

Planning by Intentional Communities: An Understudied Form of Activist Planning

TORE SAGER

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

tore.sager@ntnu.no

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Abstract: The article is about intentional communities choosing a lifestyle outside the mainstream. It is explained why their planning is a sort of activist planning and often a case of radical planning. Planning by intentional communities differs from most activist neighbourhood planning by closer relation to a deviating worldview or ideology. The permanent insistence on non-conformity makes planning processes involving both government and intentional community cases of agonist planning. Activist planning theory has not studied how the thousands of dedicated activists living in intentional communities plan the development of their area. The article starts such an investigation by studying Svartlamon in Trondheim, Norway. It is an urban intentional community for social change, housing some 240 individuals. The activists have used planning strategically to mobilize and build external support, to frame the cooperation with the municipality, and to establish a legal underpinning of the intentional community. The following questions are answered: Are the goals of the activists clearly reflected in the plans? How are the activists involved in the planning? Are the planning ideas of the intentional community well received by the municipality?

Introduction

The purpose of the article is to argue, by focusing on intentional communities, that the scope of activist planning is wider than suggested by academic planning literature, and that the planning of intentional community activists is of interest to planning theory. The case study – Svartlamon, Norway – shows that it is sometimes possible for activists living in such micro-societies to use spatial planning as a strategy for detailing and implementing their goals, mobilizing for their cause, and obtaining a legal basis for their community. The diversity goal of many cities adds to the political relevance of intentional communities.

Activist planning has been a theme in planning theory at least since the 1960s (Davidoff 1965). Activist planners can be lay people based in civil society, or professionals based either in or outside government. Through direct action, they oppose or advocate for a cause or a group. Direct action is politically motivated activity in a broad sense. It takes place to one side of the institutionalized procedures for political goal achievement in the society where the planning individual acts as citizen. When acting in the capacity of being a professional, the direct action takes place outside the normal channels for reporting problems in the organization employing the planner (Sager 2013:98). Activist planners based in civil society are often affiliated with protest groups, urban social movements, neighbourhood associations, or NGOs.

Some activist planners are members of intentional communities and plan for them. Such a community has common activities for its members and is usually located on one piece of land. ‘To consciously and willfully inhabit a particular space among like-minded people for a common purpose is to live intentionally’ (Cnaan and Breyman 2007:243). An intentional community is a group of people who have chosen to live together in order to achieve a common purpose, cooperatively trying to create and uphold a lifestyle reflecting their shared core values and ideas of the good society, and underlining their difference from the mainstream (Kozeny 1995). Sargisson (2012:31) holds that the *raison d’être* of intentional communities ‘goes beyond tradition, personal relationships, and family ties’, which excludes the Amish, as well as tribes and ethnic enclaves. In the present planning context, travelling communities fall outside, as do communities whose members live scattered among the majority population without a common area to plan for. The conceptually gray area most keenly discussed in recent planning literature is between intentional cohousing and other hybrids of private and collective habitation, such as gated communities (Chiodelli and Baglione 2014, Ruiu 2014). Members of many cohousing communities have a lifestyle not deviating much from that of the surrounding society.

With possible exception of the gray area and the few examples mentioned above, intentional communities are what Sandercock (1998b:206) denotes ‘communities of resistance... struggling for livelihood and lifespace’. They dig their heels in at the side of the mainstream consumer society steeped in individualism and material values. Providing space for urban intentional communities can be seen as part of Sandercock’s desired paradigm shift from metropolis to cosmopolis and mongrel cities.

The activism of intentional communities is usually related to promotion of arts and crafts, social change (politics), religion (spirituality), counter-culture, ecological living, peace work, care and therapy, or experimental family relations. Some of the communities have an urban or rural area at their disposal and have to plan its land use, facilities, and development, typically requiring a relationship and even some cooperation with the local government. The study of this relationship is of interest to activist planning theory.

Squatting is another tool of resistance straining activists' relationship to municipal planners and local politicians. House occupations get far more attention in the planning literature than intentional communities, even though squatters seldom use planning as a strategy to further their interests. Planning scholars have studied squatting in many cities, for example, repeatedly in Amsterdam and Berlin (Vasudevan 2017). House occupations rarely develop into intentional communities, even if this happened in Fristaden Christiania, Copenhagen, and in Svartlamon, Trondheim.

Only a few planning and geography scholars have taken interest in intentional communities. Exceptions are Boyer (2015a, b), Carter (2015), Forsyth and Crewe (2009, 2011) and Moroni (2014), but only Carter explicitly makes the link to activist planning theory. In addition, Chatterton (2013), Jarvis (2015), Vestbro and Horelli (2012), and Williams (2005a, b, 2008) concentrate on cohousing.

Forsyth and Crewe (2011) link their overview of planned residential enclaves of like-minded people to the debate on urban diversity, arguing that 'planned enclaves can enhance the standing of marginal groups within a broader community, in that way contributing to a region's diversity' (ib:69). The founders of one planned enclave complain that: 'We basically had to break almost every code in the city to get Village Homes approved' (ib:68). This echoes the accounts of several intentional communities about their – some times very frustrating – dealings with municipal planners (Ellis 2015, Mitchell et al. 2003, Rozza et al. 2015). Zoning regulations can be an obstacle to various sorts of communal living (Holland 1986), which has been analyzed particularly in the US context (Liberty 2003, Liebig et al. 2006).

There are probably more than 100,000 members of intentional communities worldwide (Fellowship of Intentional Community 2016), but activist planning theory stands without

researched accounts of how they plan. This article expands the notion of activist planning by including the planning undertaken by intentional communities. The research questions are:

- 1) Do the purpose and goals of intentional communities stand out clearly in the plans for development of their areas?
- 2) What has been the activists' role in spatial planning of intentional communities?
- 3) What are the municipal planners' attitudes to the intentional communities and their plans?

