

Challenging pro-growth dynamics by developing planning knowledges for diverse economies

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Abstract

The paper examines the knowledges that post-growth planning will require and which planners should be centrally involved in generating and fostering. It argues that developing such knowledges could help re-align planning agendas away from growth-dependence. It uses Gibson-Graham's diverse economies approach to build a framework for researching aspects of diverse economies that could pre-figure a post-growth future. The proposition is that examples of alternatives are already present with diverse economies and, if supported, could present a significant challenge to the pro-growth hegemony. The paper draws on extensive review of the research literature alongside European case studies of: neo-endogenous development, cooperatives, community land trusts, social enterprises managing community assets, community-owned infrastructure and urban commoning. Lessons are drawn for the kinds of knowledges needed to enable the shift to more diverse economies, looking across new ways of understanding the locality and the importance of networks in circulating and adapting process knowledge. The paper ends with a consideration of how this would change the nature of local planning.

Keywords: post-growth; diverse economies; social capital; social economy; small businesses

Introduction

How best to using planning systems to deliver a post-growth future? One way of approaching this question would be to examine the tools and resources of existing planning systems and see how they can be reconfigured for post-growth alternatives. Another would be to radically rethink the political context for planning, so that it embedded post-growth values and represented a break with current paradigms. This paper takes a different approach. It argues that, as economic growth is the key issue here, a post-growth approach needs to rethink what is meant by the economy and economic activity. Specifically, it suggests that Gibson-Graham's diverse economy framework provides a good starting point for this. It then further argues that the agenda for a planning system is closely aligned with the kinds of knowledge that it prioritises. Thus, a post-growth future and a future post-growth planning will require new knowledge, indeed knowledges. The paper addresses the research question of what kinds of knowledge are needed to foster more diverse economies.

The first substantive section expands on the argument about knowledge and planning, emphasising the importance of knowledge in framing planning agendas and hence the policies and practices of planning. This is followed by an account of diverse economies, suggesting that conventional economic narratives place too much emphasis on marketed goods, services and labour and prioritise activities with higher market values. Instead, the paper argues for a focus on small localised business, social enterprises and civil society organisations and the way that they provide goods and services and support livelihoods. It suggests the value of thickening under-emphasised and under-valued aspects of current economic activity, thereby rebalancing existing economies, rather than positing an alternative ideal economy. The proposition is that such examples prefigure an alternative future and thus could constitute a significant challenge to the pro-growth hegemony.

The research approach used to operationalise this perspective is described next. The paper draws on extensive review of the research literature alongside European case studies of: small businesses and local economic development, cooperatives, social enterprises managing community assets, community land trusts, community-based infrastructure and urban commoning. From this research, four factors are identified as key to these economic activities surviving and thriving: finance, business and management models, the resources of civil society, and property rights. On this basis, the knowledges that would support action for re-balanced economies can be identified and the role of planning in (co)producing and operationalising these knowledges is discussed. The paper ends with a discussion of the implications for planning.

The paper argues, pragmatically, that change can be achieved through a focus on such localised and bottom-up economic activity and, further, that by working with existing elements of diverse economies, such change may be achieved more readily than through seeking structural change. It explores this in the assumed context of existing national policy frameworks, although it acknowledges that changes in those frameworks could be more supportive of rebalancing economies. Given the dominance of growth-dependent narratives, particularly at national levels, it seems appropriate to explore the options that are available at more local levels. As will become apparent, this does imply a rather different scope for 'planning' than prevails in many places today. Indeed, part of the purpose of the paper is to unsettle assumed definitions of planning and open up other alternatives.

The centrality of knowledge(s) to planning (agendas)

Planning is often described as knowledge in action. The idea that knowledge is central to the planning process constitutes the identity of planners as professionals (Mazza, 2002; Vigar, 2012; see also Davoudi, 2015). According to this view, planners should be able to synthesise a variety of knowledge sources to deliver a plan and further implement that plan. This knowledge is assumed to be comprehensive and to be readily identified under a variety of social, economic and environmental headings. It tends to include the profiling of the area under planning from a region down to a site, the demographics and socio-economic character of the area, the land both currently in use and available for development, and the economic and population dynamics that might drive demand for new development. Then, there is consideration of the impacts of proposed development, typically knowledge that is generated through a variety of impact studies (environmental, health, social, etc.). This kind of knowledge requires establishing a baseline of the current situation in a given degree of detail, considering how new development will impact that through studies drawing on existing research and synthesising the mix of impacts through established techniques such as modelling, mapping or using checklists and matrix approaches. This means that planning documents should show strong links with the prevailing 'state-of-the-art' from research, although as Næss et al. demonstrate (2013), this is not always the case.

