million per year to reach the annual goal. In August 2016, the City Planning Commission voted unanimously to forward a study on affordable housing impact statements (AHIS) to the City Council for review.

GNOHA and HousingNOLA's political actions

Despite the favorable political climate, GNOHA and HousingNOLA partners still had to take action to ensure a smooth plan implementation. They objected, for instance, to the mayor and the council's decision regarding an amendment to the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance that would effectively ban multi-family developments in historic districts. They participated in public hearings of the Housing Authority of New Orleans and the Louisiana Housing Corporation and engaged with various housing institutions to promote HousingNOLA's policy recommendations. They also took part in budget hearings to make sure that affordable housing was prominent on the agenda. They advocated in favor of the adoption of an Affordable Housing Impact Statement, which would also be required for land-use applications where developers needed city incentives to include affordable housing units in their projects (e.g. density bonus). GNOHA and their partners also made comments and suggested amendments to articles in the Master Plan that disallowed or restricted the implementation of the HousingNOLA plan.

At the end of the first co-implementation year, in September 2016, the HousingNOLA partners released a *Report Card*. In this document, they evaluated the city's progress in implementing the plan and held themselves and the city accountable for addressing the diverse housing needs of New Orleanians. In this report, HousingNOLA partners gave the city an overall grade "B": The number

of 1,439 affordable homes was lower than the actually needed, but it almost met the commitment made by the mayor, demonstrating that the city and state agencies were capable of working together. The grade was considered a positive evaluation of the steps taken by city officials to reduce housing costs for New Orleanians.

5.2 State preemption meets housing advocacy

Political climate

In the second year of the HousingNOLA plan, co-implementation continued to unfold within a favorable political environment at the city level. The elected officials grew responsive to an important component of the HousingNOLA plan, which was the review of the feasibility of Inclusionary Housing programs and the City's existing Density Bonus, an incentive-based instrument for inclusionary housing programs. In October 2016, the City Council adopted a motion to develop a smart housing mix that leveraged market rate development activity to build and preserve lower-priced housing. The City Council directed the City Planning Commission (CPC) to study the issue more in depth. In February 2017, the CPC approved a study that recommended that 12 percent of units in multifamily developments be rented or sold below market rate, a policy applicable to the city's most in-demand neighborhoods (Mid-City, Marigny, Lakeview). The study was a first step toward drafting an ordinance.

The political ambience at the State level was less auspicious. Plan implementation stumbled upon state preemption of local laws[iv], an aggressive tool of conservative States against progressive cities to usurp local authority. The State preemption was used to eliminate the discussion on policy recommendations in the HousingNOLA Smart Housing Mix Study (Andreanecia Morris, 2018, personal communication). Advocated by the homebuilders' association and drafted by a State Senator whose district includes part of the wealthiest district Uptown in New Orleans, a law (Senate Bill 162) was approved by the Louisiana State that would ban local governments from implementing affordable housing mandates under inclusionary zoning. However, in May 2017, the House Commerce Committee voted marginally against the Bill.

GNOHA and HousingNOLA's political actions

Unsurprisingly, the new focus of HousingNOLA partners became that of overcoming barriers to housing production created by State legislature. To this end, HousingNOLA activists were constantly present at the State Legislature not only to oppose Senate Bill 162, but also to promote the merits of Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning, especially in times of shrinking federal housing programs and funds. At the local level, housing advocates faced the challenge of having their plan uninterruptedly implemented in periods of local elections. GNOHA used the political momentum to challenge candidates on housing issues by seeking support from a larger base. Through their new platform *#PutHousingFirst*, the advocates sought and secured the commitment of thousands of registered voters to support the implementation of the HousingNOLA plan. The openness to a larger base was a strategic move[v].

At the end of the second year of co-implementation, the HousingNOLA advocates gave the City a grade "C" in their 2017 Annual Report Card. The drop-in grade reflected the limited housing

development productivity (488 new affordable housing opportunities) as well as the failure to address critical issues (such as the implementation of recommended changes to the Master Plan).