The article addresses these issues through the case study of one political-ecological intentional community. In preparation for the case analysis of Svartlamon in the city of Trondheim, Norway, the next two sections place planning by intentional communities among other activist planning modes and explain how it differs from the planning of ordinary neighbourhoods. The last section before the case study argues, by linking to the goal of urban diversity, that it is politically relevant to examine planning undertaken by the activist communities.

Intentional communities' planning compared to other modes of activist planning

Sager (2013:66-95, 2016) offers a classification scheme for activist planning. It distinguishes between planning that is insurgent to the extent that it is concealed by the planners and unrecognized by the government, and planning initiatives that are unconcealed and recognized. The planning efforts of intentional communities considered in this article are of the latter kind.

Another distinction is between activist modes involving planners as government officials, and modes where the planners are affiliated with civil society groups or organizations. Examples are, respectively, equity planning (Krumholz 1982) and advocacy planning (Davidoff 1965). A few intentional communities receive support from the local or national government or use land owned by the government (e.g., Svartlamon), without being part of the public sector. The overwhelming majority of intentional communities are organizations of civil society, and lay activist planners prepare their development.

The typology of Sager (2016) distinguishes between three broad motives of activist planners. The planning modes used as examples below, all involve planners based in civil society:

- a) Loyalty to a group or a community
 Modes: Advocacy planning (Sandoval 2013) and community-based activist planning (Angotti 2008, Brownill 1988)
- b) Commitment to a strategic cause
 – pursuing the goal of changing social structures in specific ways
 Modes: Radical planning (Sandercock 1998a) and critical-alternative initiatives (Hasan 2007, Nyseth 2011)
- c) Commitment to a relational cause
 – aiming to improve the relationship between social groups or interests
 Mode: Intermediate activist planning (Brandt et al. 2008, Martens 2005)

The main aim of planners with motivation of type a) is to assist a certain ‘client’ on the client’s own terms. Advocacy planners are external, while community-based activist planners belong to the group or community they are trying to help. Such communities can, for example, be native reservations (Lane and Hibbard 2005) or inner city neighbourhoods threatened by hard-handed urban renewal breaking up long-lasting local relationships (Muzio 2009). Planning by intentional communities is done by their activist members, not by advocacy planners.

Intentional communities do not have to be extrovert, aiming to change society at large by direct action, to apply activist planning. Occasionally, an introspective (contemplative) intentional community is threatened with closure or forced displacement by the authorities. Some intentional communities provoke the government through their ideology and belief system, even if they do not push for social change beyond the borders of their own settlements. Members of introspective communities may fight as activists to protect their own settlement. As part of the struggle, community members sometimes make plans in order to demonstrate ability and willingness to comply with government regulations and show that they intend to use their land in ways unlikely to bother the neighbours. Examples from Fristaden Christiania are the Green Plan of 1991 and the development plan for the area fifteen years later (Fristaden Christiania 1991, 2006).

Commitment to a strategic cause means that the planner acts according to a goal of changing society in a certain direction. The aim is for affecting procedure or substance without focusing on a particular group or relationship, although, admittedly, these things cannot always be held strictly apart. Extrovert intentional communities are actively trying to change the surrounding

society, and most of them have members with motivation of type b). These members are activists, and when they plan the physical design and development of their community, it is a case of activist planning. The plans reflect the ideology and worldview of the intentional community, which normally deviate considerably from those of the mainstream. One can then draw an analogy with radical planning. Examples are the development of the galaxy concept for the Auroville township (www.auroville.org/contents/691) and Document 2 in Table 1, the intentional community's own proposal for development of Svartlamon. In the postscript to a recent book, Friedmann (2017:294) writes that he has, since the 1980s, been thinking 'about the possibilities of a "radical" form of planning, by which I mean a planning with and for small, autonomous, self-governing communities in constant tension with an all-encompassing state'. Most activist planning by intentional communities is radical in this sense.

Intentional communities' activist planning is typically different from critical-alternative initiatives. These pose critique at the policy level rather than at the system level. They suggest alternative approaches concerning methods, content of plans or processes for planning and decision-making. The distinction between system critique and policy critique is the main theoretical difference between radical planning and critical-alternative initiatives. Intentional communities for profound social change – whether political, ecological or counter-cultural – confront mainstream society at the system level, criticizing its capitalism, market-worship, anti-social individualism, and lack of solidarity. Plans made by these intentional communities do not primarily aim to oppose particular policies, but to create frameworks for alternative ways of living. Thus they normally contain elements of radical planning.

Commitment to a relational cause means that the planner gives priority to the goal of improving the relationship between some contending or competing social actors (groups, organizations, etc). For example, activism for peace takes place in some intentional communities where members have motivation of type c). Most of the activities of Tamera Peace Research Village in Portugal target the outside world (Dregger 2013), while the activism of Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó in the Urabá region consists for a large part in negotiating neutrality and disengagement from the fighting parties of the civil war in Colombia (Alther 2006). Planning by the intentional communities working for peace is analogous to the mode of intermediate activist planning, where the planner cannot be strongly associated with a particular substantive outcome of the mitigation process.

Many intentional communities are likely to shed little light on the spatial aspects of urban activist planning theory, because their ground area is small (single-building collectives), their population is low, their existence is very brief, or their location is rural and secluded (Meijering et al. 2007). However, dozens of intentional communities have a population of at least close to one hundred, manage a considerable non-farming ground area, and are located in a city, a suburb, or a village with municipal demand for land use plans. They may have something to offer activist planning theory if their defence against government intervention is based both on protest and on strategic plans for the community.