However, the choice of knowledge on which to base planning activity is not neutral. This choice orients planning in a particular direction and aligns it with a particular agenda. The above types of knowledge are associated with the assertion of planners' or planning authorities' expertise under modernism in the 20th century. For example, Pries details how technical standards in Swedish planning constituted 'a particular form of expert knowledge' (p. 286), allowing 'Sweden's postwar planning to become a powerful tool' addressing human needs in a 'deeply technocratic way' (p. 287). Such modernist, technocratic, expert-led planning is closely associated with the perceived need to manage urban development and urban growth and, further, to facilitate and promote such development. This variously encompasses attempts to cope with newly industrialising cities in 19th century Europe, to manage growth in rapidly suburbanising North America, to build new metropolises in contemporary China and to deal with industrial decline in northern England, as well as the darker history of creating colonial settlements around the world.

This occurs in the name of economic growth. Urban development is here seen as intrinsically linked to economic growth, partly because such development is a major component of economic activity as currently measured. But, beyond this, economic growth is seen as requiring new urban development to provide physical contexts for economic activities - factories, offices, shopping centres - and to house workers. More proactively, the provision of new built environments is seen as a potential stimulant to economic activity driving further growth. More recently, this policy approach has been reframed under conditions of neoliberalism, with the private sector taking a more dominant role and a decline in the direct capacities of governmental organisations. This shift has put market-led incentives even closer to the heart of planning agendas and tied these more directly to conventional economic growth. With neo-liberalism becoming entrenched in many societies, there has been a further tendency to become dependent on the private sector not only to deliver such development but also to deliver on broader planning goals as a share of the profits of development is directed towards objectives such as affordable housing, nursery provision, restoration of nature sites and increased energy efficiency, through the combined use of planning regulation and the negotiation of planning gain (Rydin, 2013). Planning has become increasingly growth-dependent, not just growth-oriented, as planning authorities see this as the only way to implement their policies and plans.

It has been argued that the increasing influence of the neo-liberal agenda for planning has changed knowledge within planning systems. Raco and Savini (2019) argue that, as a result, financial knowledge is increasingly seen as essential to planning practice and that this is presented as neutral,

resulting in a new form of technocracy within planning. They particularly point, in England, to the emphasis in England on identifying land that private sector developers can acquire and develop at a profit, and on undertaking calculations that align the development capacity of such land with perceived needs for new housing (Layard, 2019; Rydin, 2021). In addition, there is the importance of development feasibility calculations, which are then linked to the sharing of the costs of infrastructure and the negotiation of planning gain. While the prioritisation of a sustainability agenda can privilege technical and scientific knowledge from accredited expert sources, in neo-liberal planning contexts this knowledge is mediated by private sector interests, that is the developer and their consultants, prioritising the search for win-win economic-environmental outcomes as part of a sustainability fix.

This combination of expert knowledge and a pro-growth planning agenda is not inevitable. For example, there has long been a move within planning - from both civil society organisations and academia - that communities should have a greater say. This has gone alongside the argument that the kinds of knowledges that communities can provide and generate should be prioritised. This covers so-called lay or experiential knowledge but also suggests the value of the co-production of knowledge (Vasudevan and Novoa, 2022), with new means of generating and recognising knowledge through more fully participatory methods of community engagement as well as co-design processes, citizen science, innovative deep place investigations and ethnography (Gutiérrez Rivera, 2020; Mattila et al., 2022; Becerril, 2023; Lall et al., 2023; Tomaney et al. 2023). If knowledge from these sources were given greater emphasis within planning, then the results - it is argued - would fit better with current communities' needs. At its best, this can result in joint learning rather than knowledge being transferred from the community to the planners; there is a transfer of power here rather than just a discussion about the knowledges that a planner might need. This has been supported by the emergence of collaborative planning as a normative planning theory (Healey, 2022; see Özdemir, 2019, for review and critique). This theory favours the use of multiple knowledges, although it does not specify the means of combining such knowledges other than through communicative action and deliberation.

The selection of knowledges within planning is not, thus, automatic but rather highly political. It goes with shaping the agenda for and, hence, goals of planning systems. It emphasises that knowledge does not 'hold up a mirror to nature', as modernist accounts assumed. Following several decades of science and technology studies, it became evidence that knowledge is socially constructed and what we accept as knowledge is highly dependent on the institutions for generating knowledge claims and selectively warranting them (Rydin, 2007). So, just as prevailing forms of planning are not inevitable, the knowledge that planning needs is neither obvious or unchangeable. Indeed, the two are closely related so that a particular form of planning implies and relies on a specific set of knowledge claims. This opens up an opportunity where the issue of post-growth planning is concerned. On the basis that new knowledge could help reframe planning towards post-growth, it raises the question: what kinds of knowledge does post-growth planning require? The next section defines 'post-growth planning' and offers a framework for developing this definition by reconceptualising economic activity. This is followed by a short account of the research approach adopted, which supports the remainder of the paper, presenting an analysis of post-growth alternatives and the implications for the kinds of knowledge that would support post-growth planning.