5.3 Activating newly elected city authorities

Political Climate

In the third year of the HousingNOLA plan, co-implementation was fraught with an increasingly challenging political climate. Following up on Senate Bill 162 but with a change of wording from 'inclusionary zoning' to 'voluntary incentive policies', a new State law (Senate Bill 464) sought to forbid municipal and parish governments in Louisiana from requiring developers to include a specific number of low-income units for receiving building permits. After strong advocacy efforts from the HousingNOLA partners and other affordable housing advocates and allies across the State, Governor Edwards vetoed the state preemption Bill. Nonetheless, the City of New Orleans slowed down implementation efforts of mandatory inclusionary zoning.

GNOHA and HousingNOLA's political actions

State preemption remained a 'battlefield' for housing advocates during the third year of implementation. The housing advocates rallied against the new legislation by reactivating their campaign *#PutHousingFirst* and interacting with their political representatives. Andreanecia Morris explains: "… last year they tried to stop us from doing inclusionary zoning. And we won, but it came back again this year. One of the irritating things is we spend most of our time in stopping them from stopping us. And then we failed to implement our own policy" (2018 personal communication). To strengthen their persuasive capacity at the Louisiana level, and in anticipation of future action items of the HousingNOLA plan that were state-dependent, the organization supported the launch of HousingLOUISIANA, a statewide network of regional housing alliances (Baton Rouge, Alexandria, Lafayette, Shreveport, Northshore, Lake Charles, Monroe and Houma/Thibodeaux) that address housing affordability at the local level. As Morris eloquently argues: "What's next? The travel is so we can take the message out. Just like we need Lafayette and Lake Charles and the North Shore saying Housing First, and we need it across the country, and we need it across the world. This is how New Orleans can stay on track… From Housing Louisiana to Housing America to Housing World/Earth!" (Andreanecia Morris, 2018, personal communication).

In spite of the meritorious efforts of GNOHA and HousingNOLA advocates to prevent the Louisiana State from interrupting plan implementation, the 2017 city elections and the transition period to the newly elected city administration stalled it. To ensure that the HousingNOLA plan outlive elected officials, the housing advocates took a series of steps to remind the newly-elected city administration of their responsibility to co-implement the plan (Put Housing First) and satisfy the housing needs of all New Orleanians in a timely manner. One important action was the release of a semi-annual report showing the low figures of affordable housing development activity (with a prediction for 750 new houses being built, whereas 2,500 had been committed and 7,750 were needed by the end of September 2018). A second important action was the promotion of a set of priorities to be adopted by the newly elected administration by the end of 2018. These included: the adoption and implementation of the Smart Housing Mix Ordinance and necessary changes to

the Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance (CZO) as required by the Master Plan Amendments and the HousingNOLA 10 Year Plan; increased housing production and available resources; and a stronger Housing Trust Fund to meet production goals. A third action was to retain a lively public discourse and feed the interest of citizens on housing issues. This was achieved by launching a 'neighborhood housing plan pilot program' with the goal to further encourage local community development and help residents better understand the state of housing in New Orleans.

Due to the overall unsatisfactory progress in meeting the housing objectives of the HousingNOLA plan – in terms of volume as well as inclusion of recommendations in local policies – the overall efforts earned a grade "D" in the Third Report Card.

With increasingly worsening grades as co-implementation years unfolded, important questions have emerged about the limits of the current governance arrangements dealing with the challenging endeavor of real co-implementation. Why a collectively researched and produced housing plan, like that of HousingNOLA, could not move forward and be co-implemented? The following section provides a synthesis of the political conditions and practices that have favored or hampered co-implementation in New Orleans, and critically examines the potential possibilities and constraints for materializing the ambition of shaping egalitarian cities.

6. Political conditions hampering or favoring co-implementation

The realization of planning goals and objectives into real-life outcomes appears to be highly contingent upon the (evolving) nature of a multi-level political climate, institutional setting and political agency. Reflecting on the case of the HousingNOLA plan co-implementation, we have detected specific political conditions and practices that favored or hampered co-implementation, and in turn impacted the realization of producing an egalitarian New Orleans.