Surely, even small intentional communities may run into conflict with local planning authorities. They may have to explain in detail how they will comply with local bylaws, and in this lies an element of planning. Communities of any size may also venture on a process involving local officials in order to craft a special land use district (or some similar formal land use category), that can reconcile the vision of the activists with the building codes and the clean water, sanitation, safety, and parking requirements of the municipality (Boyer 2015b, Fenster 1999:13-14).

Strategic planning by intentional communities tends to differ from other neighbourhood planning

The section explains why activist planning by intentional communities can bring something new to planning theory, and why it typically deviates from activist planning aiming to defend and rehabilitate other vulnerable communities. Most inhabitants of intentional communities are activists with a mission. They make up a tight-knit fellowship with a common purpose beyond protecting their living quarters. The authorities cannot easily split up the activists or pacify them by offering better material living conditions elsewhere. Living in simple and sub-standard conditions is often part of their ideology. Thus, the municipality may not be able to apply the standard solution of gentrifying the place, but might instead have to look for unorthodox ways to deal with the recalcitrant neighbourhood.

This theoretical discussion concentrates on the types of intentional communities that have most similarities with the case area of this study, that is, intentional communities for political change, ecology, counter-culture and alternative social organization – political-ecological communities

for short. Some important intentions are sidelined, such as promotion of arts and crafts, religious worship and peace work. As already pointed out, little empirical knowledge is available about the planning conducted by intentional communities. The present outline of intentional communities' planning thus has a hypothetical character, and makes assumptions mainly on theoretical grounds.

In political-ecological communities, the motive of the activists is not commitment to a relational cause, so their efforts are not intermediate activist planning. Instead, their strategic planning efforts tend to be hybrids of radical planning and community-based activist planning. The aim cannot only be preservation of the activists' own housing area. Strategic planning by intentional communities must also give ideological gains. It is similar to community-based activist planning because the activists have an area or neighbourhood to defend, and it resembles radical planning because central elements of the defence spring from a certain ideology or outlook on life.

Intentional communities have a permanent need to stress their otherness. Consequently, when spatial planning is part of their defence strategy, the plans are likely to demonstrate difference from mainstream society. This makes intentional community planning agonistic by nature. Strife must be continuing to underline opposition to conventional living (Pløger 2004). The combination of hybridity and non-conformity is the reason why planning by intentional communities can contribute something new to planning theory. This is especially so when the institutional setting is an anarchist-inspired flat decision structure and a felt activist obligation to walk one's talk.

However, due to internal conflicts in many intentional communities, there is no guarantee that their attempts at spatial planning will be as sketched above. A typical conflict runs between very anti-authoritarian activists and those who, despite discouraging experiences, believe in cooperation with the local government. Protest is the likely strategy of the hard-liners, while the collaborative wing is more apt to go for a mixed protest-and-planning strategy. When the latter group has its way, the internal conflict is still likely to affect the plans.

One possibility is that planning proposals become very radical and provoke municipal officials and the general public. The likelihood of local political approval is then low. The plan may nevertheless relieve internal tension among the activists and advance their strategic thinking. A

second possibility is that the anti-authoritarian wing assents to the planning, but regards it as a merely tactical contrivance. These activists join in the planning only to obtain municipal acceptance for continued use by the intentional community of an area where they can practice their lifestyle and pursue their mission in relative autonomy. This leaves much to the municipal planners and may result in a plan reflecting the community's intentions only to a low degree. The hard-liners are likely to sabotage such a plan whenever this serves their goals. Neither of these possible outcomes provide the intentional community with a legally binding and protective development plan suited for guiding its progressive evolution. Internal conflict can thus have detrimental effect on planning by intentional communities.

The bifocal task of immediate safeguarding of one's own living conditions and achieving long-term ideological ends generates several typical disaccords affecting planning by intentional communities. First, some members give priority to ideological core issues, while others see resistance against eviction and other immediate threats to the community as the most pressing concern. Second, the intentional community has to balance the fight for political ideals with members' needs to pursue their creative, artistic or musical projects. The planning must unite the desire for youthful, anarchistic personal freedom and necessary disciplined contributions to the common cause. Third, some prefer strict ranking of goals to accomplish the ideologically and politically most important, while others hesitate to set priorities, and suggest instead to make plans that approach several goals inside the framework of the common vision. This is meant to benefit solidarity, unity and friendly relations in the community.

Political-ecological communities often face dilemmas of recruitment, normalization and goal setting that affect their strategic planning and set it apart from that of other neighbourhoods. Strategic planning in intentional communities cannot be limited to environmental, spatial and visual aspects. It is, for example, crucial for the survival of the communities to have a good strategy for filling up vacant dwellings. Their ideology may contain strong elements of solidarity and a duty to shelter miserable individuals. This can lead to an influx of people with more difficulties than resources, incapable of supplying the activism that intentional communities rely on. The recruitment policy is therefore decisive for the future ability to carry out long-term plans, prepare social and green experiments, and organize direct action.

Intentional communities have to fight mainstreaming processes forced on them by the greater society, whether they are about complying with municipal codes and bylaws or aligning their

activities with social goals. Many activists have fought hard to get the intentional community off the ground. Their new goals and plans must signal political opposition and dissociation from conventional lifestyle so clearly that they compensate for the loss of mobilization capacity supplied by the original struggle against external enemies. Since it is a main point to be different, these plans cannot mirror municipal and mainstream goals. For example, a conventional goal would be to raise housing standard in the intentional community to the level of most other neighbourhoods in the city. However, this might erase the insurgent and counter-cultural image of the area and focus community activity on material wellbeing instead of social critique. It could well be that success with regard to conventional goal dimensions endangers the long-term activism of the intentional community. Conflict, protest and direct action signal that the community is an alternative to mainstream living. In contrast, widespread renovation of houses signals a wish to live like the majority.