Moving towards a post-growth planning agenda

As the Introduction has pointed out, post-growth planning is still a term with a variety of definitions. The approach adopted here is to see post-growth planning as a form of planning that is explicitly not oriented towards achieving or managing growth, whether understood in terms of urban growth or economic growth, as conventionally defined. It seeks to avoid the dominant neo-liberal enrolment

into growth dynamics and find an alternative. However, this is still a collection of approaches that involve diverging pathways (Savini et al., 2022). There are those that seek to use the power of the state to control the extent of urban development in order to reduce resource use and break the link with growth. This would require a significant shift in political ideology of governments away from neo-liberalism (Saito, 2023). Then there are those that frame post-growth planning in terms of the relationship to capitalism, seeing post-growth as moving beyond or against capitalism. They seek to move completely outside the influence of market processes and look to various forms of radical commoning (Lange et al., 2022), which would imply major societal transformation. The approach adopted here is more pragmatic and instead looks for planning to have a different relationship to economic activity. This involves a re-conceptualisation of that economic activity and 'the economy'.

Rather than equating the economy with capitalism, this approach looks to how economic activity is hybrid - moving across conventional divisions between the economy, the state and civil society - and seeks to re-balance the economy in ways that are less tied to the pursuit of growth. The key reference point here is the diverse economies framework of Gibson-Graham (2006). They have argued that existing ways of thinking about the production and delivery of goods and services are capitalocentric, that is they align with conventional measurements of economic activity and growth that give more emphasis to high-value goods and services, as measured by market exchanges and associated valuation processes (Mazzucato, 2018; Pilling 2018). Gibson-Graham point out that there are, in fact, a variety of ways of undertaking enterprise, providing labour and enabling transactions within current systems. While conventional economics uniquely focuses on profit-oriented markets for all these activities, alternative forms exist for markets, payment for labour and enterprise, as well as there being forms that are outside any kind of market, that is non-monetised flows of goods and services, unpaid labour and non-capitalist enterprise. In some lower-income countries, alternatives to market forms may indeed dominate; even in higher-income countries, these alternatives currently exist, often in substantial sectors, even if they are side-lined by prevailing narratives.

Using this model of diverse economies, it is possible to consider a variety of ways of delivering goods and services that are not primarily driven by growth incentives. By supporting all the dimensions of diverse economies and achieving a rebalancing of economic activity, the influence of alternative incentives for delivering goods and services will be expanded. This has advantages in that this diversity already exists within economies and, thus, the seeds of such expansion have already been sown. Capitalocentric accounts of the economy downplay the importance of the small business sector, the social economy and civil society. Instead, diverse economies could be said to prefigure a post-growth future and a way of overcoming the dominance of growth-driven modes. This focus on rebalancing existing diverse economies can also connect to the idea of the Foundational Economy (Foundational Economy Collective, 2018), which highlights the value of aspects of the economy that are under-emphasised by conventional approaches. These include the material economy of core infrastructure and utilities, the providential economy that acts as a safety-net in times of trouble but significantly also the everyday economy that meets people's everyday needs and which is greatly undervalued by conventional economic measures. Many of the small businesses, social enterprises and community actions identified within diverse economies are also part of this everyday economy.

Thus, the argument is that planning needs to reorient itself away from promoting and managing urban development, as a means to encouraging conventional economic growth. Instead it should focus on rebalancing diverse economies, including the support of the small business sector and the wide variety of social enterprises and civil society organisations that are involved in providing and distributing goods and services to enhance both livelihoods and quality of life. Such expansion would prefigure a post-growth future through incremental change. It would prove its feasibility in thousands of distinct settings and grow an alternative to the reliance on growth-driven, market-

oriented organisations. The particular problem that this paper addresses is what kinds of knowledge are needed to enable this reorientation.

Research approach

Diverse economies encompass a range of ways of delivering goods and services, including market-oriented firms but also many varieties of social enterprise and non-governmental organisations and actors within civil society. The research approach adopted was, therefore, to explore these diverse modes of economic activity: small, localised firms; cooperatives involved in production, retailing and housing; community land trusts; social enterprises managing community assets; community-owned infrastructure; and examples of urban commoning (see Rydin, 2025 for more detail). All of these, it is argued, have significant productive and distributive capacity but are less likely to be driven by growth dynamics, unlike larger market-based firms, which may be subject to incentives around shareholder value and delivering high yields on financialised assets. Furthermore, all these modes are already established within the existing structure of diverse economies and could be expanded as a way of moving towards a post-growth future.

The methods used were extensive literature review of the published research on these kinds of organisations, projects and initiatives, as well as more detailed coverage of particular cases through a mix of documentary research, site visits and interviews. Existing research was used to triangulate the details of specific examples. These examples were: local economic development policy in Shildon, County Durham, England; the cooperative movement in Sweden; Community Land Trust-Brussels; Belgium; social enterprises in the Western Isles of Scotland and rural Western Ireland, specifically Pàirc, West Kerry and Connemara; community renewable energy in France; and urban gardening as urban commoning. Looking across these different enterprises, projects and organisations, the analysis considered the common pre-requisites for survival and longevity that emerged. From this understanding of what would make these contributions to diverse economies more effective and secure, planning knowledges for rebalancing diverse economies could be deduced. This also underpins a discussion of the scope of planning activity that would fit with the operationalisation of such knowledges and hence could constitute post-growth planning.