Political conditions hampering co-implementation

The first political condition hampering co-implementation is state preemption. State preemption appears as a negative and aggressive political tool that limits cities' autonomies and confines their capacity to control and organize egalitarian urban development processes. Another important condition is the counter-advocacy efforts by opposing forces. Implementation deviates from initial planning goals when hegemonic housing actors propose counterproductive legislature that is driven by market-based solutions (regardless of whether these solutions are equitable or impactful on the poor or middle classes). A third condition hampering co-implementation is associated with the radically reduced public (federal) funding for subsidized affordable housing causing difficulties in access to resources and the semi-implementation of local plans. Lastly, the empirical research reveals that temporal inconsistencies of political support result in a lack of specific strategies and ideas for fostering a productive institutional framework in which affordable housing can be provided. Elected officials' lack of constant interest in affordable housing translates into pre-election promises of policies that become dormant and delegitimized unless they are constantly being challenged by housing advocates.

Political conditions favoring co-implementation

The first political condition that favors co-implementation is the constant (political) presence of informed and networked alternative co-producers who interact with elected officials and civil society in various arenas and contribute to the multi-level formulation of strategies and co-implementation practices. Another major condition favoring co-implementation is the establishment of housing alliances and planning initiatives at larger scales. A proliferation of housing alliances is deemed necessary, especially for actions in urban housing plans that depend on higher tiers of administration, in order for plans to be turned into real-life outcomes at the city level. A third condition is the capacity of alternative co-producers and their alliances to remain connected to larger community networks and to their broader base in order to ensure well-founded and persuasive advocacy processes. Lastly, co-implementation is fostered when alternative co-producers are mindful of the temporality and fragmentation of political support and, hence, take actions to have co-implementation outlive administrations.

Above all, the experience of HousingNOLA reveals that the political activism of alternative co-producers appears as a response to the temporal and fragmented political support of elected officials for the poorest and the disadvantaged, especially when the implementation of plans deviates from their original pro-equity socio-spatial vision.

7. Conclusions

This paper sought answers to the following questions: Which political conditions and actions exist and emerge in the long-term planning and implementation process that hinder or facilitate co-implementation? What political tactics, claims and strategies do alternative co-producers use to ensure co-implementation by counteracting "sheered-off" pro-equity plan implementation trajectories? And how does co-implementation contribute to the development and governance of egalitarian cities? Bridging theories of co-production, planning politics and democracy, the main conceptual/theoretical contribution of our paper was the introduction and definition of the concept of 'co-implementation' in planning theory and practice; a planning dimension that can play a catalytic role in democratizing urban governance and shaping more egalitarian urban development but which, thus far, remained insufficiently scrutinized. Empirically, this paper contributed to the analysis of co-implementation by using evidence from HousingNOLA, a multiyear implementation plan in post-Katrina New Orleans aiming to ensure affordable, high quality housing for all residents.

Our research on HousingNOLA shows that the vision of building an egalitarian city is constantly jeopardized and only partially materialized because of interrupted and disrupted planning and implementation processes. Specific goals and actions oriented towards the satisfaction of housing needs will not produce expected outcomes when met with temporalities of political support, power imbalances across administration scales, austerity-inspired housing policies and the powerful influence of pro-growth urban actors. The vision of making an egalitarian city, however, is still visible on the horizon when alternative co-producers become watchdogs of planning and implementation, and use these processes as an instrument to politically empower themselves in the city and in regional arenas, to rectify persisting neoliberal policies and manifest new aspects of democratic governance that can guide more fair urban redevelopment outcomes.

As the case of New Orleans exemplifies, politically savvy and well-organized alternative co-producers can respond to – and hopefully overcome – multiple administrative and political rigidities by scaling out their political actions and reinforcing their political voice in and through the support of ordinary city residents. This has resulted in the formation of a 'neo-political' governance arrangement of New Orleans; namely a bottom-linked governance arrangement through which alternative co-producers are liberated – also through the support of a larger base – to challenge institutional structures and institutional fallacies and start molding a more favorable multi-level and ideologically-varied political climate that can better allow an uninterrupted and undisrupted plan co-implementation. HousingNOLA, hence, confirms the political nature of co-implementation and provides inspiration for alternative co-producers and their alliances across the world to politically activate themselves in planning processes, and in doing so, democratize urban processes at large.