Keeping up activism over long periods requires continued commitment to unfulfilled goals with strong mobilization potential. With successful achievement of a goal, part of the mobilization platform disappears. Replacing the original and inciting goals by incremental and detailed plans for more greenery, vegetable plots and energy saving may well be insufficient to keep the flame burning. The paradox is that a high degree of goal fulfilment is risky. It opens for lack of inspiration and guidance about the way forward, and new missions, goals and tasks must promptly eliminate this void. Resting on one's laurels holds no mobilization potential, and is an untenable attitude for activist communities. Strategic planning by intentional communities must set new goals provoking mainstream society and giving direction and motivation to activists eager to demonstrate that alternative lifestyles are possible and required.

The flat decision-making structure of many political-ecological intentional communities (including Svartlamon) leaves its mark on their planning processes. Every important choice – for example, in negotiations with external actors – is put before the residents for final decision. The procedure is often consensual and time consuming, causing delays for other actors. Resident meetings sometimes come up with new proposals surprising other parties and causing loops in the process. Some activist communities – Svartlamon among them – even practice rotation of representatives in committees and work groups that discuss planning matters with external actors. This may slow down progress and annoy the cooperating parties.

Taken together, the above characteristics of strategic planning by intentional communities set it apart from activist planning in other kinds of neighbourhoods. This indicates that studies of intentional communities using spatial planning as a strategy for survival and development can be of interest to activist planning theory.

The political relevance of studying planning by intentional communities

The relationship between intentional communities and the larger society says much about the realization of values that many liberal democracies are boasting about, such as hospitality, inclusion, tolerance, and personal freedom. The cooperation with the host municipality regarding plans for the area of the intentional community – or lack of such cooperation – reveals information on the relationship. Actual practice is not well known, however, as the planning efforts of the numerous intentional communities scattered on all continents have scarcely been studied.

Many intentional communities are formed as reactions to current problems or negative tendencies troubling society at large. Some communities are frameworks of experimental practices in search of solutions to deterioration problems. For example, cohousing is a reaction to the trend towards more individualized and private ways of living. Ecovillages respond to the atmospheric destruction and exaggerated exploitation of nature. Many counter-cultural intentional communities for social change protest against the neoliberal celebration of competitive markets. Attacks are launched against mainstream society on a broad front, making these communities dependent on considerable tolerance of diversity in the surrounding society. Preference for cultural diversity is likely to go along with ambitions of being an inclusive society valuing encounters with people of all stripes. Such ambitions would potentially be to the advantage of intentional communities with social change on their agenda.

The political goals of Trondheim, the host municipality of Svartlamon, are presented in the city's masterplan for 2009-2020 (Trondheim kommune 2010). One of the main goals states that 'in 2020, Trondheim is an inclusive and diverse city' (ib:7). The plan depicts diversity as desirable, as encounters with the unknown, the stimulating, and the transboundary characterize an attractive city. To make diversity a resource, everybody's participation and active use of the city must be facilitated, no matter what is their age, ethnic group, religion, economic status, or

level of functioning (ib:17). The planning document starts out from broad articulations of diversity and inclusion that take account of many dimensions of difference among people. However, sub-cultures among ethnic Norwegians – for example ‘system refugees’ forming intentional communities – do not get attention.

Some of the fine words used in planning documents dealing with diversity, such as inclusion and integration, are deeply problematic seen from the perspective of intentional communities. Their members are definitely against being included and integrated. Representing a distinct alternative to the values and practices of mainstream society is their pivotal point; it is exactly the reason for the existence of the intentional community. In this lies a dilemma affecting the activists’ relationship to the local government. On the one hand, intentional communities depend on the host cities’ positive attitude to diversity and their tolerance of sub-cultures. On the other hand, the politics of handling diversity by means of integration and inclusion is a threat to members of intentional communities. This kind of ‘help’ may not be possible without an undesirable shift of identity on their part. To the astonishment of many elected politicians, some marginalized groups actually insist on remaining outsiders and stay on the margin, paying the price of lower material comfort. Should diversity politics be pursued to the extent that the building of intentional communities is strongly encouraged by the Establishment, the supply of external enemies would become limited, and intentional communities for social change would lose attraction.

The diversity goal gets much attention in this section. The reason is that it has potential influence on the municipality’s attitude to plans made by intentional communities. Appreciation of diversity may also positively affect planning processes requiring cooperation between activists and public planners.

Case: Planning by Svartlamon intentional community

The purpose of the case study is to provide an example of activist planning by an intentional community and answer the research questions in the context of this specific case. It is shown that planning for the development of their area can be a useful strategy for intentional communities. Svartlamon activists were successful in signaling social responsibility and coming up with constructive ideas, thereby building external support. The archives of the local

newspaper Adresseavisen, the Municipality of Trondheim, and Svartlamon Housing Foundation are the basis of the research. Informal interviews with planners, residents, and the General Manager of the Housing Foundation supplemented the written information. The Foundation manages the properties and tenancy agreements in Svartlamon, where the municipality owns nearly all plots and houses.