Exploring the knowledge requirements for post-growth planning

The analysis of the different types of economic activity within diverse economies suggested four sets of factors that determine the success of activities, projects and initiatives, ensuring their survival and longevity. These suggest new forms of planning, if planning systems are to be re-oriented towards genuinely diverse economies rather than more urban development and growth, based on new types of planning knowledge. The four sets concern finance, business and management models, the resources of civil society and property rights. Each is explored below, before bringing together the analysis and discussing implications.

Finance: income, outgoings and investment

Any project or organisation requires resources for its survival and longevity and these may take many forms: human, physical, technological, intellectual, political and cultural, as well as financial. This may be the political capital to get planning permission granted, the technical knowledge of how to build a community energy or housing scheme, or the collation of necessary funds or the managerial capacity to deliver market or community services efficiently and legally. Some of these will be internal to the firm or social enterprise or community group; others will be drawn in from external sources. Funds may need to be raised from external bodies or the natural resources of a locality may determine the success, say, of a community energy or food-growing project. The broader political climate may be

supportive of an initiative, and a project may be able to capitalise on aspects of local identity that define wider cultural resources.

That said, any project or organisation depends on financial viability, ensuring that revenue at least equals outgoings. Small businesses but also social enterprises that sell anything to raise income as part of their activities need to identify sources of demand for their products and services. They may then supplement these with grants or loans, as they can access them, but some level of paid-for demand is essential for viability. Firms and social enterprises need to be able to identify supply chains that they can be part of as well as cost-effective supply chains for their own activities. These may be local but are just as likely to be regional, national or even global.

This suggests that key knowledge that small firms and social enterprises need is market intelligence. However, this is rather more specialised and localised market intelligence than the broad-brush sector studies that economic market research typically provides. For example, more successful small firms are often part of local networks in which they exchange information and build trust for collaborations. Community Land Trusts require the households they seek to home to provide finance through rents and deposits and, thus, they need to understand their capacities to save and pay. CLT-Brussels was able to rely on this finance because they were engaging with a particular African community in Brussels that had a tradition of collective savings, known as *tontine*¹. And, in the case of community renewable energy projects, there needs to be an understanding of the income that will be raised by sale of the electricity/energy locally and this, in turn, depends on the local rhythms of energy demand; there may be scope for selling any surplus on to other energy users or the electricity grid but the finances of the project depend on how this division of demand works.

There is also the centrality of access to finance to enable investment for the desired activities, commercial and quasi-commercial. Experience in the small business and social enterprise sectors points to the advantages of having specialised and localised financial institutions that can provide finance and determine the terms for such provision on the basis of good local information and an understanding of the local economy in all its diversity. The Swedish housing cooperatives operate with local and sector-specific savings banks to underpin their business model and the importance of such institutions in the face of pressures for greater penetration by mainstream commercial banks has been emphasised (Bengtsson, 1992; Vogel et al., 2016). The famous Mondragon cooperative movement was based on a collective bank financed through forced savings from employment which funded a variety of investments. More generally, within the community wealth-building approach, the benefits of regional and local banks are becoming recognised (Manley and Whyman, 2021).

Thus, there is a role here for local planning to act as a focal point for amassing relevant local economic intelligence and making it available to local small business and social economy sectors, as well as supporting regional and local financial institutions.

Proven business and management models

Many small businesses and social enterprises are resource-constrained and can struggle with the managerial, financial, legal and entrepreneurial dimensions of running such an organisation. In addition, in many cases, this is a first venture for the originators of the organisation, particularly where a community is seeking to run a social enterprise to manage a community asset or an infrastructure project, say. The Irish cases benefitted from a national development agency which provided a ready-made model for creating social enterprises and this kind of support can be invaluable. But beyond providing a legal and organisational template, these diverse economies organisations often demonstrate considerable complexity, and this puts an additional burden on getting the financial and management models right. They often take several attempts to find a model

that will deliver viability over the longer term, with experience of failures early on and learning to succeed over time.

In some cases, the complexity arises from the combination of different activities that are bundled together in order to create a financially sustainable project. In the Western Isles, the Pàirc social enterprise runs a cafe, a shop, and a hostel as well as providing a community centre for local use. In Ireland, the West Kerry case involves an enterprise centre, a family centre and a University Centre with links to the National University of Ireland. The latter provides income-generating activities such as Gaelic-culture courses for overseas students and associated accommodation. The example from Connemara involves an old industrial school, which now houses a creche, sports facilities, and a community radio station, as well as a training centre for woodworking skills and an associated business focused on conserving and restoring old wooden furniture and artefacts. There are holiday cottages that bring in an income and links to a US college which leads to student visits. These all support social housing projects also. This mix of different activities creates additional issues in the overall business model.