As the conditions favoring co-implementation reveal (i.e the constant presence of politically active co-producers in state arenas, the proliferation of housing alliances across territories and the connection of co-producers to constituencies), co-implementation informed by a 'neo-political' and 'neo-democratic' bottom-linked governance emerges as a necessary pre-condition for building egalitarian cities. GNOHA and HousingNOLA partners, in their role as alternative co-producers and emancipated and leading plan co-implementers, saw the value of HousingNOLA plan implementation and used it as a political instrument i) to increase their visibility and influential capacity in housing governance arenas and ii) to steer uninterrupted pro-equity redevelopment trajectories as designed through debate, disagreement and dissensus with powerful co-implementers (public authorities and governmental agencies).

However, the undesired socio-spatial effects that were showcased by the low performance of the HousingNOLA plan co-implementation provide evidence of a co-implementation process that has not yet reached its societal ambition of building an egalitarian city. This calls attention to another very crucial parameter in building the egalitarian city: that of identifying which form of capitalism (or political economy paradigm) and state need to be in symbiosis with co-implementation in order to reach the ideal of the egalitarian city. Alternative co-producers are, hence, expected to widen their political claims, level up their political ambition and build up a larger political base during co-implementation processes while keeping an eye towards promoting and shaping a radicalized 'neowelfare' state. This yet-to-be-developed state could become an optimal hosting environment for co-implementation when deep public subsidies are distributed across co-producers, neighborhoods and social groups in an equity-based manner; and when a wider range of substantially financed housing possibilities for the heterogeneous neighborhoods of the cities is publicly deliberated and offered. Future research on the state-finance-planning nexus will shed more light on co-implementation and its full political potential in shaping egalitarian cities.

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[i] This paper is largely based on the weekly updates of HousingNOLA with their members; a source that is not readily available. However, the website of HousingNOLA can be a rich source of information for interested readers (https://www.housingnola.org/main/home).

[ii] Hetero-development refers to different and parallel housing projects led by heterogeneous assemblages of housing actors each focusing on different income target groups (high, medium, low), neighborhoods (strategic, ghettoized, underinvested) and types of housing (market rate, low income, subsidized) (Paidakaki et al. 2020).

[iii] The HousingNOLA Strategy and Implementation Plan was released in December 2015, aiming to solve housing affordability problems. It focused primarily on supporting the rebuilding of the 275,000 homes that were destroyed by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Anticipating a demand of 33,563 new housing units by 2025, the plan called for adding 3,000 affordable housing units within two years and 5,000 by 2021 using public funds managed by city (Housing Authority of New Orleans, New Orleans Redevelopment Authority, Finance Authority of New Orleans and City OCD) and state (Louisiana Housing Corporation, State OCD Disaster Recovery Unit) housing agencies.

[iv] State preemption is the use of state law to nullify a municipal ordinance or authority. In some cases, preemption can lead to improved policy statewide. However, preemption that prevents cities from expanding rights, building stronger economies, and promoting innovation can be counterproductive when decision-making is divorced from the core wants and needs of community members (National League of Cities 2018: https://www.nlc.org/resource/city-rights-in-an-era-of-preemption-a-state-by-state-analysis).

[v] As the Chairwoman of GNOHA and HousingNOLA Project Lead, Andreanecia Morris, explains: "… Part of our job is reminding the community we have a solution, it's one we've worked hard on, and we have to hold ourselves to it. These elected officials are not some foreign body that's descended from on high. We elect our leaders; we empower them. Just as we empower our elected officials, we work and will continue to work to empower the people of New Orleans" (The Advocate, January 2018: https://www.theadvocate.com/gambit/new_orleans/news/article_28ca19a8-f8f7-5095-b623-6c2b25acbb49.html).