Svartlamon (Sager 2013:209-10) is situated 1.5 km across the river from downtown Trondheim. The area was regulated for port, industry, and transport infrastructure after World War II. The remaining houses were not maintained, and by the mid 1980s Svartlamon was threatened by total demolition and inhabited mostly by outcasts with gross overrepresentation of crime, alcoholism, and asocial behaviour. The first young activists came from a tightknit circle of youth spending much time at the UFFA house. The acronym means ‘youth for free activity’, and this group had at its disposal an autonomously managed youth house nearby. The first wave of new inhabitants occupied some houses in 1987, but most of them soon obtained legal contracts with the municipality without outbreak of conflict. Svartlamon Residents Association was founded in February 1990, which is here seen as the start of the intentional community. The statutes of the Association lay down the flat structure, the autonomy of the area, and the goals of urban ecology and anti-racism.

Some 180 adults and 60 children inhabit about thirty buildings in Svartlamon in 2017. The old houses (about 5000 m² floor space) are considered worthy of preservation. Residents manage or operate around a dozen of small businesses and non-profit events in the area. Many of the cultural and commercial activities are located in buildings formerly owned by the car dealer Strandveien Auto.

Photo in about here.

From the activists’ perspective, the conflict with the municipality of Trondheim throughout the 1990s was about the right to affordable housing and less about preserving old working-class houses. The idea of an alternative way of urban living was strong from the outset. The activists wanted to pursue their interests in, for example, music and art – and idling about and partying – without having their dreams crushed by the material chase. The housing standard is therefore to remain low. Only thirty of the 133 tenancy agreements offer unshared bathroom. Nissen (1998:19) describes the intentional community as created at the intersection of punk and

hedonism, adding that the cohesive force of music has perhaps been stronger than that of politics. He holds the ideal of most Svartlamon residents to be urban conviviality (Peattie 1998), fusing serious social protest and cheerful social activities.

The youth's need for combining low rent and alternative lifestyle conflicted with the political and administrative need for consistent policies and budget control. The municipality anticipated much higher restoration expenses than would be covered by future rents from the run-down houses. The consistency argument had several aspects. First, groups taking the law into their own hands as house occupants should not benefit relative to other groups in need of municipal assistance. Second, tenants persuaded to leave Svartlamon in earlier decades should not have to experience that others preserve and use the houses. Third, the actions of all households and private firms that had been guided by the still valid pro-industry regulation, should not be rendered sub-optimal by municipal kneeling to activists. Fourth, politicians felt a special obligation to companies in Svartlamon that had long announced their need to expand by purchasing adjacent plots, and had received positive response. It was at the heart of the conflict that, up to 1998, the municipality of Trondheim actively supported the expansion plan of the car dealer Strandveien Auto. Figure 1 shows a timeline of events influencing the development of Svartlamon.

Timeline in about here.

Figure 1: Timeline of events concerning Svartlamon

It was important for approaching a solution to the Svartlamon conflict, that the activists hooked their protests on to the environmental discourse of Local Agenda 21 (United Nations 2012). Trondheim municipality had signed the Aalborg Charter of European Cities and Towns Toward Sustainability in 1996. The city council also ratified the national Fredrikstad Declaration in 1998, thereby accepting responsibility for initiating a Local Agenda 21 process advancing sustainable development. A negotiated deal with the intentional community would show that the politicians were serious. The activists also argued for preserving working-class quarters and for the diversity goal. Narrow demands for affordable housing for young people would have pinned down their protest as an egoistic rally for subsidies. Politically, it was easier for the city council and the municipal officials to reconsider the industry-oriented regulation, when the Svartlamon dwellers had strengthened their image as responsible citizens. The political decision

in September 1998 was to re-regulate Svartlamon to a residential area. The ensuing sub-sections answer the three research questions.

Intentional community goals reflected in the plans

Svartlamon is a political-ecological intentional community, and its strategic plans combine elements of radical and community-based activist planning. Table 1 lists planning documents published after the establishment of the intentional community in 1990. It leaves out a few documents written in preparation for the official development plan of 2001 and the environmental plan of 2005. Documents appear in chronological order and are included irrespective of the role of the activists in the plan-making.

Table 1: Planning documents on Svartlamon since the establishment of the intentional community in 1990

<i>Document no. / Norwegian title</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Document type / Deciding organization</i>	<i>Planning content</i>
1 / Reina 2000 - Økologisk byfornyelse på Svartla'mon	1995	Election material / Green Party in Trondheim	A proposal for developing Svartlamon as housing area. Resident participation, green values and urban ecology feature prominently
2 / Utviklingsforslag for Svartlamon	1998	The intentional community's proposal for development of Svartlamon / Svartlamon Residents Association	Concrete alternative to the municipality's ideas: new buildings from recycled materials, connection to Local Agenda 21, common facilities, and local autonomy
3 /Reguleringsplan med bestemmelser for Svartlamoen, Sak 0149/01	2001	Development plan / Trondheim City Council	Detailed map showing land use

4 / Svartlamoen: Bolig-, kultur- og næringsutvikling, Sak 0150/01	2001	Attachment to the development plan / Trondheim City Council	Main goals and purview for Svartlamon as an alternative neighbourhood and an experimental area for urban ecological solutions
5 / Grøntplanen for Svartlamon	2003	Green framework plan / Svartlamon Residents Association	Shows how the common green areas in Svartlamon can be improved
6 / Miljøplan for Svartlamon	2005	Environmental plan / Svartlamon Residents Association	Detailed environmental goals and suggested concrete actions
7 / Bestemmelser til endret reguleringsplan for Svartlamoen (Reinaområdet), R219b	2006	Development plan changes / Trondheim City Council	Revised objectives (with interpretation) for Svartlamon. Guidelines for further development and for cooperation with the municipality
8 / Hovedmål-setninger for Svartlamoen beboerforening 2014- 2015	2014	List of decisions made at meeting / Svartlamon Residents Association	Main development goals for Svartlamon and approved actions with regard to activism, buildings, and common areas
9 / Evaluering av Trondheim kommunes involvering på Svartlamoen	2016	Draft evaluation report from the city administration / Trondheim municipality	Evaluation of the municipality's involvement in Svartlamon: economic consequences, organization model, and achieving development planning goals
10 / Merknad til evaluering av Svartlamon	2016	Comments to the municipality's evaluation / Svartlamon Housing Foundation	Viewpoints on accomplishments since 2001, and suggested improvements of Svartlamon goal- achievement