In other cases, the financial models for the activity itself have a degree of complexity. Community Land Trusts (CLT) work by separating out the ownership of the land from the ownership of the housing building. Thus, the CLT is the long-term owner of the land and a housing association or cooperative can own the housing, which is then rented out or sold (or a combination) to the occupying households. In addition, there is usually collective governance; in the case of CLT-Brussels, the governing board comprises equal representation of project residents, public stakeholders and the wider local community. Neither the business model nor the governance structure is the usual model for speculative or social housing development by a public authority, housing association or other social landlord. It, therefore, requires explanation and understanding, including potentially new forms of legal arrangements.

Similar issues arise in the case of community-owned energy. As mentioned above, it is not usually the case that all the energy generated by such projects is consumed by the local residents and businesses that have supported the initiative. Rather, in the absence of cheap and effective storage, it is usually the case that the mismatch between local generation and local demand is covered by imports and exports to neighbouring businesses and housing through a private wire or the national grid. This requires contractual arrangements to ensure payment for the various energy flows. In many cases, the viability of the project also relies on subsidies or renewable energy certificates, i.e. market-based instruments that are bought and sold. Then there are choices about how the property rights over the site for the energy infrastructure are acquired, whether the land for a community wind turbine, say, is bought or whether the rooftops for solar panels, say, are rented. Not surprisingly, given these points, the study of the community renewable energy sector in France makes it clear that this is a highly heterogeneous sector (Vernay, 2023). Such heterogeneity is also found elsewhere opening up the sector to many different models and highlights the importance of intermediaries (potentially planners) in enabling community groups to navigate this complicated terrain.

This insight suggests a further role for local planning authorities to act as a clearing house for knowledge about business models that have been effective for small businesses and social enterprises. To this may be added knowledge of management models and of entrepreneurial skills more generally, given that research has shown that small businesses and social enterprises often lack existing expertise in business management and further lack the time and resources to develop it. The demand for such expertise is compounded where any relatively novel technology is being deployed. Thus, community renewable energy projects particularly require the circulation of existing knowledge about relevant energy technologies, their installation and ongoing management and -

above all - how these all impact the business model; however, a similar point could apply to any technologies being introduced by small firms or social enterprises.

The resources of civil society

One of the distinctive features of diverse economies is that there is often a reliance on unpaid labour, whether for activities such as gardening, serving in a shop or running a playgroup or managerial activities such as helping to apply for planning permission, resolving legal issues, applying for grants or developing strategies for the future. Even small firms draw on such resources as in offers of information or help from other firms or members of local business communities; research has indicated that such firms are dependent on local social connections. At the other end of the spectrum, pure urban commoning tends to rely almost entirely on volunteer labour of different kinds, from political organising, to making material contributions and physical labour. In between one finds different kinds of social enterprise using a mix of paid and unpaid labour and hence connecting into local civil society.

These are all hybrid organisations facing both towards markets and their incentives (not least to build viability), but also towards civil society and its mix of inter-personal relationships and common norms. Social enterprises need financial viability to survive but also considerable inputs of volunteer labour in various capacities. In worker cooperatives, this means inputs from workers beyond their productive labour; in community-based organisations, this means input from local members of the community for routine labour, management activities and strategic planning. This reliance on civil society for human involvement on a more or less voluntary basis can render these social economy organisations vulnerable. The pool of those able and willing to contribute may be limited and demographic or economic changes can reduce this over time. Nurturing the local culture and associated social capital that encourages such contributions takes time and effort and cannot be assumed.

These points were apparent in the cases studies but are also emphasised in the wider literature. Whitelaw and Hill (2013) stressed that links to the local communities were important for cooperatives in both Scotland and Sweden. Indeed, in Sweden, cooperatives often overlap with civil society organisations. For renewable energy projects, Dudka et al. (2023) found community-social enterprise connections to be important in France, and Colombarolli and Storti (2022) commented on the training and advice that ensued. In Brussels, the work of CLT-Brussels was partly based on a history of community action around housing in the city but these connections continued through the range of community work that CLT-Brussels actively engaged in. In Sildon, County Durham not only was the Town Council very active within the local civil society through projects such as the health and well-being garden, the fridge-for-all and a credit union, but the local railway museum, Locomotion, also built its expansion plans on deep community engagement, including appointing community champions.

Local planning systems can only have an indirect effect on building local social capital. This requires considerable work within communities to establish connections and foster norms of trust, reciprocity and mutuality. However, there is a role for planning in providing local built and natural environment assets that might foster the creation and maintenance of social capital. The social infrastructure of a locality plays an important part in relation to social capital; this encompasses community centres, libraries, sports and leisure facilities, parks and gardening allotments (Tomaney et al, 2023). Protecting these parts of the physical fabric of an area and encouraging their enhancement through designation, regulation or incorporating them into spatial plans are all roles that the planning system can play. For this, local planning authorities need knowledge arising from the mapping of social infrastructure, ideally linked to a mapping of the varieties of community organisations that would make use of such infrastructure.