11 / Evaluering av evalueringen av Trondheim kommunes involvering på Svartlamon	2016	Comments to the municipality's evaluation / Svartlamon Residents Association	Viewpoints on accomplishments since 2001, compared to development planning goals
12 / Saksframlegg. Evaluering av Svartlamoen	2016	Presentation of Svartlamon case for Trondheim Municipal Executive Board / Chief Municipal Executive	Trondheim municipality's conclusion on how to cooperate with the intentional community and the Housing Foundation to achieve development planning goals

The intentional community used planning strategically from the middle of the 1990s. The ecological emphasis was clear already in Document 1. The strategy continued with the intentional community's own plan of 1998 (Document 2), the year when the area was decisively re-regulated for housing. Two years later, the 1998-plan served as guidelines for intentional community members cooperating with the municipality on the official development plan.

One should not 'conflate plans with regulation and planning with governance' (Kaza and Hopkins 2009:492). Plans can signal commitment to intentions and willingness to cooperate. It was important to the intentional community to convey such signals to the municipality and the citizenry by making its 1998 development proposal public. When the opportunity came in 2000 to prepare a development plan for Svartlamon in cooperation with municipal planners, the activists had already clearly signaled their main points. The plans from 1995 and 1998 demonstrated that the intentional community was predictable, as it had stuck to its main goals – including the Local Agenda 21 commitment – for five years.

Documents 3 and 4 are intertwined, and the remarks on the official development plan refer to them in combination. The legally binding plan of 2001 contains the main ideas put forward in the 1998-plan. It turned out to be of particular importance that the intentional community's plan argued for the whole of Svartlamon becoming an ecological and environment-friendly area for experimentation. The 2001-plan is of great importance to the intentional community and presents its vision in phrases accepted by the municipality and the city council:

The superior goal of the Svartlamoen project is to develop an alternative urban area with ample room for experimentation, trials, and testing. The experimental activities relate to dwellings, housing environment, social interaction, resident participation, ecology and energy use, municipal services, art forms, culture, and business development. (Document 4, first approved point)

The majority of the city council applauded the activists' ability to integrate many interests and urban qualities by means of the official development plan. It was crucial to the legitimacy of Svartlamon community, that the activists won accept for the new regulation category 'urban ecological experimental area'. This gave institutional backing for trying out alternatives related both to process and substance; that is, democratic neighbourhood governance, outdoors design, and building construction. Within the framework of the official development plan, and in full compliance with the purpose of the intentional community, common facilities and use of recycled materials were to have a prominent place. Rents should be well below average due to residents' improvement of municipal property and the nevertheless sub-standard housing. The hard-won experimental status makes it clear that this is a case of radical planning, where the degree of autonomy and the scope for dissident action go beyond the achievements of most community-based activist planning.

Since the late 1980s, there have been activists in Svartlamon devoted to green politics. The Green Plans (Documents 5 and 6) develop Svartlamon as an urban ecological area. The 2006-revision of the official development plan (Document 7) and the intentional community's own goals of 2014 (Document 8) sharpen the ecological focus.

Documents 9–12 are about the municipal evaluation of Svartlamon. Both the evaluation itself and the comments to it clearly acknowledge the goals set down in the official development plan. The Housing Foundation insists that complaints about modest experimentation and few new homes are due to an unsuitable organization model for the Foundation, blocking the raising of loans and giving disincentives for renovation and tenants' own work. Svartlamon Residents Association draws attention to cases in which the municipality ignored the development plan's goal of resident participation. It also complains that the municipality has made it unreasonably difficult in some cases to obtain the agreements and regulative exemptions required for experimental building.

The agonistic character of the relationship between the municipal administration and Svartlamon community becomes explicit in the evaluation process. Antagonism is avoided, however, due to the moderating effect of the development plan of 2001.

Svartlamon activists' autonomy and involvement in the plans

Except for Documents no. 7, 9 and 12 in Table 1, the activists have strongly influenced the content of the plans. When initiating development of Svartlamon, they operated independently of the municipal planners and did not look to previous planning documents for the area. There was close cooperation with the Green Party on the plan of 1995 (Document 1), while the development proposal for Svartlamon of 1998 (Document 2) was entirely the creation of the activists. The close planning cooperation with Trondheim municipality only concerns the development plan of 2001 (Documents 3–4).

Støwer (2005) confirms that Svartlamon residents and municipal planners cooperated closely on the official development plan (Documents 3–4). Others were also involved, such as architects, business representatives, municipal and county agencies, and research organizations. Much of the interaction took place in work groups. They dealt with four themes determined in the upstart seminar: increased density by constructing new houses, Local Agenda 21 activities, green structure, and keeping Svartlamon dwellings affordable. The intentional community had two members in each work group and representatives in the coordinating project group. This process was a case of communicative planning based on codetermination.