However, it should be noted that a reliance on social capital within localities can be at odds with goals of inclusion and equality. Social capital is not equally distributed across such localities and can often be more readily fostered within those parts of communities that already have a disproportionate share of assets and capacities. In addition, forms of social capital known as bonding social capital involve strong links between people who share a degree of homogeneity. Bonding social capital implies boundaries and inclusion/exclusion. Thus, care has to be taken concerning the implications of strong local social capital for how difference and diversity are treated and for the distribution of benefits across local societies. This, again, is an area that local planning can monitor through data using the insights to inform local practices.

Property rights

One resource was highlighted as of considerable significance to all diverse economies organisations and that was land-ownership and the holding of property rights in a site or building. Not only were the activities of civil society organisations, social enterprises and small firms constrained by the absence of access to property, but this was also found to have more profound importance in that it provides long-term security for the activities of a firm, project or organisation. It can also act as an asset to leverage finance and ensure that access and occupation are not dependent on market signals and rent/price levels. For larger private sector firms, gaining access to land is just a matter of being effective within the commercial property market. Property costs are rarely a large proportion of total costs and there is often a wide choice of premises available. This is not the situation for small firms which are tied to a locality by their market, supply chains, labour sources or entrepreneur residence, or for social enterprises and civil society organisations, which are also tied by their reliance on local social capital and their desire to meet a local demand or need.

Small local firms often find themselves priced out of the local property market, and their premises can seem like ripe development opportunities rather than an important local resource in their own right. Given current economic structures, residential development can crowd out lower-value commercial and industrial premises, particularly smaller-scale ones. The small town of Sildon was found to benefit from a number of local, low rent business parks and a county council policy that saw Sildon as a low rent location with flexible premises, while focussing efforts at encouraging inward investment on the larger settlements in the county. The fact that vacancies were at or below the county average could be seen as a testimony to this approach working, particularly from a Foundational Economy perspective, even if the market value of property and businesses remained low.

For social enterprises, gaining access to land and property can be difficult and may require subsidies and public sector support. CLT-Brussels benefits from the city region authority granting it land on favourable terms, thus not only providing sites for development but also making its business model viable. The social enterprises of the Western Isles benefited from the Scottish Government's policy of enabling communities to buy land and buildings and supporting them in the ongoing management of these assets (Mackenzie, 2013). It may also require an understanding of alternative forms of collective ownership that are not prioritised within property markets. Providing knowledge of models of collective ownership and the financial, legal and management implications can, therefore, be important to social enterprises. It was advantageous that there was Scottish legislation regularising tenure patterns for community-owned organisations and, in Sweden, it helped that the housing cooperatives were working with a common and widely-understand property model in which the cooperative owned the estate or housing and residents held a subsidiary property right.

Property rights are intrinsically involved with the built and natural environment and thus planning should be highly relevant. This suggests a role for planning in developing and publicising knowledge

resources of ownership, particularly for sites of relevance to small firms, social enterprises and civil society organisations, as well as public spaces that could be used for urban commoning efforts. In addition, there is a need to give greater recognition to less familiar forms of property ownership than those associated with individual household, firm or organisational claims. Many organisations within diverse economies benefit from common ownership models and thus knowledge of these requires wider dissemination and support.

This knowledge would not only be of significance to local business communities and local civil society, but it could also connect to proactive planning action to protect sites and buildings for diverse economy uses and to promote those uses on and within them. Furthermore, it could be mobilised to support action by local authorities to acquire land - perhaps using eminent domain powers - and assemble sites, specifically for use by these organisations. This would enhance the availability of sites and at affordable prices or rents for these parts of diverse economies. Such knowledge is not a passive addition to the planner's repertoire but rather is integral to the active creation of opportunities for smaller and more vulnerable organisations. As such it is implicated in a shift of power from larger, principally commercially-oriented entities that can crowd out, displace and limit the potential of these smaller firms and social enterprises.

Discussion: new knowledges for supporting and rebalancing diverse economies

The above analysis of diverse economies cases has suggested four types of planning knowledges that can help build robust diverse economies and potentially enable a move away from growth dependence. These are summarised in Figure 1.

First, there's a role in amassing local and global economic intelligence of relevance to the local small business and social economy sectors and making this available to the relevant organisations. This, in itself, requires a good knowledge of these sectors locally and links with them, so as to gather appropriate information and distribute intelligence effectively. This could also be extended to regional and local financial institutions, so that they can tailor their lending decisions accordingly.

Second, local planning authorities can collate and disseminate knowledge about models of business, management and entrepreneurship that have proved effective for these small businesses and social enterprise sectors, having due regard to any technological innovations they may be seeking to implement.