Early in the developing planning, in year 2000, both municipal planners and representatives of the intentional community attended a study trip to Copenhagen. The trip helped to improve relationships between former adversaries. One excursion went to Fristaden Christiania, a political-anarchist intentional community on the old ramparts towards Amager. The input from the study trip and the work groups resulted in a development plan proposal considered by municipal committees in May 2001. Svartlamon Residents Association distributed a first draft of the development plan to its members, who commented and proposed changes.

The level of activism and participation in an intentional community varies over time. Threats from an external enemy tend to increase involvement, but the case of Svartlamon shows that there are other motivational factors as well. The meetings of the Residents Association had an

average attendance of 36 in 2002, which is a higher number than during the fight with the municipality and the car dealer throughout the 1990s. It turned out to be mobilizing appeal in the constructive task of safeguarding the victory and ensuring continued low rents by building Svartlamon in line with the principles of Local Agenda 21. This is in line with accounts of the mobilizing effects of Local Agenda 21 on lay activist planners in some other European cities (Batterbury 2003, Novy and Hammer 2007).

In agreement with the Svartlamon development plan of 2001, Trondheim City Council established two foundations to administer the area; the Housing Foundation in 2001 and the Foundation for Culture and Business in 2006. From 2013 onwards, Trondheim Municipality insisted on having three of five board members. This was an important symbolic issue strongly annoying the intentional community. Activists complained that their community was no longer autonomous. However, from 2017 the chair of the Housing Foundation's board is to have a third-party affiliation, weakening municipal control.

The participation of the intentional community in the evaluation process 2015–2016 consisted mainly in writing critical replies to the preliminary evaluation report (Document 9). The community's objections (Documents 10 and 11) influenced the final text laid out before the politicians (Document 12). Examples are the wish for longer tenancy periods than ten years in order to improve the incentives for residents' own renovation of houses, and for more emphasis on the value for Trondheim of having an alternative neighbourhood.

The planning of the two most recent densification projects in Svartlamon described below illustrates tensions in the planning and administration of the area. The two building projects contrast municipal bureaucratic procedure and the participation ethos of the intentional community.

The Replacement House built under municipal auspices compensates for an old house, which burnt down in 2013. Those who lost their home were scarcely and only initially heard when the new building was planned. There is nothing experimental about the house. It is conventional in every respect and obliges with all building regulations. The municipality wanted a standard suitable to ordinary people temporarily in need of municipal housing assistance.

The contrasting project is a row of five self-builder houses completed in the summer of 2017 (Nøysom Arkitekter 2016). The planning and building of these houses has the following characteristics:

- Svartlamon Residents Association approved project and design, and selected self-builders
- Extensive self-builder influence throughout the entire planning and construction process
- Widespread mutual learning and assistance among the self-builders
- Low housing standard in line with Svartlamon ideology. The total cost of the five 60 m² units is 3.0 million NOK, while the Replacement House with two flats cost 5.4 million NOK
- Exemption from a number of national building regulations and municipal bylaws
- Heeding ecological principles, using recycled materials both inside and outside
- Rejecting privatization; the self-builders become tenants in the new houses, which are owned by Svartlamon Housing Foundation

The process and product in the Replacement House case demonstrate that Trondheim Municipality can act unilaterally when such behaviour serves its interests. The house breaks with Svartlamon intentions and underscores the continuing agonism between municipality and activists. The contrast to the self-builder houses is striking. This densification project has great symbolic significance, as it gives a concise summary of what Svartlamon intentional community stands for: rich social life and cooperative process, experimentation regarding both participation and built environment, ecological solutions, and a substantive outcome displaying the non-conformist character of the community (Enlid and Larssen 2017).

Municipal planners' attitudes to the activists and their plans

This sub-section deals with municipal planners' attitudes expressed after the political sanctioning of Svartlamon as a housing area in 1998. Several sources of irritation and inspiration may affect the planners' treatment of the intentional community. Even if mixed views on the opposite camp are coming from both sides, the majority of utterings found in newspaper articles and master students' interviews with planners are appreciative (Lundberg 2009, Thorkildsen 2003). Considering the divisive controversies throughout the 1990s, the politicians' comments attached to the development plan of 2001 (Document 4) are remarkable.

The majority of the municipality's Committee for Environment, Transport and Urban Development, consisting mostly of representatives to the left of the political centre, find the development plan for Svartlamon both creative and geared to future needs. They characterize the Svartlamon project, fought into reality by the intentional community after a decade of struggle, as very interesting and ambitious.

The relationship between activists and municipality was improving as the new millennium started. Dialogue got more room during the common work on the official development plan. Nevertheless, both activists and municipal planners realized that tensions were unavoidable in interactions between the flat structure of the activist community and the hierarchical technocratic culture of public administration. According to municipal officials, additional difficulties were caused by the division of Svartlamon members of work groups and committees in two camps: a majority opting for a cooperative strategy and a minority following a confrontation strategy. Two years after the development planning process, some planners recalled that a few representatives from the intentional community 'wanted to be rebels just to be rebels', and that they incorrectly believed in advancing the ideals of the community by 'making verbal warfare' in the work groups (Thorkildsen 2003:64). Several planners praise the efforts of a handful of central members of the intentional community, who had the stamina and personal authority to withstand the cross pressure from the municipal bureaucracy on the one hand, and the fellow activists they reported back to, on the other (ib:64).