Third, local planning authorities can seek to generate, foster and build local social capital but in the recognition that they are likely to have only an indirect impact on these features of local civil society. One particularly productive intervention would be to map and use planning powers to protect local social infrastructure of importance to local civil society. At the same time, local social inequalities and patterns of exclusion are important to monitor where social capital is being relied upon.

Fourth, the central importance of property rights suggests planners could also map local ownership patterns and circulate knowledge of common property rights models. This could support and protect the allocation of property and use rights to local small businesses and social enterprises and, further, enable the purchase of land and site assembly for such organisations. In these ways, planning action could protect sites and buildings for diverse economy uses.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

As Figure 1 indicates, two different kinds of knowledge are involved here. First, there is a different way of getting to know the locality, with more emphasis on small business, the social economy and civil society organisations, mapping their existence within the area but also providing for their own information needs. The purpose of this knowledge is to support viability and survival. Thus, knowledge of local and wider markets and supply chains, social infrastructure in the locality, and available properties are all centrally important. Second, there is process knowledge of how to sustain small businesses, social enterprises and civil society organisations, which needs to be gained through wider networking and then adapted to local circumstances. Identifying these two types raises two questions:

- What methodologies are appropriate for knowing the locality differently?
- What expertise can planning bring to the circulation and adaptation of process knowledge?

In relation to the first, if these are the kinds of knowledge that are needed to support diverse economies and assist them in prefiguring post-growth futures, then how can they be generated? What are the methodologies implied here? The mapping of social infrastructure and land ownership patterns implies new uses of existing sources of data, such as local taxation, land use, real estate and civil society data sources. However, likely gaps in such data sources suggest the need for engaging with local business, social economy and civil society sectors in order to generate comprehensive and meaningful datasets. There has to be an element of co-production here.

To this can be added the market intelligence that small businesses and social enterprises need to develop viable business and management plans. Again, there will be a need to engage with local organisations to ensure that the market intelligence collected is relevant, driven by their needs and not the availability of data. Mapping and collation are only part of the required activity; such data can only play a useful role if it is then disseminated back to these sectors for them to use. Open source platforms, communication channels and informative formats also require attention. But, to make a difference, planners will have to engage directly with these sectors and build strong relationships.

With regard to the collation and circulation of process knowledge, planners have considerable expertise in networking, that is building links between actors. Such networking is integral to the way that planning authorities operate, working across the boundaries between actors and across scales. Planning authorities can use this expertise to support the actors within diverse economies. The success of the enterprises, organisations, projects and initiatives of diverse economies depends on the ability to build and activate networks of actors within the locality and also across scales of government. Such networks can be among market actors but also with local political authorities and into civil society; often they need to be multi-level. Planners can use their expertise to establish forums and practices for building relevant networks across sectors and scales to support small businesses, social enterprises and civil society. The most effective networks often take the form of the spoke-and-hub shape, with the planner located within the hub to manage transfers of information and communication across the network (Rydin and Holman, 2004). There is active work here required of the planner to ensure that networks operate effectively and support diverse economies.

Some of these networks will be more localised and premised on a firmer knowledge by planners of the specific needs of local organisations. There may be existing networks within the local economy and civil society but they can be under-resourced. In Shildon, this was certainly the case, although

local businesses had the benefits of links into the very active Town Council and, perhaps more significantly, urban regeneration networks set up by the county council to administer the regeneration budget, which funded many small projects in the town, including guerrilla gardening, a community newspaper, footpath improvements, public art and heritage protection. Other networks will be more regional, national and even international in scale, helping to circulate knowledge across scale, as well as across different sectors. For example, links into local government networks were essential for CLT-Brussels, not only for the land transfers mentioned above but also to release grants and to integrate the CLT developments into both regional planning and the neighbourhood contract system of more localised planning. Government support at national level was essential for local social enterprises in Scotland (Gordon, 2002; Lloyd and Black, 1993) and, in Sweden, national recognition of cooperatives was essential, including through the principle of tenure neutrality.

It has been the argument of this paper that introducing new forms of knowledge will enable a re-orientation of planning agendas supporting a rebalancing of economies towards small business, social enterprises and civil society organisations and thus enabling a move away from the reliance on conventionally-measured economic growth. However, this is a new planning agenda which has to contend with the hegemonic pro-growth agenda and, therefore, it requires support from actors who see it as delivering benefits on the ground. A common critique of these smaller-scale, community-based and bottom-up approaches is that they do not add up to sufficient change to make a real difference. Arguing that they do not scale up (get bigger) or scale out (get more numerous) sufficiently, such critics argue instead for larger-scale initiatives, often using new technologies and having the perceived benefit of dealing with only a limited set of (big) actors.