Several interviews cited in master theses and newspapers strongly indicate that planners were more inspired than frustrated by the enthusiastic involvement of the Svartlamon activists (Lundberg 2009, Thorkildsen 2003). In 2009, one planner says that:

Planners assigned tasks in the Svartlamon process have been very engaged and put more energy into the work than what is normal. The work is rewarding! There is drive and progress in the Svartlamon project, producing visible results in contrast to many other planning efforts, which stay on the paper. In other development projects one does not get the same close relationship to the people one is planning for. (Lundberg 2009:123)

While this planner underlines the participation aspect, the opportunity to make Trondheim culturally more diverse inspires others. One planner says in 2009 that the most important is that the experimental project in Svartlamon 'is a counterweight that makes for a dissonance in the

cog wheel mechanism of the rest of society' (Lundberg 2009:95). The planner finds satisfaction in the opportunity created for non-conformist people:

Svartlamon is the last area in Trondheim looking like this. It is wonderful that the old wooden houses are taken care of, that the people there can be themselves and keep up their own lifestyle...

It is very important to create diversity in the city. To me it is crucial to show that things can be done differently, that eyes are opened to the fact that urban alternatives can be created. (Lundberg 2009:95-96)

Summing up this section, it is clear that: (1) The goals and ideas of the intentional community have a prominent place in a number of plans made for Svartlamon. (2) This is the result of strong activist involvement in planning. (3) Since the re-regulation to housing, the majority of local politicians and municipal planners have received the planning ideas of the intentional community well. Official planning documents integrate the core ideas of the activists, which continue to serve as guiding principles for further development of the area after the municipal evaluation of Svartlamon in 2016.

A preceding section suggested that planning by intentional communities can be a sort of radical planning. The activists worked out or strongly influenced the plans for Svartlamon 1995-2005. These plans were important in forming Svartlamon as a radical alternative to the rest of the city. Later planning-oriented efforts have consolidated and defended earlier victories by experimental building activity and improvement of the institutional framework.

Conclusion

This article is about a type of activist planning seldom studied in planning theory, namely planning done by the activists of intentional communities. The main contribution is to show the relevance to planning theory of intentional communities that (a) offer an activist lifestyle deviating from the mainstream, (b) try to transform their ideas and ideals into practice, and (c) use planning of their area as a strategy to succeed.

Planning theorists have studied the planning of activists in public agencies, NGOs, distressed neighbourhoods, and social movements, but not in intentional communities operating as activist micro-societies. It is intellectually dissatisfying that activist planning theory ignores planning by some of the most dedicated activists. Moreover, it is important in the 2010s, with neoliberalism occupying a dominant position, to envisage possible strategies for living less affected by its ideological tentacles.

The continuous struggle of intentional communities to remain contrasts to the mainstream makes consensualism irrelevant in their dealings with the larger society. Activist planning by intentional communities may serve as an archetype of agonist planning; it is a strategy for circumstances in which consensus on values and attractive lifestyles is likely to be repressive (Bond 2011).

Resisting external mainstreaming pressure and withstanding internal sectarianism determine the existence or collapse of intentional communities. The internal tensions of organizations built around radical ideology may be more effectively kept at bay by direct action than by strategic planning with its bickering over goal formulations and priority setting. The study nevertheless demonstrates that Svartlamon intentional community in Trondheim, Norway, used planning successfully to strengthen its position vis-à-vis the municipality, and obtain legal status as an urban ecological experimental area. The case shows that plan-making can be an effective strategy for detailing ideas and concretizing values, and bring them out to political decision-makers.

The research questions asked about the emphasis on the goals of the intentional community in the plans, the activists' role in the planning, and the attitudes of the municipal planners. Work on the official development plan started shortly after re-regulation to housing. The participation of intentional community members was extensive. The plan shows noteworthy agreement with the intentions of Svartlamon community expressed in earlier plans made by the activists. The official goal is that Svartlamon remains an urban ecological test area aiming for sustainability, diversity and recycling in accordance with Local Agenda 21 principles. Experimentation should deal with housing and spatial planning, but also organization models and active participation in development of the area. The evaluation report of 2016 blames unfulfilled municipal aims for the area on institutional deficiencies rather than obstinacy and inefficiency on the part of the intentional community. The City Council's Committee for Environment, Transport and Urban

Development remarked in 2001 that: ‘Participation from residents, private businesses and research institutions has supplied the Svartlamoen project with important competence and resources. It is crucial that this principle also be the basis of further work’ (Document 4).

The Svartlamon case shows that planning strategically can be combined with continued activism and social protest. Planning can bring to the fore the constructive side of alternative urban living and diverse urban neighbourhoods. The cooperative development planning process became a vehicle for mending the wounds after ten years of strife between municipality and activists. The resulting plan stretched the limits with regard to the categories of land use permitted by the municipality, and the width of acceptable experimentation. The official development plan constitutes a frame inside which the necessarily agonistic relationship between intentional community and municipality can co-exist with cooperation concerning plans, housing projects, and institutional adjustments. The plan has given the intentional community protection against privatization, gentrification and mainstreaming through one and a half decade of strong neoliberal influence on urban policy in Norway, and it has been the foundation of all later work on the evolution of the area.

The Svartlamon experience is not transferable under all conditions. It is, however, relevant to activist communities willing to practice negotiation and cooperation in addition to protest and provocative direct action. A surrounding society tolerant of diversity is a success factor. Moreover, the parties need to agree on institutions that give the local government control of public outlays and grant the intentional community autonomy to cultivate its alternative lifestyle.

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Overview of Svartlamon as the triangular area bordered by Strandveien road to the right, the railway track intersecting the upper part of the photo, and the road connecting the bus-camp with the New House in the lower right corner. The flat-roofed complex previously belonged to Strandveien Auto. The unfinished self-builder houses are seen to the left of the complex. The Replacement House is under construction in the centre of the photo. (Source: Municipality of Trondheim, photographer Carl-Erik Eriksson)