Yet, the emphasis on larger-scale initiatives can continue both the buy-in to growth and the greater focus on entities with higher market valuations. Those aspects of the diverse economy that would be supported by the new knowledges identified here may not be large but they are numerous and they already exist in all localities. They do, therefore, offer the hope of expanding further in number and becoming more robust elements of localities if supported. Local planning systems have a role to play in this, although it will be a different role to current patterns. The final section reflects on this new role.

Conclusion: the implications for planning

Taking on board this post-growth approach would involve a reorientation for planners and local planning authorities away from managing development and searching for major projects. It rather implies a localised fine-grained perspective with an emphasis on what is already there in a locality rather than primarily envisioning an alternative built environment. It requires the building of local relationships and understanding the needs of local businesses, social enterprises and civil societies. This work would support diverse economies as a means of providing entrepreneurship, employment as well as goods and services that could lead to a post-growth future.

This might seem a task for local authority economic development departments, not planning departments. There are two problems with the argument. First, it implies a very narrow view of planning, one that forgets past experiences in which planning systems have, at times, extended into areas of local community development and concern with economic processes as well as change in the built environment. Post-growth thinking demands a return to a broader perspective for planning in order to escape growth-dependence. Second, planning needs to engage with local economic development practices to challenge the ways in which inward investment is prioritised to the

exclusion of alternative approaches. Opening up the agenda of planning systems not only introduces new planning practices but enables existing local economic development practices to change.

However, this is not presented as a one-size-fits-all solution and it is not suggested that this would represent the entirety of planning systems. This kind of bottom-up emphasis on under-recognised aspects of diverse economies has particular attraction in areas experiencing low, zero or even negative economic growth (as conventionally measured). It offers an alternative way to support livelihoods and quality of life. In areas under development pressure, it would represent more of a way to resist growth-oriented pathways but, to do so, it would need strong regulatory support from local planning authorities. Spatial planning also has a role to play here in influencing the location of new development so that growth-dynamics are not fed by excessive market-led construction.

Furthermore, there are strong arguments that infrastructures at regional and national scale need to change in order to reduce environmental burdens and prompt the transition to a low carbon society. While many aspects of social and economic sustainability could be met through these aspects of diverse economies, there is little evidence that, of themselves, these organisations embrace enhanced resource efficiency. Ideally, a post-growth future requires both stabilisation of economic activity and increases in resource efficiency (resource use per unit of economic activity) - one without the other risks ecological overshoot.

In part, this can be addressed by paying attention to how resource efficiencies can be enhanced within small firms and social enterprises, and incorporating these improvements within their business and management models. But resource use is not just determined by localised decision-making. The infrastructure systems set the context for such decision-making and are able to influence resource efficiency at a greater, aggregate scale. Thus, planning for resource efficient energy, water, waste and transport infrastructure is an additional task for planners, one that could sit alongside the more localised planning envisaged here. It could also connect with more traditional roles of spatial planning, by ensuring that urban development follows patterns for resource-efficient infrastructure.

Finally, it can be argued that this approach could be regressive in two ways. First, there is the point made earlier about relying on social capital potentially leading to inequitable outcomes and adverse consequences for inclusion. This concern suggests a further role for planning in monitoring local equality and inclusion and providing feedback on such outcomes and consequences. This could help fine-tune the support of diverse economies. Second, focusing on localised small firms and social enterprises could embed low-value economies alongside low wages and capital returns. From a post-growth perspective this focus may not be considered a problem provided that the needs of local communities are met and that organisations are able to maintain themselves. 'Low value' as a term carries with it the assumed preference for activities with high market worth which is critiqued by Gibson-Graham, the Foundational Economy Collective and many other commentators on ways of measuring economic activity. But this does require an unsettling of conventional narratives of the pursuit of economic 'value'. Planning can play a role here by refusing to embed such narratives within policies and plans, instead emphasising narratives of quality of life and sufficiency. While not suggesting this will be an easy task, planning systems are significant arenas were societal discourses circulate and this could be a further way they support the movement towards post-growth futures.

To conclude, this paper started from the innovative stance of arguing that tackling economic processes is a key way to develop a post-growth approach. This approach addresses the problem of growth-dependence at its core and offers alternative ways of producing and distributing goods and services and, thereby, supporting livelihoods and quality of life. This is about recognising the existing

diverse nature of economic activity and seeking to rebalance economies towards forms that are less driven by growth dynamics; these are essentially the small, localised business sector, the social economy and civil society organisations. If there is to be a shift in planning agendas away from growth-dependence and towards such a rebalanced economy, then new forms of knowledge will be needed as the framing of planning systems has always gone with the prioritisation of certain types of knowledge. Developing, publicising and using knowledge for re-balanced diverse economies will assist in re-orienting planning systems towards post-growth futures and would be transformative of planning systems. While this may seem challenging to existing practitioners, the types of knowledges outlined here provide a practical way towards that transformation.

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Figure 1 New Knowledges for Post-Growth Planning

ⁱ This kind of *tontine* describes a variety of collective savings schemes used in parts of Africa; it is different from the schemes whereby collective assets benefit the longest-living participant.